

On behalf of: The Secretary of
State for Foreign,
Commonwealth and
Development Affairs
By: Sir Philip Robert Barton
KCMG OBE
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IN THE MATTER OF:

THE UNITED KINGDOM
COVID-19 INQUIRY

STATEMENT OF SIR PHILIP ROBERT BARTON KCMG OBE ON BEHALF OF
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND
DEVELOPMENT AFFAIRS

I, **SIR PHILIP ROBERT BARTON KCMG OBE**, Permanent Under-Secretary of State ("**PUS**") at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ("**FCDO**"), King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, **WILL SAY** as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

1. I make this statement on behalf of the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs ("**Secretary of State**") for the United Kingdom ("**UK**") Covid-19 Inquiry ("**Inquiry**").
2. This statement addresses the period from 1 January 2020 to 1 September 2020.
3. I am duly authorised by the Secretary of State to make this statement on his behalf.

4. The contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Many of the matters referred to are not within my personal knowledge, so I have drawn on the recollections of those officials who were working on the matters relevant to this statement.
5. There is now produced and shown to me a paginated bundle of true copy documents marked (“PRB/[xxx]”), with ‘[xxx]’ referring to the number of the exhibit. All references to documents in this statement are to Exhibit (PRB/[xxx]) unless otherwise stated.
6. This statement has been prepared with the assistance of officials in the FCDO, including the FCDO’s Covid-19 Inquiry Unit.
7. My statement is structured as follows:

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Section 2: Preliminary points

8. At the outset of my statement, I wish to note, on behalf of the Secretary of State, the following preliminary points.
 - 8.1 First, the Secretary of State welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Secretary of State supports the Inquiry in fulfilling its terms of reference.
 - 8.2 Second, reflecting the Secretary of State's goal of supporting the Inquiry in its work, the FCDO has gone to considerable effort to locate information and documents which respond to the Inquiry's requests. Notwithstanding the extensive information provided with this statement (and provided to date preceding this statement), the Secretary of State remains ready to assist the Inquiry further through the provision of additional information and documents.
 - 8.3 This statement addresses the period from 1 January 2020 to 1 September 2020, the day before the FCDO began operating as a new department following the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office ("FCO") and the Department for International Development ("DFID"). A further statement addressing the FCDO's work during the period from 2 September 2020 to 24 February 2022 is being submitted in parallel.

Section 3: Explanation of terminology

9. On 16 June 2020, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, the then Prime Minister, announced that DFID and FCO would merge to form a new department, what is now the FCDO. The FCDO came into existence on 2 September 2020.¹
10. The FCO and DFID are now sometimes referred to, particularly in FCDO internal documents, as "legacy departments" and, in internal and external documents as "ex-FCO" and "ex-DFID". These terms all describe the departments which merged to become the FCDO.
11. To be consistent with the names used by these departments before 2 September 2020, this statement will use the term "FCO" to refer to activities undertaken by, and material

¹ See the Transfer of Functions (Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs) Order 2020 (SI 2020/942) made as an Order in Council pursuant to sections 1 and 2 of the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975.

originating from, the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the term "DFID" to refer to activities undertaken by, and material originating from, the former Department for International Development. The term "FCDO" will be used to refer to activities undertaken by, and material originating from, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office since its establishment on 2 September 2020.

Section 4: My background

12. I have been the PUS at the FCDO since 2 September 2020. As PUS, I am a Senior Civil Servant and the principal Civil Service adviser to the Secretary of State, and his / her Ministerial team.
13. As PUS, I am also responsible for the day-to-day management of the FCDO and I serve as its Accounting Officer. Additionally, in my role as PUS, I am head of HM Diplomatic Service.
14. I joined the FCO in 1986 and have worked in the Civil Service since then. During my time as a civil servant, I have worked in a number of roles in the FCO and FCDO, both in the UK and overseas, including as British High Commissioner to India, British High Commissioner to Pakistan and Deputy Head of Mission in the United States of America. I have also worked in the Cabinet Office and No. 10 Downing Street ("No. 10").

Section 5: The FCO's role, function and responsibilities on 1 January 2020

15. In this section of my statement I explain the FCO's role, function and responsibilities on 1 January 2020. I provide this information to give context to subsequent sections in which I describe the FCO's work in responding to the Covid-19² pandemic between 1 January 2020 and 1 September 2020.
16. I note in addition that, while the Inquiry has asked that this statement focuses on the work of the FCO, some brief detail is included in relation to the work of DFID, to explain how that department also contributed to the work of HM Government over this period.
17. On 1 January 2020, the FCO's role was to lead HM Government's global diplomatic network to advance British interests and act for the people of the UK around the world,

² On 11 February 2020, the World Health Organization officially announced "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)" or "Covid-19" as the name of what until then had been referred to generically as "coronavirus". For ease of reference and except where otherwise appropriate, I refer to coronavirus as "Covid-19" throughout this statement.

supporting all HM Government activity overseas.

18. In this, the FCO represented (and the FCDO represents) all parts of the UK, ensuring the international interests of the devolved nations (i.e., Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) were represented, delivered and advanced. (For the purposes of this statement, I have taken 'devolved nations' to mean the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ("**Devolved Administrations**"). For example, in 2019-2020 the FCO supported 35 overseas visits by Ministers in the Devolved Administrations to pursue international interests in the areas of trade and investment, tourism, education and culture.
19. The FCO's role was reflected in the FCO's Priority Outcomes 2019-2020 [**PRB/1 - INQ000100843**], and in its three overarching, strategic objectives:
 - 19.1 'Protect our people' – utilising the UK's hard power expertise to protect UK citizens and the UK's allies through its cyber expertise, P5 status³ and NATO membership, to counter terrorism, prevent weapons proliferation, counter malicious cyber activity, and tackle state and non-state threats.
 - 19.2 'Project our influence and demonstrate diplomatic leadership' – advancing UK interests by protecting and promoting the UK's values, influence and soft power (i.e. the range of cultural, economic and other assets of attraction and influence available to the UK). Working through the rules-based international system, with partners, to make the world safer and fairer by supporting human rights, democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and preventing and resolving conflict.
 - 19.3 'Promote our prosperity' – projecting the UK as a connected, innovative and active global economy, ensuring it is an attractive investment destination, opening overseas markets, driving economic reform, championing UK business, and enhancing global free trade through key international bodies.
20. To support these overarching objectives, the FCO had for 2019/20 (and thus on 1 January 2020) 11 'Foreign Policy Priority Objectives' ("**FPPOs**"), as explained in the FCO's 2019/2020 Annual Report ("**19/20 Annual Report**") [**PRB/2 - INQ000100880**]. The FPPOs covered the following areas: 'consular and crisis'; 'Euro-Atlantic security'; 'security challenges', including 'cyber-security'; 'diplomatic leadership'; 'multilateralism';

³ "P5" status here refers to the UK's status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

'Europe'; 'conflict and stability'; 'Overseas Territories'; 'global economic architecture'; 'economic diplomacy' and 'climate change'.

21. To facilitate these objectives the FCO had a 'Corporate Policy Priority Outcome' – referred to as the CPPO1 International Platform – by which the FCO provided a platform for the whole of HM Government's overseas operations (often referred to as 'One HMG') via its Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates and overseas posts ("Posts"). Further detail on this can be found below and in the 19/20 Annual Report.
22. In January 2020, 34 HM Government partners (i.e. other HM Government departments and agencies) were based on the FCO's global platform (i.e. they used it for their overseas operations), including the Department for International Trade ("DIT"), DFID, the Home Office and the British Council. The network comprised 280 Posts, including ten at multilateral organisations, such as the United Nations, in 178 countries and territories.
23. The FCO's overseas network enabled the whole of HM Government to deliver its international objectives overseas. Examples of this immediately prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic included: the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January 2020, led by DFID, DIT and the FCO, which built on common links to encourage new trade and investment partnerships between the UK and sub-Saharan Africa; the UK hosting a summit of NATO leaders to mark the 70th anniversary of the alliance in December 2019; securing the UK co-hosting and presidency of the 'COP26' (Conference of States Parties) conference on global climate change also in December 2019; and various large-scale consular operations, on which I say more below.

Consular and crisis work

24. The FCO was, on 1 January 2020, the lead government department for HM Government's consular and overseas crisis work. This responsibility was reflected in the FCO's FPPOs as 'Foreign Policy Priority Objective 1', which was summarised in the 19/20 Annual Report as follows:

"- Stand up for British citizens overseas by providing high quality, accessible consular services globally, focused on those most in need.

- Reduce preventable incidents affecting British people overseas through collaboration with partners and governments.

- Respond rapidly to all overseas crises, leading cross-government action."

[PRB/2 - INQ000100880]

25. The relevant constituent parts of FPPO1 were as follows:

25.1 First, the FCO was responsible for providing consular services globally to British nationals overseas. This support ranged from issuing emergency travel documents to providing support to British nationals and their families affected by acts of terrorism, natural disasters and the collapse of airlines and tour operators. I discuss this work in detail in Section 10.

25.2 A second part of FPPO Objective 1 (as reflected in the 19/20 Annual Report) was the provision of travel advice to British nationals [PRB/2 - INQ000100880]. The FCO issued travel advice to inform British nationals so that they could make decisions about travelling abroad. In this context, I would emphasise that any decision to travel, to stay in or to leave a country is for the British national themselves to take. The process by which changes are made to travel advice, as well as changes made in that process relating to Covid-19, is covered in Section 10 of this statement.

Engagement with international partners

26. The FCO was, on 1 January 2020, the lead government department in respect of HM Government's work in engaging with the UK's international partners. This is reflected in the FPPOs, including FPPO4 'Diplomatic Leadership', FPPO5 'Multilateralism', and FPPO6 'Europe'. Each of these objectives was a significant focus for the FCO and its diplomatic network, in particular in the context of the UK's exit from the European Union ("EU") on 31 January 2020. Objectives FPPO4 and FPPO5 set goals for a continued high-profile and values-based UK presence internationally, making use of British soft power and defending the rules based international system. Objective FPPO6 included delivering a strong post-EU exit relationship with Europe, advancing UK interests, tackling shared global challenges, and helping to negotiate a strong future partnership with the EU.

