

Minutes from high-level roundtable discussion with Harriett Baldwin, Minister for Africa to explain and discuss the UK Government's Africa Strategy

Tuesday 13th November 2018 at 3pm in Committee Room 20, House of Commons

The meeting was well attended by both MPs and Peers and some select external guests-
From the FCO/DFID: Harriett Baldwin MP- Minister for Africa for the FCO & DFID, Jane Edmondson- DFID's new Africa Director East/Central and Alison Thorpe - Head of the Joint Africa Unit.

Parliamentarians: Chi Onwurah MP (meeting chair), Lord Luce, Lord Purvis, Patrick Grady MP, Liz McInnes MP, Lord Chidgey, Lord Judd, Laurence Robertson MP, Henry Bellingham MP, Baroness Northover, Lord Steel, Jeremy Lefroy MP, James Duddridge MP

APPG & parliamentary staff: Henrietta Bailey, Secretariat to the APPG for Africa, Nick Westcott, Royal African Society, Andrew Rosindell MP's Africa Advisor, Emmanuel Obasi Aisha Dodwell, Political Advisor to Kate Osamor, Shadow Secretary of State for International Development

External guests: Graham Peters- Managing Director, Avanti Government, Avanti Communications Ltd, Toni Pearce- Oxfam's Head of Advocacy, Lesley Coldham- Tullow Oil plc, James Cemmell- Vice President- Government Engagement at Inmarsat, Edward Howard- Vodafone Group External Affairs, Magnus Taylor- Rift Valley Institute, Lucy Williams- International Alert

The Minister set out the five strategic shifts of the new approach, and highlighted the announcements that the Prime Minister made in her Cape Town speech-

- A) Climate Change & Sustainable Resource Management
- B) Demography
- C) Inclusive Growth, Trade and Economic Partnerships
- D) Security & Stability
- E) The Sahel

She emphasised that we wanted this to be about 'win-win' partnerships for both the UK and African countries to promote prosperity, security and stability and outlined three key ambitions-

- 1) In 2019 the UK will host a major UK-Africa investment summit,
- 2) The UK to become the largest G7 investor in Africa by 2022;
- 3) £3.5 billion from UK Government via CDC to be invested in Africa.

Members were keen to understand how the Whitehall architecture would change to drive this work forward. The Minister agreed to send an organisational diagram and core messages about the approach to the group.

The Minister was asked how departments would work together to meet the Prime Minister's ambition to become the biggest investor in Africa by 2022 in the G7.

The Minister explained that the FCO, DFID and DIT worked closely together in a 'fusion' approach to ensure that the government delivers a single vision to foster long-term partnerships with African nations.

Mrs Baldwin also spoke about next year's UK-Africa Investment Summit, and the APPG was keen to be involved.

It was suggested that more direct flights between London and African cities would have the biggest impact on investment. The Minister agreed she'd like to see more.

Other questions from the Group included how the strategic shifts linked with UK efforts to meet the Global Goals, and whether African Commonwealth countries had a particular place in the approach. The Minister underlined that the Government remained committed to the Goals, and our work was part of that effort. On the Commonwealth, she noted efforts since CHOGM, including recent Royal visits.

Some members were particularly concerned about how the UK engaged with African countries on family planning, given the Minister had mentioned demography as an area of greater focus. They noted Tanzania as an example of where this work was more challenging. The Minister noted that despite worrying rhetoric on family planning in Tanzania, UK programmes were still operating.

It was suggested that the UK open a mission in Burundi but the Government does not have current plans to do so.

Other issues raised with the Minister included:

- The ongoing issue of decision making on visas and the need to engage with the Immigration Migration minister as part of the strategy; hopes that technology will improve the process over time.
- UK support for peacekeeping efforts in Africa and the Defence Attaché Network;
- the situation in Somalia,
- UK support for the African Continental Free Trade Area and the UK mission of 12 posts to the African Union in Addis,
- Africa's growing private debt and the need to raise revenue collection to ensure sustainability.
- Human rights and trade relations.