



Department
for International
Development



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Dear Sam

Thank you for your letter of 14 May enclosing a copy of the Africa APPG's report "Democracy Soup" and for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry. The report discusses a range of extremely relevant issues which will help to inform DFID's continued efforts to strengthen democratic governance in Africa.

As the report notes, formal multi-party democracy is now the norm in Africa. Citizens view democracy as the most preferable political system and leaders are increasingly talking the language of democracy. However, democracy in practice is still falling short, with limited opportunities for participation, particularly by women and youth. I agree that changing this will take time and that successful institutional reform will need to be locally led, but your report sets out a very useful range of opportunities for international engagement which DFID is actively pursuing.

Each DFID office has recently undertaken fresh country analysis to inform their future priorities. This has entailed looking at the implications of the local political settlement for participation, accountability and inclusive growth, and the opportunities for DFID to influence the evolution of that settlement. Interventions will continue to vary according to context, but each country office retains a focus on the Golden Thread of development; promoting open societies through transparency, accountability and empowerment, all of which the APPG has helpfully highlighted. We are now also placing greater emphasis on supporting domestic resource mobilisation, not only as a tool for promoting a self-financed exit from aid, but also to help strengthen the contract between citizen and state mentioned in your report.


Selecting which governments to work with, when and how, requires careful consideration – something which your report reflects closely on. As the APPG is aware, commitment to promoting human rights and strengthening domestic accountability are two of the UK government's core partnership principles. These are assessed to inform and shape our overall strategy for engagement, as well as programme design, in all countries where we have an aid partnership.

I agree that decisions on how to respond to this assessment need to be made on a case-by-case basis. We judge carefully where to apply conditionality or raise issues publicly, and where to do so privately, whilst working more broadly to promote non-discrimination, equality and inclusion.

I am grateful to the APPG for placing emphasis on the role of global and regional norms and international action for promoting institutional change. We are proud of the work the UK has been doing internationally on transparency and open government through our membership of the Open Government Partnership and last year's Presidency of the G8. There is still more though that we can do to embed transparency in the international system and support democratic strengthening in Africa, particularly for those countries with a significant extractives sector.

The report also highlights the potential role of other actors in strengthening democratic governance. Building on our economic development strategic framework, we are exploring more closely the potential role that the private sector can play in promoting institutional change as part of achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. We have also recently approved a new programme to support the AU to fulfil its mandate to oversee compliance with regional commitments (through the African Governance Architecture) and strengthen the quality of its election observation.

Many thanks again for the APPG's in depth work on this issue which will be of interest to many of DFID's staff working on Africa.



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