27. Further details on each of these Objectives can be found in the 19/20 Annual Report [PRB/2 - INQ000100880].

Advice on international affairs to HM Government

28. The FCO was also the lead government department within HM Government providing information and advice concerning international affairs and working with international partners, and in formulating international policy. The FCO and its network of Posts

worked extensively with other HM Government departments on all aspects of UK interests. For example, on economic diplomacy, the FCO worked with DIT and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to support UK exports and inward and outward investment. In some areas, FCO staff worked in 'Joint Units' formed with other HM Government departments, for example with the Ministry of Defence ("**MOD**") to provide integrated advice to FCO and MOD Ministers on defence and international security issues. The FCO also contributed to cross-Government discussions coordinated by the Cabinet Office, for example in the security sphere, with Heads of Mission routinely engaging with Ministers and officials across government on international aspects of their departments' work and their engagement with international counterparts, including through overseas visits by the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet, and other Ministers.

29. A core component of the work of the FCO's overseas network was to provide timely information and analysis on events overseas in support of UK policy and decision making. One important way in which the FCO would disseminate such information and advice was through Diplomatic Telegrams ("**DipTels**"). I exhibit a guidance note which explains DipTels in further detail [**PRB/3 - INQ000100877**].
30. As I set out in further detail below in Section 9, the FCO and its overseas network sent a significant number of DipTels concerning Covid-19 during the period between 1 January 2020 and 1 September 2020. They formed an important part of the FCO's work in responding to the pandemic during the period covered by this statement.

Section 6: Governance and decision making in the FCO on 1 January 2020

31. On 1 January 2020, the FCO's Ministerial team was headed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (the "**FCO Secretary of State**"). On 1 January 2020, the FCO Secretary of State was the Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, who had been appointed by then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, on 24 July 2019.⁴
32. As FCO Secretary of State, Mr Raab had overall responsibility for the work of the FCO.
33. The FCO Secretary of State was supported by a team of Ministers. The table below lists the FCO Ministerial team (and their respective portfolios) on 1 January 2020.

⁴ For completeness, I note that Mr Raab remained in post as FCO (and then FCDO) Secretary of State until 15 September 2021, when he was replaced by the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP as Secretary of State.

FCO Ministerial team – 1 January 2020	
Minister	Role
Rt Hon Dr Andrew Murrison MP *	Minister for the Middle East and North Africa
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister for the Commonwealth, the UN and South Asia
Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP *	Minister for Europe and the Americas
Rt Hon Andrew Stephenson MP *	Minister for Africa
Rt Hon Heather Wheeler MP *	Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Asia and the Pacific

34. On 13 February 2020 the Prime Minister conducted a Ministerial reshuffle and those with “*” listed against their names ceased to be Ministers in the FCO. With effect from 13 February 2020, the new joint FCO/DFID Ministerial team, and their portfolios, was as follows:

FCO/DFID Joint Ministerial Team – 13 February 2020 onwards	
Minister	Role
Rt Hon Nigel Adams MP	Minister for Asia
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister for the Commonwealth, UN and South Asia
Rt Hon James Cleverly MP	Minister for the Middle East and North Africa
James Duddridge MP	Minister for Africa
Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State for the Pacific and the Environment

FCO/DFID Joint Ministerial Team – 13 February 2020 onwards	
Minister	Role
Rt Hon Wendy Morton MP	Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas
Rt Hon Baroness Sugg CBE	Minister for the Overseas Territories and Sustainable Development

35. The FCO Ministerial team was supported throughout this period by FCO officials. The most senior civil servant in the FCO on 1 January 2020 was the then PUS, Sir Simon McDonald.⁵
36. Sir Simon was supported in his leadership role by six Directors-General (“DGs”) (Civil Service grade Senior Civil Service 3). Each DG was responsible for overseeing the work of Directorates – a Directorate is an operational unit ordinarily led by a Director (Civil Service grade Senior Civil Service 2).
37. Some Directorates in the FCO were responsible for a particular region of the world, in which case they would be known as the geographical Director for that region – for example, the Asia-Pacific Director. Geographical Directors were also responsible for the work of the FCO’s Posts in that region. Other Directorates were responsible for cross-cutting (or ‘thematic’) matters, such as consular services or national security, or were responsible for an FCO corporate function, such as human resources or finance.
38. The FCO Secretary of State, as the most senior Minister in the FCO, was ultimately responsible for the decisions made by the FCO. Reflecting the considerable number of areas for which he was responsible, the FCO Secretary of State was, as set out above, supported by his Ministerial team who had allocated portfolios. The most important and significant decisions were, however, taken by the FCO Secretary of State.
39. In taking decisions, the FCO Secretary of State was supported by a private office consisting of civil servants whose primary responsibility was to ensure that his decisions were communicated to and implemented within the FCO, and that information and advice from officials was communicated to the FCO Secretary of State.
40. The FCO Secretary of State was also supported by a number of special advisers or

⁵ Now Lord McDonald of Salford, GCMG, KCVO.

“SPADs”. SPADs are temporary political advisers employed as civil servants to provide political advice and support that would generally be outside the remit of the Civil Service.

41. The PUS and his team of senior civil servants were responsible for advising FCO Ministers and ensuring their policy decisions were enacted. Additionally, the PUS and the senior Civil Service leadership of the FCO had a number of responsibilities relating to the corporate functions of the FCO. As at 1 January 2020, these were essentially discharged through several boards and committees, notably:

41.1 Supervisory Board – the Supervisory Board (chaired by the FCO Secretary of State) met at least once each financial year and provided collective strategic leadership, advising on strategic and high-level operational issues affecting the FCO. Alongside the FCO Secretary of State, members of the Supervisory Board also included FCO Ministers, the PUS, the Chief Operating Officer, the Finance Director, the FCO’s non-executive directors, and at least one other DG on rotation.

41.2 Management Board – the Management Board would ordinarily be chaired by the PUS and would in general meet monthly. It provided corporate leadership to the FCO by delivering the policies and services decided by Ministers. It comprised DGs, and certain Directors and Non-Executive Directors.

41.3 Executive Committee – the Executive Committee (“ExCo”) comprised the executive members of the FCO Management Board and met weekly. It had delegated authority to make decisions on certain issues, including strategic choices and challenges relating to sensitive or time-bound issues, as well as decisions relating to the day-to-day running of the FCO as a department (including human resources, budget and resourcing issues), emerging issues, risks and crises. ExCo would ordinarily be chaired by the PUS and consisted of DGs and certain Directors.

41.4 Network Board – The One HMG Overseas Network Board was chaired by the FCO’s Chief Operating Officer and met quarterly. It was attended by chief operating officers or senior officials with similar roles from the main large HM Government departments, agencies and organisations represented overseas, including the Home Office, MOD, DFID, DIT, HM Revenue and Customs, the British Council, and the National Crime Agency, as well as HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office. The Network Board provided a forum to coordinate HM

Government activity overseas and enable the FCO to operate the One HMG platform overseas efficiently and effectively. The Network Board was essential for resolving shared challenges and helping set the strategic direction for HM Government's work overseas.

Section 7: DFID's role, function and responsibilities on 1 January 2020

42. Although as I note above, the Inquiry's Rule 9 Request is directed towards the FCDO (and one of its predecessor departments, the FCO), the FCDO considers that it may assist the Inquiry to provide outline information relating to DFID and its work in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic between 1 January 2020 and 1 September 2020, as relevant to the issues outlined in the Rule 9 Request. This information has been provided particularly to explain the role DFID played in joint-FCO/DFID entities which were set up to help HM Government in responding to the pandemic prior to the merger (see Section 8 below for further information). Our response to Module 1 addresses specifically the role DFID played in UK preparedness and resilience. I provide an explanation of DFID's Covid-19 response in Section 12 below.

DFID's Function and responsibilities

43. On 1 January 2020 DFID's primary mission was to lead the UK's international work to end extreme poverty. The Secretary of State for International Development ("**DFID Secretary of State**") had Cabinet-level responsibility and overall oversight for the 'Global Goals' (also known as the 'Sustainable Development Goals' or 'SDGs'), and the department was responsible for tackling global challenges, in line with HM Government's UK Aid Strategy.
44. DFID's role was reflected in the DFID 2019/2020 Annual Report ("**19/20 DFID Annual Report**") [PRB/4 - INQ000100873].
45. In the 19/20 DFID Annual Report, DFID set out its key strategic objectives as follows:
- 45.1 "Strengthening global peace, security and governance" – by addressing underlying causes of conflict and insecurity, maintaining a sharp focus on prevention, tackling crime and corruption and supporting transparency, capability and trust in global institutions;
- 45.2 "Strengthening resilience and crisis responses" – by helping countries and their populations be better able to anticipate and manage risks and shocks caused by climate change;

- 45.3 "Promoting global prosperity" – working to increase investment, trade, productivity and to build better tax systems to raise incomes, improve jobs and spread general benefits across society;
 - 45.4 "Tackling extreme poverty and providing help to the world's most vulnerable" – working to strengthen national systems where reform delivers better and more inclusive services, including healthcare and education;
 - 45.5 "Supporting a strong and resilient international system" – working with multilateral agencies and institutions to build a stronger and more resilient international system. Building local partnerships and engaging with new global development partners with a view to strengthening the global financial system; and
 - 45.6 "Improving the value for money and transparency of UK Aid" – described as an overarching corporate objective, this objective envisages driving excellence and value for money in the design, delivery and monitoring of aid through staff engagement in DFID funded programmes and expertise across DFID's country networks.
46. DFID's primary departmental responsibilities were as follows:
- 46.1 Honouring the UK's international commitments and taking action to achieve the United Nations Global Goals;
 - 46.2 Making British overseas aid more effective by improving transparency, openness and value for money;
 - 46.3 Targeting British international development policy on economic growth;
 - 46.4 Improving the performance of international development in fragile and conflict-affected countries;
 - 46.5 Support for women and girls in the developing world through education and family planning, alongside work on the prevention of violence; and
 - 46.6 Work to prevent climate change and encourage low-carbon growth.

DFID's governance arrangements

47. On 1 January 2020, the DFID Secretary of State was the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP. Mr Sharma held this post from 24 July 2019 to 13 February 2020. On 13 February 2020,

Mr Sharma was replaced by the Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP. Ms Trevelyan held her post until DFID merged with the FCO to become the FCDO on 2 September 2020.

48. The Permanent Secretary was Matthew Rycroft⁶, who was responsible for the day-to-day management of DFID and served as its Accounting Officer. Additionally, as Permanent Secretary, he chaired the DFID Management Board, and ExCo. The DFID Secretary of State chaired the DFID Departmental Board which provided strategic leadership and challenge on strategy and policy priorities, major corporate issues and risks. The Audit and Risk Committee advised the DFID Departmental Board and the Accounting Officer on the effectiveness of internal processes and actions in relation to risk management across DFID.

Section 8: FCO structural changes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

49. In this section of my statement I describe how the FCO's activity and structures evolved in the first half of 2020 to reflect the changing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and to respond to the most urgent requirements of HM Government and British nationals located overseas.
50. At the outset, it is important to underline the extent to which Covid-19 changed the work and operating environment of the FCO and its staff in the UK and around the world, and its significant impact on the FCO's wider activity in the first half of 2020. As the FCO and its overseas network focused increasingly on Covid-19, many other important areas of work were deprioritised or dropped, and an organisation-wide mobilisation towards Covid-19 activity took place from March 2020.
51. This organisation-wide reorientation of effort and resource enabled, in particular, a greater FCO focus on consular work, in order to provide assistance to and help return to the UK the many thousands of British nationals overseas at the start of the pandemic.
52. FCO staff were also engaged in the wider work of HM Government on international aspects of the pandemic, including the sourcing of medical supplies and equipment from overseas and international cooperation on vaccine development.
53. The FCO's pandemic-related work necessitated redeploying hundreds of FCO staff in

⁶ Now Sir Matthew Rycroft, KCMG, CBE. For completeness, Sir Matthew was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Home Office on 17 March 2020. He was replaced by Nick Dyer as Acting Permanent Secretary of DFID on the same day. Nick Dyer served as Acting Permanent Secretary until 2 September 2020, i.e. the merger of DFID with the FCO.

the UK and overseas to Covid-19 tasks, at the same time as developing wholly new ways of working, especially after the first national lockdown was introduced in the UK from 27 March 2020. This included using remote working IT systems at scale for the first time in the FCO's history. At the peak of the crisis, over 90% of FCO staff in the UK were working away from the office, very many of them contributing directly to the pandemic effort. The picture was similar across the overseas network, with the vast majority of staff working away from offices, and in accordance with local public health requirements.

54. In terms of context, I note that at the start of 2020 the FCO's senior leadership and many staff were heavily focussed on a range of foreign policy challenges, including managing the FCO's responsibilities within HM Government's wider EU exit negotiations, and preparations for the UK's new place and relationships in Europe following its departure from the EU, including the department's responsibilities across its network of Posts in Europe, for example as regards the implications for British nationals living or working in the EU.
55. From the start of 2020 the FCO's Management Board and ExCo were in parallel monitoring the evolving Covid-19 situation. This included, as described below, the decision in March 2020 for a complete organisational shift in priorities and resource allocation, recognising that standard, previous crisis response parameters were insufficient, as well as the much longer-term nature of the international challenges created by the pandemic, and the significant implications it would have for the department and its staff.
56. This was a period of immense pressure for the FCO, with the organisation and its people navigating a difficult, fast moving, constantly changing, and highly unclear environment.
57. This was a crisis response that had no post-war precedent in terms of scale, complexity and duration. By way of example:
 - 57.1 Between January and April 2020 the FCO launched six separate crisis operations culminating in the global repatriation charter operation;
 - 57.2 The FCO's charter operation brought over 38,000 people back to the UK, on 186 flights, from 57 different countries and Overseas Territories;
 - 57.3 MOD flights helped hundreds more, including from some of the furthest-flung

locations;

57.4 More than 19,000 British nationals from 60 cruise ships were successfully disembarked, including 1,500 people on direct or supported charters; and

57.5 FCO staff worked around the clock to keep hubs and transit routes open, and provide consular assistance to those most in need, enabling 1.3 million British nationals to return via commercial routes, of whom approximately 132,000 were on flights directly assisted by HM Government.

58. But these statistics tell only part of the story. Every flight required specific permissions, and each brought its own, individual challenges. Some locations were remote, e.g. Fiji where we supported British nationals in the aftermath of a cyclone. Others presented acute logistical challenges, e.g. organising internal transfers by small boat and small aircraft in the Philippines and providing assistance at every stage of these journeys. And the volume of travellers was huge, e.g. from India where 66 HM Government flights brought back nearly 18,000 people, each of whom required an individual movement plan and permissions from the Government of India just to get to the airport. That operation alone required more than 4,000 vehicles, covering over 2.87 million kilometres.

59. In parallel, the FCO also provided extraordinary consular support, giving bespoke support to thousands, with assistance ranging from helping with access to medication, to providing just under 3,000 repatriation loans with a total loan value of over £2m, and advice to millions. The scale of that work speaks for itself: by the end of May 2020 the FCO had published more than 4,300 travel advice updates, compared to just under 2,300 in the whole of 2019. The FCO's webpages received 51 million hits in the first five months of 2020; and between 16 March and 17 June 2020, the FCO and its contracted providers handled over 172,000 telephone enquiries, compared to 104,000 in the same period in 2019. That assistance was provided alongside a wide range of unique consular demands, ranging from support for British national prisoners in lockdown, and seeking furloughs, through to disrupted surrogacy arrangements.

60. I set out these details to help to capture the overall magnitude of what the FCO and its overseas network was managing over this period. I understand that there will be some cases in which British nationals will feel that they did not receive the support they might have expected. Nevertheless, given the scale of the task, in my view FCO staff in the UK and overseas did an extraordinary job at a time of unprecedented professional and

personal pressure. Without wishing to suggest that such pressure was unique to FCO colleagues and their families, I wish to record my gratitude and admiration for their service and dedication during such an immensely challenging period.

FCO Crisis Doctrine

61. Before I describe the changes to the FCO's structure and activity required to respond to the pandemic, it is first necessary to explain the FCO's Crisis Management Doctrine ("**Crisis Doctrine**") as this doctrine underpins, in part, these structural changes.

62. The FCO's approach to an incident formally designated internally as a 'crisis' was set out in December 2019 when the FCO published for internal use the latest version of its Crisis Doctrine [PRB/5 - INQ000100879]. This version was in operation on 1 January 2020.

63. The Crisis Doctrine outlined "the fundamental principles to be applied [by the FCO] in responding to an overseas crisis". According to the Crisis Doctrine, a crisis was defined as follows:

"A crisis for the FCO is a specific and exceptional mode of operation, outside of normal business, caused by an event or situation which overwhelms the FCO's ability to operate as normal."

[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]

64. The Crisis Doctrine explained that a crisis may be triggered by an event or a situation that:

- *"Threatens or involves serious damage to the human welfare or security of a significant number of British or other eligible persons overseas or severe disruption to their ability to travel, leading to an increased requirement for assistance and advice, including consular assistance."*
- *Threatens or involves a serious impact on UK strategic interests requiring an extraordinary, co-ordinated foreign policy response, working with other UK government departments and external organisations.*
- *Threatens or involves serious damage to the human welfare, security or environment of a UK Overseas Territory.*
- *Attracts high levels of parliamentary, media and public interest requiring coordinated,*

consistent and effective communications from across the FCO and wider UK government."

[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]

65. The Crisis Doctrine stated further that the effect of moving into a 'crisis' mode of operation (as defined by the Crisis Doctrine) was that existing FCO resource – principally in the form of its diplomatic (Civil Service) and overseas locally engaged staff – could be redirected towards dealing with that crisis. Such resource reallocation would, as explained in the Crisis Doctrine, be a temporary arrangement in that once the crisis had concluded, staff would return to 'business as usual' or pre-crisis roles. As Covid-19 increasingly became the focus of the FCO's work, structural changes were made to support the response. I describe this in further detail below.
66. The Crisis Doctrine stated that the objectives for a crisis response must be set at the outset of the crisis, as well as the triggers for moving out of crisis mode.
67. The Crisis Doctrine also explained that the decision to move into crisis mode was, in respect of the FCO in the UK, one made by the PUS "having considered a recommendation from Crisis Management Department duty Senior Point of Contact and the relevant geographical or thematic lead (normally the relevant director)" **[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]**. This was because "by agreeing to move into crisis mode in London, the PUS is signalling the importance of the issue to the whole of the FCO, allowing the use of additional staff resources from the crisis volunteer cadres, and approving the use of the crisis budget to pay for anything directly relating to the crisis." **[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]**
68. In respect of a crisis outside the UK which required a crisis response from an FCO Post or network of Posts in a country, the decision to move into a crisis mode of operation would be taken by the relevant FCO Head of Mission who in taking such a decision would not ordinarily require the approval from the FCO in London **[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]**. In this respect, the Crisis Doctrine noted that:

"A post can move into crisis without London moving in at the same time but should always discuss their decision with their geographical directorate. London can, in extremis, instruct a reluctant post to move into crisis if they believe it is essential for the effective management of a situation."

[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]

69. Finally, and in respect of the decision to move out of a crisis mode of operation, the Crisis Doctrine stated the following:

"The decision to move out of crisis should take place once the tempo of a response has decreased to a level where it can be handled as business as usual (possibly augmented by some extra staff) and the exit triggers have been met. This is always a matter of judgement and so a clear plan, understood by all, is essential, alongside an understanding of the triggers that might move a post or directorate back into crisis.

In London the decision is made by the PUS having considered a recommendation from Crisis Management Department Silver Crisis and the relevant geographical or thematic Gold lead. In post the decision is taken by the Head of Mission, in consultation with the relevant geographical directorate."

[PRB/5 - INQ000100879]

70. For completeness, I should also note that the Crisis Doctrine was updated in June 2020, and this updated version is exhibited at **[PRB/6 - INQ000100872]**. The changes to the Crisis Doctrine in the June 2020 version are not material for the purpose of this statement.

Structural changes

Creation and evolution of the FCO / DFID Coronavirus Taskforce

71. The FCO first entered crisis mode in relation to Covid-19 on 26 January 2020, in order to support the repatriation of British nationals from Wuhan, China. In the weeks that followed, and as is described in further detail in Section 10 of this statement, the FCO moved into and out of crisis mode six times in response to specific situations relating to Covid-19.
72. By early February 2020, the FCO (and HM Government more generally) had formed a view that a more systematic and sustained government response would be required to manage the implications of the spread of Covid-19 both domestically and, as relevant to the FCO, abroad. Accordingly, on 5 February 2020, a Cabinet Office Briefing Room Ministerial meeting ("**COBR(M)**") asked the FCO and DFID to convene a cross-HM Government group to consider implications of further international spread of Covid-19.
73. On 8 February 2020, in light of the request from COBR(M), the PUS approved the establishment of what would become the FCO-DFID Coronavirus Taskforce

(“**Coronavirus Taskforce**”) [PRB/7 - INQ000089149]. The Coronavirus Taskforce, jointly led by DFID and FCO DGs, was intended to operate separately and alongside crisis operations, to fulfil the remit set out in the following paragraph, and was not formally governed by the Crisis Doctrine. It evolved a number of times reflecting both the changing global situation and HM Government requirements, as well as experience of what worked well and what needed to be further refined.

74. On 10 February 2020, the draft remit of the Coronavirus Taskforce was agreed at a Cross-HM Government DG-level meeting. The remit was subject to updates and amendments and as at 13 February 2020 read as follows:

PURPOSE: *to plan for and respond to the consequences for UK interests of the international spread of the 2019 novel Coronavirus.*

PRINCIPLES:

- *All Whitehall departments engaged on the international impacts to work from the same planning scenario(s).*
- *All policy decisions to be based on the scientific evidence.*
- *All departments have access to the modelling and assumptions work being generated by SAGE/DHSC/DfID.*
- *Work on the international impacts to keep in lock step with work on the domestic response.*
- *Life of the Taskforce to mirror the length of any global coronavirus pandemic.*

[PRB/8 - INQ000100895]

75. The Coronavirus Taskforce initially operated with six ‘workstreams’: “international engagement”, “British nationals”, “HMG overseas operations”, “policy and briefing”, “comms” and “admin/logistics/IT/Welfare”. Each of these workstreams would consist of a team and be led or co-led by an FCO or DFID official.

76. Between 10 February and 15 March 2020, the Coronavirus Taskforce operated, in summary, in the following way:

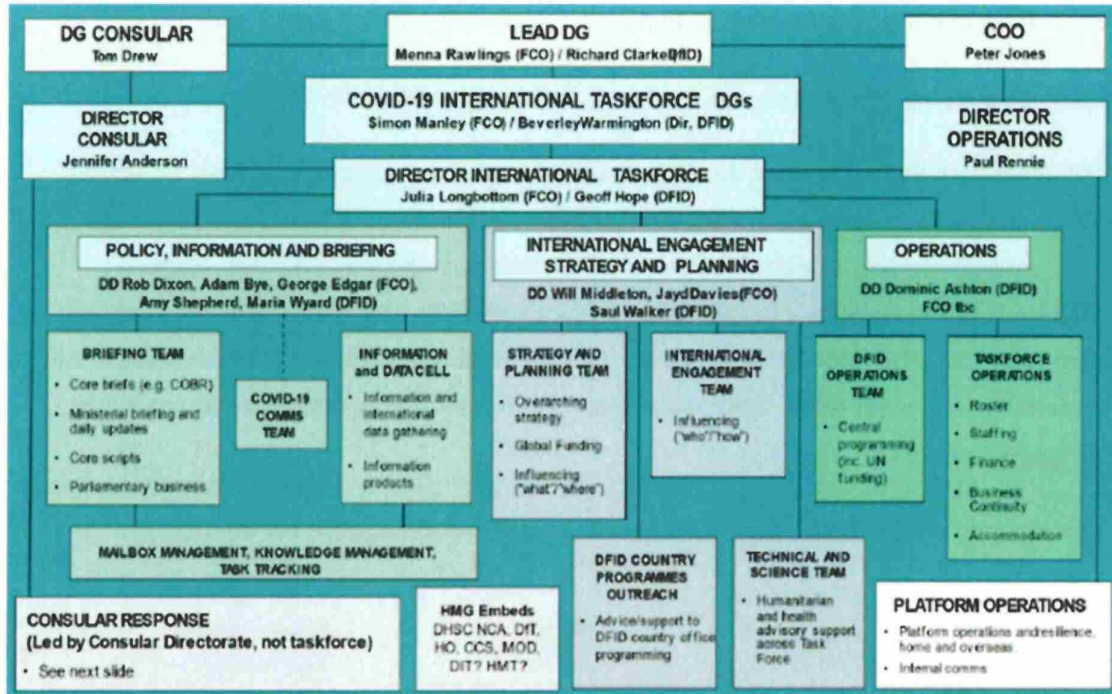
76.1 Those DFID officials who had been assigned to work in the Coronavirus Taskforce worked primarily on the “International Engagement” workstream;

76.2 FCO officials were allocated across all workstreams; and

- 76.3 At senior official level, the responsible DFID and FCO DGs chaired a steering group meeting roughly twice a week to bring together cross-HM Government senior officials to discuss the emerging international risks and to plan the associated response.
77. On 16 March 2020 the Coronavirus Taskforce was restructured for the first time. The restructuring took place against a backdrop of HM Government refocussing almost all governmental work on Covid-19-related matters [PRB/9 - INQ000089246]. It also followed decisions taken by ExCo on 10 March 2020 [PRB/10 - INQ000100832], including to reprioritise work across the FCO in order to concentrate on the pandemic. A further ExCo meeting on 17 March 2020 [PRB/11 - INQ000089527] addressed the need to review structures and staffing arrangements in the Coronavirus Taskforce and across the FCO and agreed additional measures, including to improve ExCo's own resilience.
78. The restructuring was reflected in the decision (taken on 17 March 2020) by the then PUS to move the entire FCO into a whole of organisation mobilisation to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic [PRB/11 - INQ000089527]. This meant that most FCO staff could be re-allocated to Covid-19 matters and, where needed, surged into the Coronavirus Taskforce.
79. The FCO Secretary of State and the PUS agreed on 19 March 2020 that the work of the FCO should be divided into three categories: things that the FCO must do; things that the FCO should do differently and keep under review; and things that the FCO should drop [PRB/12 - INQ000100853; PRB/13 – INQ000100854; PRB/14 - INQ000100855]. In a message to FCO Directors, Heads of Mission and other senior FCO staff on 19 March 2020, the then PUS set out guidance on these priorities as the FCO mobilised to confront the enormous challenges posed by Covid-19 [PRB/15 - INQ000100856]. He underlined that tackling the implications of Covid-19 was at the top of what the FCO must do, and shaped everything else. Other work in the 'must do' category included the department's legal requirements; functions essential to the FCO's global operations and the UK's international standing; and the protection of the public.
80. Several FCO activities that had previously been considered top priorities, including the UK's exit negotiations with the EU, free trade negotiations with other countries, and preparations for the COP26 UN climate change conference (which had been scheduled to take place in the UK in November 2020, and which was subsequently postponed by a year to October-November 2021) were moved into the 'do differently' category. Many

other areas of what had previously been core FCO business were moved – to respond to the pandemic – into the ‘drop’ category, including most non-pandemic-related work on the UK’s bilateral relationships with other countries, multilateral events and Ministerial and senior official visits overseas. Discretionary corporate work was also dropped to respond to the pandemic.

81. In his message the then PUS commented that the changes might feel drastic to colleagues, and were meant to be. He also noted that other HM Government departments would be doing their own version of this prioritisation, with implications for their staff based on the overseas platform run by the FCO, all of whom needed to support Posts’ crisis response. The then PUS noted that the then DFID Secretary of State had been clear that DFID’s capability to deliver health and humanitarian programmes was essential and a Covid-19 imperative.
82. This radical reprioritisation of the activity of the FCO and its Posts allowed significantly more staff to be redirected onto Covid-19 tasks, in particular the consular response. Work at very many Posts focussed almost exclusively on Covid-19 priorities.
83. The restructured Coronavirus Taskforce was divided into three separate workstreams to consolidate the previous six. These separate workstreams were as follows:
 - 83.1 “Policy, Information and Briefing” – responsible for providing COVID-19 briefings, information and data;
 - 83.2 “International, Engagement, Strategy and Planning” – responsible for defining the strategy for the Coronavirus Taskforce in regard to international engagement; and
 - 83.3 “Operations” – responsible for staffing and the corporate operations of the FCO.
84. Two DGs were given responsibility for managing the Coronavirus Taskforce. As at 13 March 2020, the structure of the Coronavirus Taskforce was as follows:



[PRB/16 - INQ000100852]

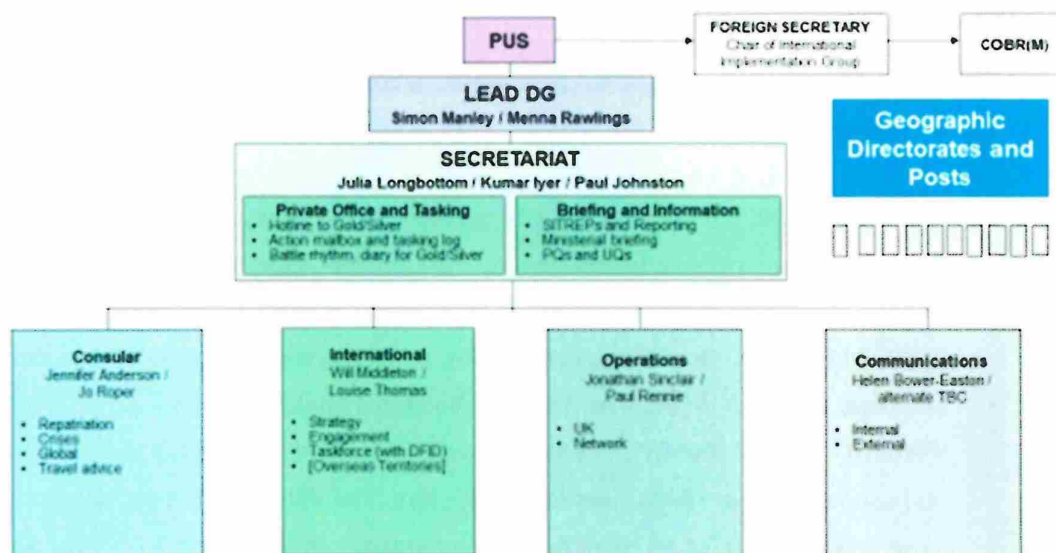
85. On 17 March 2020 the Prime Minister announced the establishment of four cross-HM Government committees (stewarded by the Cabinet Office and known as 'implementation committees') to focus on different aspects of the pandemic (PRB/17 - INQ000100885]. One of these committees was focussed on the UK's international response to Covid-19: the International Ministerial Implementation Group ("IMIG") [PRB/18 - INQ000100861]. The IMIG would be chaired by the FCO Secretary of State and consist of other HM Government Ministers. The IMIG would meet approximately three times a week, or as required, to co-ordinate collective decision making across HM Government on the UK's role in the delivery and coordination of the international health and economic response to COVID-19. This was supported by an officials' group, who would prepare advice and recommendations for the IMIG, and ensure actions and decisions were taken forward.
86. Following the first IMIG meeting on 18 March 2020, IMIG agreed four international priorities [PRB/19 - INQ000100858]:
- 86.1 A strong and co-ordinated global health response, particularly for the most vulnerable countries;
- 86.2 Finding a vaccine, new drugs and expanding testing;

86.3 An economic response to protect global trade and supply chains; and

86.4 To support British nationals overseas, including to return to the UK.

87. To implement these priorities the Coronavirus Taskforce was, effective from 20 March 2020, further refined. In particular, the Coronavirus Taskforce adopted a 'command-and-control' system, a central feature of which was a single joint-DG lead, Simon Manley and Menna Rawlings [PRB/20 - INQ000100878]. This joint-DG team would be supported by a Director-led secretariat. Underneath that secretariat sat four director-led teams: the Consular team, Operations team, Communications team, and International Engagement team.

88. An organogram (as at 20 March 2020) reflecting these changes is set out below:



89. The Coronavirus Taskforce DGs (and some Directors as required) attended daily 'huddle meetings' with the FCO Secretary of State, where he took decisions on issues presented to him by officials in the meeting. A written record of such decisions would be noted and disseminated by the Coronavirus Taskforce Secretariat for action by the relevant Coronavirus Taskforce workstream. I provide an example of such a written record at [PRB/21 - INQ000100857].

Changes to Ministerial responsibilities to respond to Covid-19

90. On 17 April 2020, the FCO Secretary of State introduced a new division of responsibilities between FCO Ministers to bring greater clarity as to which FCO Minister would lead on each area of the FCO's Covid-19 response.
91. The principle underpinning the new system was that the named thematic Minister would lead for that policy area with all ministerial tasking coming through that Minister. The thematic lead Minister would therefore act as the single point of contact for officials and fellow Ministers, streamlining tasks and requests. Specific geographical or thematic foreign policy issues continued to be covered in accordance with the Ministerial portfolios set out in Section 6. The thematic division of Covid-19 responsibilities among FCO/DFID Joint Ministers were as follows:

Minister	Covid-19 thematic lead
Rt Hon Nigel Adams MP	Global travel advice Repatriations policy and operations Consular Contact Centre Economic issues relating to Covid- 19
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Human resources Multilateral engagement with the UN and the Commonwealth on Covid-19
Rt Hon James Cleverly MP	The consular package of support for stranded British travellers and British nationals residing overseas
James Duddridge MP	Medical procurement including ventilators and PPE* Wider supply chains Multilateral engagement on Covid-19 with International Financial Institutions and CDC
Rt Hon Wendy Morton MP	Cruises*; Airlines* Multilateral engagement relating to Covid-19 with global health multilateral organisations (including the World Health Organisation (" WHO "), Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (" Gavi ") and the Global Fund)

*Minister could delegate international engagement on specific cases to the relevant geographical Minister.

Other related structural changes to support the FCO's consular response to the pandemic

92. The shift from the FCO's initial approach of handling the repatriations of British nationals as discrete crisis operations, as described above, to a whole of organisation response, saw the creation of two additional Director-led Cruise Ships and Repatriations teams on 17 March 2020. These teams worked alongside the FCO's established consular team, led by the Consular Director Jennifer Anderson. This team continued to manage the remainder of the FCO's considerable consular workload (both that which related to Covid-19, such as travel advice changes, and all other consular services to British nationals overseas). I say more about the work of these two teams in Section 10 below.
93. At its meeting on 27 March 2020, the FCO Management Board reviewed the FCO's mobilisation and resourcing of Covid-19 response [PRB/20 - INQ000100878]. The Management Board noted that the delivery of return flights for British national travellers overseas required an estimated 500 staff in London, working triple shifts with a number having been made available by pausing training and other activity. Covid-19 cells had also been established in geographical Directorates to support the work of Posts in that geographical region.

Disbandment of Cruise Ships Team and downscaling of Repatriations Team

94. On 1 May 2020, when work on repatriating British nationals from cruise ships had largely concluded, the Cruise Ships team was disbanded and a single point of contact for residual cruise ship issues was established within the Consular Assistance Department.
95. On 15 June 2020, following the end of the global repatriation operation, the Repatriations Team was downscaled, handling residual work on Covid-19 repatriations until it was disbanded in September 2020.

Disbandment of the Coronavirus Taskforce and establishment of the C-19 Directorate

96. In April 2020, ExCo and the senior leadership of the Coronavirus Taskforce considered the future shape and structure of the FCO's Covid-19 response [PRB/22 - INQ000089534]. On 28 April 2020, ExCo agreed that the FCO's Covid-19 response

should cease to be delivered through the Coronavirus Taskforce and should instead move to a new permanent structure within the internal architecture of the FCO, as a Directorate. This would allow the continuing FCO work responding to Covid-19 to be carried out by a smaller but permanent team of FCO officials [PRB/23 - INQ000089531; PRB/24 - INQ000100866].

97. On 1 June 2020 the C-19 Directorate came into existence as a Directorate of the FCO. On the same day, the Coronavirus Taskforce was disbanded.
98. As part of the formation of the C-19 Directorate, a Borders Team was established within the C-19 Directorate to begin work on what would become a growing area of HM Government work in respect of Covid-19 measures relating to international travel and borders.
99. The disbandment of the Coronavirus Taskforce and formation of the C-19 Directorate was led by Julia Longbottom, continuing from her role as one of the Coronavirus Taskforce Directors until 1 July 2020. Continuing from his joint leadership of the Coronavirus Taskforce, Simon Manley was interim Director General overseeing the C-19 Directorate until 30 September 2020. From that date, the C-19 Directorate became the responsibility of Vijay Rangarajan (DG Americas and Overseas Territories) within the newly formed FCDO. Robert Tinline was appointed a Director in the C-19 Directorate on 1 July 2020 and continued in that role in the newly formed FCDO.
100. The C-19 Directorate remained in place both up to and beyond 1 September 2020 and the formation of the FCDO.

Section 9: The role of the FCO and DFID in tracking the risk posed by the international spread of the Covid-19 virus from 1 January 2020 to the announcement of the first UK lockdown at the end of March 2020

101. While the Department for Health and Social Care ("DHSC") and Public Health England ("PHE") were the lead HM Government department and non-executive agency respectively, the FCO and DFID's efforts in tracking the risk posed by the international spread of the Covid-19 virus, from 1 January 2020 to the announcement of the first UK lockdown at the end of March 2020 can be described, in broad terms, in two parts:
 - 101.1 First, the FCO's overseas network provided information to the FCO in London, and through the FCO to HM Government more generally, on the spread of Covid-19 abroad. Two key ways in which this information was disseminated were in the

form of DipTels, and situation reports (“sitreps”) provided by Posts to the Coronavirus Taskforce;

101.2 Second and additionally, both the FCO and DFID gathered data from open sources (that is, publicly available information drawn from the internet and elsewhere) and from and through liaison with, international organisations such as the WHO on the spread of Covid-19 globally. This information and data complemented the data and information DHSC and others were also sourcing directly, including from the WHO.

102. In both respects, this information and data was used by the FCO and DFID to inform its own internal decision making, and was also provided to other HM Government departments, including No. 10 and the Cabinet Office, to assist with HM Government's wider decision making on the UK's response to the pandemic. As set out in Section 13, data was also regularly shared with the Devolved Administrations.

DipTel reporting on the emergence and spread of Covid-19

103. I understand that the disclosure already provided to the Inquiry includes DipTels from the FCO's Posts in China, Italy, France, Spain, Austria and Switzerland, identified by the Inquiry as countries of particular interest. I also understand that the FCDO has prepared a chronology which documents the same. Therefore, I do not in this section of my statement repeat everything that is said in the documents disclosed or the chronology provided. Instead, I describe in broad terms the roles of DFID and the FCO in tracking the spread of Covid-19.

Reporting on the emergence and spread of Covid-19 in China

104. From mid-January 2020 the FCO in London began to receive reports on the spread of Covid-19 from its overseas network, largely in the form of DipTels. On 15 January 2020, the FCO's Asia Pacific Directorate (which had responsibility within the FCO for China) first informed FCO Ministers, by way of an update paragraph to Minister Wheeler, of the emergence and increasing number of cases of a novel coronavirus (i.e. Covid-19) in Wuhan, China [PRB/25 - INQ000089103]. Such an update paragraph was a standard means of making Ministers aware of an issue, particularly on a new or emerging subject, or one where there was not yet much information.

105. The first DipTels from the FCO's Posts reporting the emergence and spread of Covid-19 came from the British Embassy in Beijing. On 20 January 2020, the British Embassy

in Beijing sent a DipTel to the FCO reporting that a new strain of virus had originated in Wuhan. The DipTel reported that the virus was spreading and provided information about how the Chinese authorities were responding [PRB/26 - INQ000064685].

106. Further DipTels from the British Embassy in Beijing provided updates on the spread of the virus in China and the steps the Chinese government was taking in response over the following weeks [PRB/27 - INQ000064689; PRB/28 - INQ000064693; PRB/29 - INQ000064730].

Reporting on the emergence and spread of Covid-19 beyond China

107. As cases of Covid-19 spread beyond China to other parts of Asia, the FCO's overseas network issued DipTels reporting on case numbers and overseas governments' responses to the emergence and spread of the virus. For example, on 3 February 2020 the British Embassy in Hanoi issued a DipTel reporting the first eight cases of Covid-19 in Vietnam [PRB/30 - INQ000100844] and on 7 February 2020 the British Embassy in Manila, Philippines, issued a DipTel reporting the first recorded fatality with Covid-19 outside China [PRB/31 - INQ000100845].

Reporting on the emergence and spread of Covid-19 in Europe

108. On 1 February 2020, the British Embassy in Paris issued a DipTel reporting the first cases of Covid-19 in France, which were also the first cases in Europe [PRB/32 - INQ000064692]. On 4 February 2020, the British Embassy in Rome issued a DipTel reporting the first cases of Covid-19 in Italy and Italian scientists' isolation of the DNA sequencing of the virus [PRB/33 - INQ000064694]. Over the following weeks, DipTels and other updates reported the first cases in Spain, Switzerland and Austria, and further cases in France and Italy and the respective government responses, including containment and quarantine measures [PRB/34 - INQ000064696; PRB/35 - INQ000100848; PRB/36 - INQ000064699; PRB/37 - INQ000064714; PRB/38 - INQ000100849; PRB/39 - INQ000100850; PRB/40 - INQ000100851].

Reporting on the WHO's response to the emergence and spread of Covid-19

109. The UK's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva ("UKMis Geneva") issued DipTels reporting on the WHO's response to the emergence and spread of Covid-19, including the WHO's issuance of policies and guidance. For example, on 23 January 2020, UKMis Geneva issued a DipTel reporting that, following an emergency committee meeting held by the WHO's Director General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, the

WHO had decided that the Covid-19 outbreak was not at that point a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' and that the committee would reconvene to review the situation in ten days [PRB/41 - INQ000064686]. On 6 February 2020, UKMis Geneva issued a further DipTel reporting on the WHO's release of a 'strategic preparedness and response plan' and comments made by the WHO Director General about China's response to the spread of Covid-19 and the approaches other countries should adopt [PRB/42 - INQ000064695].

Research and information gathering

110. The demands and requirements for information and analysis from the overseas network on the evolving situation generally and on specific aspects of the pandemic were substantial. As noted above, the FCO gathered data from a wide range of sources, including open sources, as well as from international organisations, including the WHO, and local and regional partners and contacts. To streamline the process by which the FCO could provide the most relevant information in a timely way to HM Government departments, a new reporting system was introduced on 26 March 2020, by which data from the network was received in a consistent format in the form of weekly questionnaires and/or crisis sitreps.
111. Information gathered was then drawn upon by the FCO in London to develop data summaries and other reports to inform the rest of HM Government, for example from 6 April 2020 the FCO Global Daily Dashboard, which pulled together the economic, health and social restrictions data from around the world, and was circulated by the FCO across HM Government [PRB/43 - INQ000100860].
112. From 17 March 2020, DFID's Covid-19 Hub⁷ provided updates on numbers of Covid-19 cases and deaths globally, the impact of Covid-19 in developing countries and the UK's international response [PRB/44 - INQ000100897]. These updates were initially provided daily, then from 25 March 2020 were provided twice weekly and from the end of April 2020 onwards were provided weekly: please see an example at [PRB/45 - INQ000100884].
113. The FCO's and DFID's Chief Scientific Advisers, respectively Professor Carole Mundell and Professor Charlotte Watts, as part of the cross-HM Government Chief Scientific Adviser network, participated in Scientific Advisory Group for Emergency ("SAGE")

⁷ This was a temporary unit established within DFID to coordinate DFID's response to Covid-19

meetings, contributing to SAGE assessments.

114. The FCO, through its Posts, supported the WHO's efforts to encourage a coordinated international approach to Covid-19. For example, on 13 February 2020, the FCO requested its Posts to lobby overseas governments to share line-lists for data (a type of epidemiological database) for all Covid-19 cases via the WHO. Posts were also asked to identify transparency and data sharing restrictions of host governments that might impede wider data sharing [PRB/46 - INQ000100846].
115. In March 2020, the FCO created an Information Unit, drawing together analysts and staff with data skills to provide FCO Ministers with analysis and information to help inform policy-making and FCO's operations. This was a new way of operating within the FCO, taking staff from across the FCO to create this unit, working on a shift basis. The products were routinely shared with Cabinet Office and No. 10.

International Comparators Joint Unit

116. The International Joint Comparators Unit ("ICJU") was established in April 2020 as a joint unit between the FCO and the Cabinet Office, bringing together analytical staff within HM Government, including the FCO's Information Unit described above. It worked closely with the FCO's overseas network to understand how other countries were responding to the pandemic in order to identify possible lessons learned and to help inform UK policy decisions around issues such as non-pharmaceutical interventions ("NPIs") using comparative analysis. The ICJU consisted of around 25 staff comprising analysts, data scientists, economists, and social researchers. Analysis by the ICJU was shared with No. 10, Cabinet Office, Department for Transport ("DfT"), HM Treasury, DHSC, Home Office, MOD, and 'Go Science'. It was also shared with the Devolved Administrations.
117. The ICJU took its initial direction and commissioning from No. 10, working on the most pressing issues to aid decision making. Tasking then came through the Coronavirus Taskforce described in Section 8 above. By looking to other countries ahead of the UK in the Covid-19 pandemic timeline, the ICJU produced analysis that complemented other advice and analysis HM Government was receiving (for example from SAGE) and supported decision making. Analysis was provided on subjects such as social distancing, international travel and certification, testing and ventilation [PRB/47 - INQ000100874; PRB/48 - INQ000100875; PRB/49 - INQ000100876].
118. The ICJU researched and produced briefs on specific Covid-19 related issues

commissioned at the request of other HM Government departments – for example, it was commissioned by No. 10 on 27 May 2020 to research the “scientific grounding” for decision making by comparator governments in other countries [PRB/50 - INQ000100868; PRB/51 - INQ000100869].

119. The ICJU also helped to streamline requests from across HM Government departments to Posts, reducing the risk that Posts were overwhelmed by direct requests, especially acute for those Posts in countries with the biggest Covid-19 outbreaks, such as China, and therefore under most pressure.

Section 10: The FCO’s role in key decision making relating to the imposition of UK-wide and, later, England-wide NPIs

120. For the purpose of this section, ‘NPI’s refer to public health measures that aim to prevent and/or control Covid-19 transmission in the community – for example, promoting and facilitating physical distancing and self-isolation.
121. In summary, the FCO contributed to key HM Government decision making between 1 January and 1 September 2020 relating to the imposition of UK-wide and, later, England-wide NPIs through the FCO Secretary of State’s participation in Cabinet meetings and other meetings with the Prime Minister, and FCO Secretary of State and Ministerial participation in COBR(M), COVID(O) and IMIG meetings as detailed in the chronology provided separately to the Inquiry.
122. While the FCO’s role in relation to the imposition of NPIs in the UK and later in England between 1 January and 27 April 2020 was limited relative to other HM Government departments, the FCO was the lead government department during this period in respect of overseas travel advice and the repatriation of British nationals, and was part of the decision making body (COVID(O)) with respect to international travel and border measures from June 2020 onwards.

Travel advice

123. In paragraph 25.2 above, I provided context on the provision of travel advice by the FCO and now by the FCDO. In this subsection I set out how the FCO provided travel advice in relation to Covid-19.

FCO process for amendments to travel advice between 1 January and 1 September 2020

124. As at January 2020, there was a centralised travel advice team within the FCO’s

Consular Directorate with responsibility for managing what are termed 'travel advice products'. This included responsibility for travel advice policy, guidance on travel advice to the FCO as a whole (along with other HM Government departments) and acting as a contact point, and publishing agreed updates to the gov.uk website.

125. Responsibility for travel advice provided in relation to specific countries rested with the relevant geographical Directorates in question.
126. Travel advice was produced and amended based on information available to the FCO from a number of different sources. These included information from the FCO's Posts, the National Travel Health Network and Centre ("NaTHNaC") (the organisation mandated to provide health advice to British nationals travelling overseas), media sources, travel industry representatives, international organisations including the WHO, the intelligence agencies and foreign governments. Minor amendments to travel advice could be authorised by FCO officials without Ministerial approval. Substantive amendments required Ministerial approval. These included:
 - 126.1 A change to the overall travel advice level, i.e. advising against all or all but essential travel, or removing advice against all or all but essential travel for any country or territory;
 - 126.2 Sensitive updates, including decisions with the potential to cause significant economic or political impact to other countries or the UK travel industry;
 - 126.3 Significant updates required pursuant to a crisis response;
 - 126.4 Updates affecting large numbers of British nationals; and
 - 126.5 In the event of disagreement between the FCO's London office and a Post, or between different Directorates within the FCO.

Amendments to Travel Advice – key principles

127. The FCO also had regard to specific principles in assessing whether to advise against travel to the whole or part of a country in accordance with the FCO's Travel Advice review, which was published in 2004 ("TA 2004") [PRB/52 - INQ000100892].
128. The principles set out in the TA 2004 specified that in the event of a non-terrorist threat (which would include a global pandemic) the FCO could advise against all, or all but essential, travel to the whole or part of a country if the risk to British nationals became

“unacceptably high”. Such changes to the overall level of risk set out in travel advice were described within the FCO as “level changes”.

Updates to travel advice in relation to Covid-19

129. As outlined in Section 9 of this statement, from an early stage the FCO monitored the spread of Covid-19 on a country-by-country basis using information gathered from a number of sources, including DipTels and information provided by the WHO, PHE and NaTHNaC. It used this information to inform its decision making as to the issue of, and amendments to, travel advice. I have referred below in further detail to travel advice decisions in relation to specific countries identified by the Inquiry (paragraphs 135 to 140 below).

Global Travel Advisory

130. On 17 March 2020 the FCO Secretary of State issued the FCO’s first ever global travel advisory [PRB/53 - INQ000100886]. In this global travel advisory, the FCO formally advised against all but essential international travel (except to Ireland) initially for a thirty-day period.
131. On 23 March 2020, the FCO updated the global travel advisory to include advice that all UK based travellers should return to the UK [PRB/54 - INQ000100888].
132. In the early stages of the pandemic, responsibility for all travel advice updates remained with the geographical Directorate responsible for the country or territory in question. From 17 March 2020, when the global travel advisory was brought in, the FCO’s Consular Directorate took on responsibility for changes to travel advice levels for countries and territories relating to Covid-19 and consideration of when the global travel advisory might be lifted, or countries exempted from that advisory. Where there was advice against all or all but essential travel for reasons other than Covid-19, the geographical Directorate remained responsible in accordance with ordinary travel advice policy.
133. Global travel advisories were kept under continuous review. From May 2020 onwards, the FCO regularly considered the circumstances in which the global travel advisory could be lifted, as well as the best way of measuring and assessing the Covid-19 risk from overseas countries and territories. The FCO produced criteria which it used to evaluate whether the risks of allowing overseas travel would cause “unacceptably high” risk to British nationals [PRB/55 - INQ000075220]. During this period, the FCO

consulted DHSC, DfT, PHE and NaTHNaC to understand their concerns relating to epidemiological patterns and transport, and used this information in decision making on travel advice for specific countries or regions. The FCO's Posts and geographical Directorates were closely consulted, but the Travel Advice Team drew up the criteria, consulting the relevant experts and submitted to Ministers for a decision.

134. As was the practice generally for travel advice changes prior to the pandemic, the majority of decisions on travel advice relating to Covid-19 which were referred to Ministers were submitted to the FCO Secretary of State.

Travel advice changes for specific countries

135. The disclosure already provided to the Inquiry includes documents relating to travel advice updates for China, Italy, France, Spain, Austria and Switzerland between 1 January and 27 April 2020, which were identified by the Inquiry as countries of particular interest. The FCDO has also prepared a chronology which documents the same. I do not therefore repeat in this statement what is in the documents disclosed or the chronology provided, but instead provide examples of travel advice changes for the specified countries, which predated the global travel advisories.
136. During the period 1 January 2020 to 27 April 2020, the FCO updated its travel advice pages on gov.uk 3,187 times. These updates included advice for UK travellers in relation to the emergence and spread of Covid-19 in specific countries and parts of countries, and global travel advisories. By way of comparison, the FCO updated its travel advice pages 2,188 times in the whole of 2018 and 2,291 times in the whole of 2019.
137. On 7 January 2020, the FCO made its first update to travel advice in relation to the emergence of Covid-19: a statement was added to the FCO's travel advice for China stating that, "the WHO China Country Office had been informed of "cases of pneumonia of unknown cause" detected in Wuhan City" [PRB/56 - INQ000100894]. On 22 January 2020, following reports of person-to-person transmission of the virus and on advice from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Chief Medical Officer, the FCO Secretary of State decided that the FCO should advise against all but essential travel to Wuhan City [PRB/57 - INQ000075027].
138. On 23 February 2020, the FCO made its first change to travel advice for Italy to inform British nationals that the Italian state authorities had imposed restrictions in certain towns in Lombardy and Veneto because of a Covid-19 outbreak [PRB/58 -

INQ000100887]. On 25 February 2020, the FCO Secretary of State decided that FCO travel advice for Italy should be updated to advise against all but essential travel to the towns in Lombardy and Veneto which had been isolated by the Italian authorities **[PRB/59 - INQ000100889]**. Over the following days, updates were made to FCO travel advice for Italy reflecting the spread of Covid-19 and the measures the Italian authorities were taking. On 9 March 2020, the FCO Secretary of State decided that the FCO should update its travel advice to advise against all but essential travel to the whole of Italy **[PRB/60 - INQ000100893]**.

139. On 26 February 2020, the FCO made its first update to travel advice for Spain in response to the situation in the 'H10 Hotel' in Tenerife, where Covid-19 cases had been reported **[PRB/61 - INQ000100890]**. Over the following weeks, updates were made to FCO travel advice for Spain reflecting the spread of Covid-19 and the measures the Spanish authorities were taking in response. On 14 March 2020, the FCO Secretary of State decided that the FCO should update its travel advice to advise against all but essential travel to the whole of Spain **[PRB/62 - INQ000075306]**.
140. Factual updates were made to travel advice for Austria and Switzerland on 26 February 2020 to reflect the first cases of Covid-19 reported in each country. No updates were made to FCO travel advice for France in relation to Covid-19 before the global travel advisory on 17 March 2020.

International travel and border measures, including 'Travel Corridors', from June 2020

141. The FCO was not the lead government department for these measures, but the FCO Secretary of State was a member of COVID(O), which took decisions on the introduction and review of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/568) **[PRB/63 - INQ000100891]**. These regulations took effect from 8 June 2020 and required all arrivals from outside the 'Common Travel Area' (the UK, the Crown Dependencies, and Ireland) to complete a 'Passenger Locator Form', and to self-isolate for 14 days on arrival.
142. On 11 June 2020, COVID(O) agreed to move from a blanket requirement for all arrivals to self-isolate, to the self-isolation requirement being based on risk criteria. The FCO therefore worked with DfT (which took the lead) to prepare an options paper for "travel corridors" for consideration by COVID(O).
143. On 6 July 2020, following agreement by COVID(O), the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, announced the initiation of a travel corridors

scheme. Under this scheme, passengers arriving in England from particular countries and territories assessed as low risk by the Joint Biosecurity Centre ("JBC") were exempt from the requirement to self-isolate. Those who visited or transited through a non-exempt country or territory within the 14 days preceding their arrival in the UK were still required to self-isolate for the remainder of the period.

144. The travel corridors list was regularly reviewed during the period to 1 September 2020. Countries were added and removed from the list based on JBC risk assessments which considered epidemiological data in the country concerned.
145. The decision making process for adding or removing countries and territories from the travel corridors list was initially by means of a 'write-round' by the Secretary of State for Transport to other COVID(O) members. From August 2020, decision making for adding and removing countries from the travel corridors list was by means of a weekly Ministerial meeting, which the FCO Secretary of State or another FCO Minister on his behalf attended.
146. In parallel to revisions being made to the list of countries included on the travel corridors list by COVID(O), the FCO reviewed its travel advice, and in particular made changes to the list of countries to which the FCO advised against all but essential travel when it assessed the risk to the traveller from Covid-19 to be unacceptably high, drawing on advice from PHE and NaTHNaC.

Section 11: The FCO's operations to repatriate British nationals

147. In this section of my statement I describe the operations led by the FCO between January and June 2020 to repatriate British nationals to the UK following the emergence and spread of Covid-19. These operations included:
 - 147.1 Discrete crisis operations to repatriate British nationals from Wuhan, Tenerife and Peru;
 - 147.2 Three discrete crisis operations to disembark and repatriate British nationals from cruise ships before the FCO's global cruise ships operation was launched;
 - 147.3A global operation to disembark and repatriate British passengers and crew on cruise ships; and
 - 147.4A global repatriation operation to assist British nationals located across the world who were unable to return to the UK.

Discrete Repatriation Operations

148. The FCO ran the operations to repatriate British nationals from Wuhan, Tenerife and Peru as discrete crisis operations, in accordance with the structures and processes as described in the FCO's Crisis Doctrine, with decisions on significant financial, health, safety and security being referred to Ministers. The then PUS agreed when the FCO should move into and out of crisis mode for each operation on advice from the geographical and consular directors.

Wuhan (22 January – 10 February 2020)

149. On 22 January 2020, the FCO entered crisis mode in response to the Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China. On the same day, the FCO updated its travel advice for China to advise against all but essential travel to Wuhan. On 25 January 2020, the FCO's travel advice for China was updated to advise against all travel to Wuhan and to advise those there to leave by any means possible [PRB/64 - INQ000089537].
150. Over the course of the next five days, the FCO organised the first evacuation flight of British nationals from Wuhan. On 31 January 2020, the first plane took off carrying 83 British nationals and 27 foreign nationals.
151. The flight landed at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. All passengers were transported to Arrowe Park Hospital in Merseyside for a 14-day quarantine period. On 9 February 2020, a second evacuation flight from Wuhan carrying 105 British nationals and 98 foreign nationals landed at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. Those passengers were transported to the Kents Hill Park isolation facility in Milton Keynes for a 14-day quarantine period. In total, the FCO's crisis operation repatriated 188 British nationals from Wuhan.
152. The FCO exited crisis mode in respect of Wuhan on 10 February 2020 [PRB/65 - INQ000051426].

H10 Hotel, Tenerife (26 February – 4 March 2020)

153. There were a total of 85 British national guests at the H10 hotel in Tenerife, where several guests had tested positive for Covid-19. On 26 February 2020, the Government of the Canary Islands announced that all those in the hotel, except the 106 people who had checked in on 24 February 2020, were required to remain in quarantine for a total of 14 days. The FCO's Posts in Spain entered crisis mode on 26 February 2020, and the FCO in London entered crisis mode on 27 February 2020 in response to the

situation.

154. As a contingency, the FCO began to explore charter options. Charter flights were not required as all UK travellers returned to the UK by commercial means. The FCO exited crisis mode for Tenerife on 4 March 2020.

Peru (14 March – 31 March 2020)

155. On 14 March 2020, the FCO updated its travel advice for Peru to advise against all but essential travel due to Covid-19 [PRB/66 - INQ000075299].
156. On 21 March 2020, the FCO entered crisis mode. On 26 March 2020, 192 passengers, including 167 British nationals, returned to the UK from Peru on a British Airways flight. A charter flight arranged by the FCO returned 276 passengers, including 243 British nationals, to the UK on 29 March 2020. A further two charter flights arranged by the FCO returned 558 passengers, including 468 British nationals, to the UK on 30 March 2020. The FCO exited crisis mode for Peru on 31 March 2020. A final charter flight on 16 April 2020, as part of the global repatriation operation, brought 272 passengers, including 108 British nationals, back to the UK.

Specific cruise ship operations

157. Similarly, the FCO went into crisis mode to run its operation in response to developments on three specific cruise ships: the Diamond Princess, the Grand Princess, and the MV Braemar [PRB/67 - INQ000089165; PRB/68 - INQ000089235; PRB/69 - INQ000089245].

Diamond Princess (5 February – 22 February 2020)

158. On 5 February 2020, 10 passengers on board the Diamond Princess Cruise ship (a cruise ship docked in Yokohama Port, Japan) tested positive for Covid-19. There were 77 British nationals on board. The Japanese authorities placed the ship in quarantine for 14 days.
159. On 7 February 2020, a British national was confirmed as having Covid-19 and was transferred to hospital in Japan. The British Embassy in Tokyo was in contact with them and their family. At this point, there were 61 confirmed Covid-19 cases on board the Diamond Princess.
160. On 15 February 2020, the FCO entered crisis mode and considered a number of

different options for the safe disembarkation of the remaining 75 British nationals on board, in consultation with DHSC and PHE [PRB/67 - INQ000089165].

161. On 22 February 2020, an FCO-organised charter flight returned 32 people (including 30 British nationals) to MOD Boscombe Down. Once they had arrived, they were transported to Arrowe Park Hospital for a 14-day quarantine period. 23 British nationals travelled to other countries on evacuation flights. The FCO exited crisis mode that day.
162. 33 British nationals remained in Japan: 10 members of the Diamond Princess crew, 9 British nationals who were hospitalised with Covid-19, 2 partners of those hospitalised and 14 Hong Kong British nationals.

Grand Princess (9 March – 11 March 2020)

163. On 9 March 2020, the FCO entered crisis mode in response to several passengers testing positive for Covid-19 on board the Grand Princess Cruise ship which was docked in Oakland, California. No British nationals tested positive for Covid-19 [PRB/68 - INQ000089235].
164. On 11 March 2020, 131 British nationals on board the Grand Princess were repatriated to the UK on an HM Government charter flight from California to Birmingham. Onward transport was arranged for passengers from Birmingham airport to their homes, where they were required to self-isolate for 14 days.

MV Braemar (13 March – 19 March 2020)

165. On 13 March 2020, the FCO entered crisis mode in response to the situation on board the MV Braemar, where four crew and one passenger had tested positive for Covid-19 [PRB/69 - INQ000089245]. After being refused permission to dock by several countries, the ship was eventually able to dock in Havana, Cuba on 18 March 2020.
166. On 19 March 2020 the FCO assisted 684 passengers, including 669 British nationals, to return to the UK on an MOD flight to Boscombe Down and three British Airways flights. Passengers on the British Airways flights were met by coaches and escorted to Manchester Airport or Gatwick Airport from where they arranged their own onward travel. Passengers on the MOD charter flight were taken home by coach or by relatives. On 19 March 2020, the FCO exited crisis mode [PRB/70 - INQ000051431].

Global cruise ship repatriation operation

167. On 12 March 2020 the FCO issued travel advice for British nationals aged 70 and over, and those with pre-existing health conditions, advising against cruise ship travel [PRB/71 - INQ000100896].
168. On 17 March 2020 a Director-led cruise ships team was established to coordinate the disembarkation and repatriation of all British national passengers and crew on cruise ships worldwide.
169. The Cruise Ships Director had overall responsibility for this operation, working closely with the Consular Director, who remained responsible for all consular assistance and services except cruise ships and the repatriations operation (see below), with decisions on significant financial, health, safety and security being referred to Ministers.
170. Between 17 March and 27 April 2020, the FCO helped 19,338 British national passengers and crew on cruise ships return to the UK.

Global Repatriation Operation

171. In March 2020, the FCO launched a global repatriation operation to assist British nationals located across the world who were unable to return to the UK due to flight disruptions caused by Covid-19.
172. On 20 March 2020 a Director-led Repatriations Cell was established to coordinate the global operation to repatriate British nationals (except those on cruise ships). Reflecting the increasing scale of the repatriations operation, more staff were surged into this unit from 31 March 2020 and it adopted the bronze, silver and gold hierarchical structure as described in the FCO's Crisis Doctrine. Gold Repatriations was responsible for the work of this unit with decisions on significant financial, health, safety and security being referred to Ministers.
173. HM Treasury agreed to provide funding of up to £75m to the FCO to run the repatriation programme. The FCO entered into contracts with Corporate Travel Management Limited to deliver chartered repatriation flights and with a call handling partner, Teleperformance SE, to provide agents to help the FCO handle the unprecedented volumes of calls from British nationals requiring consular assistance.
174. From April 2020, it was decided that the FCO should streamline the process for applying for emergency repatriation loans, and provide essential assistance loans for British nationals in need of financial assistance who were unable to return to the UK because of the lockdown measures in the country they were in.

175. Between 20 March and 27 April 2020, the FCO chartered 86 repatriation flights to the UK. The FCO also supported people to return to the UK on a further 9 MOD flights (from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, Ascension Island, Kenya, Senegal and Cape Verde) and worked with DFID to arrange a flight from St Helena to Ascension Island for onward travel to the UK.
176. In total, the FCO's global repatriation operation, which finished on 12 June 2020, brought over 38,000 people back to the UK, on 186 flights, from 57 different countries and territories. The FCO's wider diplomatic effort to keep hubs and transit routes open, and its consular assistance to those most in need, supported 1.3 million British nationals to return via commercial routes, of whom the FCDO estimates 132,000 were on flights directly assisted by HM Government.
177. Furthermore, the FCO collaborated with a number of other countries, to ensure the return of more than 4,000 British nationals on their charter flights and supported more than 8,000 of their nationals in return.
178. The FCO's total spend on the global repatriation operation which concluded on 12 June 2020 was £29m. The FCO provided more than 3,000 loans to support British nationals who otherwise would not have been able to return to the UK, the value of which totalled over £2m.

Section 12: DFID's Covid-19 response

179. I understand the Inquiry does not at this stage require extensive detail on DFID's Covid-19 response. Nonetheless, I hope the following short summary will be helpful in terms of context.
180. As described in DFID's 2019/2020 Annual Report [PRB/4 - INQ000100873] and the FCDO's 2020/2021 Annual Report [PRB/72 - INQ000100837], between January and September 2020, DFID used its expertise in humanitarian response, science and technology and its global influence, to use UK aid to its full effect to help counter the health, humanitarian, economic, rights, governance and security impact and risks of the Covid-19 pandemic in the developing world.
181. DFID undertook a range of actions to help stop the spread of disease, save lives and prevent economies from collapsing. Furthermore, DFID worked with UN agencies, global leaders, commercial partners, and civic society groups to ensure a strong and coordinated international response.

The role of DFID's EpiThreats Group in monitoring of epidemic threats to developing countries

182. The importance of swift, early action in response to new disease outbreaks in developing countries was the rationale for the establishment in 2016 of DFID's 'EpiThreats Group'. Aimed at mitigating the threat of new disease outbreaks, it provided evidence based, timely, proportionate advice, with a focus on ensuring that established national and international mechanisms were responding effectively to the disease outbreak, as well as identifying potential triggers and potential mechanisms for action.
183. The EpiThreats Group was co-chaired by DFID's Chief Scientific Adviser who was a Professor in Global Health and the Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Director.
184. In the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, the EpiThreats Group was used to coordinate and develop DFID's response. On 27 January 2020, a Coronavirus Crisis Coordination Team ("**CCT**") was also established. The CCT was responsible for coordinating the various inputs to DFID's response, and contingency planning.

DFID Science Cell

185. In March 2020, a new DFID Science Cell ("**Science Cell**") was created within the Research and Evidence Directorate, to support DFID's response to Covid-19, and establish a regular pattern of briefing. This included weekly science updates to Directors, shared across DFID staff working on the response, HM Government departments and the Devolved Administrations. The Science Cell also provided weekly updates to the DFID Secretary of State.
186. In addition, the Science Cell developed and supported a range of other products, disseminated regularly to stakeholders, both in DFID and across HM Government. These included a daily dashboard, weekly science and epidemiology reports and weekly Covid-19 updates. An example of one of these products (dated 26 March 2020) is at [PRB/73 - INQ000100883].
187. On 17 March 2020, No. 10 requested that DFID provide regular updates for the Prime Minister on the state of play on Covid-19 cases and deaths globally, and the impact of Covid-19 in developing countries. These were produced by the then DFID C-19 Hub. This continued when the C-19 Hub merged with the FCO C-19 Directorate in September and became the FCDO C-19 Global Impacts Department.

Development assistance – redirection of funding to Covid-19

188. Between January and September 2020, DFID redirected a substantial amount of the UK's Official Development Assistance towards the effort to tackle Covid-19, including £250m to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations to develop a Covid-19 vaccine. The UK committed up to £829m for the research, development, and distribution of vaccines, treatments and tests, including a £500m commitment to COVAX in support of the provision of vaccines to low and lower-middle income countries. COVAX is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, Gavi, and the WHO, alongside key delivery partner UNICEF. Its aim is to accelerate the development and manufacture of Covid-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world.
189. In June 2020, DFID led the UK's virtual-hosting of a Global Vaccine Summit to shore up sustained support for Gavi through which representatives from 52 countries pledged US\$8.8bn to help Gavi continue the fight against infectious diseases globally, including Covid-19.

Section 13: The FCO and the Devolved Administrations between 1 January 2020 and 1 September 2020

190. The FCO engaged regularly with the Devolved Administrations during the period between 1 January 2020 and 1 September 2020 through meetings and sharing information.
191. Between 1 January and 1 September 2020, the Devolved Administrations received the twice-daily FCO DipTel summary, an email containing all DipTels issued by the FCO in London and its Posts. These DipTel summaries included DipTels from Posts on the emergence and spread of Covid-19 and the measures that countries were taking in response, as well as instructions from the FCO in London to its Posts on the UK's international response to the pandemic.
192. FCO Minister Nigel Adams hosted teleconferences with Ministers from the Devolved Administrations on 31 March, 16 April, 23 April, 30 April, 7 May and 21 May 2020 to update them on the FCO's global repatriation operation, broader consular assistance to British nationals overseas during the pandemic and the UK's international engagement on Covid-19. Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Europe and International Development, Scottish Government; Baroness Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, Welsh Government; Declan Kearney MLA and Gordon Lyons MLA, Junior Ministers, Northern Ireland Executive attended the meetings on 31 March,

16 April, 23 April, 30 April and 7 May [PRB/74 – INQ000100859; PRB/75 - INQ000100863; PRB/76 - INQ000100870; PRB/77 - INQ000100871; PRB/78 - INQ000100867]. Minister Adams was joined by HM Government Ministers the Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, Minister for Trade Policy at the DIT and Lord (James) Bethell, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at DHSC for the meeting on 16 April 2020 [PRB/75 - INQ000100863].

193. On 14 April 2020, FCO Minister Nigel Adams wrote to Welsh Minister Elenud Morgan, NI Minister Gordon Lyons and NI Minister Declan Kearney, and Scottish Minister Jenny Gilruth about the FCO's global repatriation operation [PRB/79 - INQ000100862].
194. FCO officials also held weekly meetings with senior officials from the Devolved Administrations between 30 March and 12 May 2020 in order to update them on the UK's international activities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. At these meetings, FCO officials updated Devolved Administration officials on the FCO's work internationally relating to consular assistance for British nationals, vaccine development and international procurement, and the repatriation of British nationals.
195. From April 2020 onwards, the FCO shared its Repatriation Daily Dashboards and Global Daily Dashboards with Devolved Administration officials. Briefing sessions were also provided by FCO officials to share data and analysis on specific topics. The FCO also provided briefs produced by the ICJU to the Devolved Administrations from July 2020 onwards [PRB/80 - INQ000100864].

Section 14: The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP's role deputising for the Prime Minister between 6 and 27 April 2020

196. The FCDO was not responsible for retaining details of decisions made by the Prime Minister or Mr Raab in his role in place of the Prime Minister during April 2020, which will be addressed by the Cabinet Office.
197. In terms of the chronology, however, Mr Raab was appointed by the Prime Minister as FCO Secretary of State on 24 July 2019, and at the same time as First Secretary of State.
198. On 23 March 2020, No. 10 confirmed that Mr Raab would assume the Prime Minister's duties in the event the Prime Minister was incapacitated by Covid-19 or otherwise.
199. On 27 March 2020, the Prime Minister began to self-isolate following a positive Covid-19 test. On 6 April 2020, No. 10 issued a statement that: "The PM has asked Foreign

Secretary Dominic Raab, who is the First Secretary of State, to deputise for him where necessary" [PRB/81 - INQ000100881].

200. Following his return to work after his illness, the Prime Minister resumed his duties on 27 April 2020 [PRB/82 - INQ000100882] and Mr Raab ceased to deputise for him.

Section 15: The FCDO's Second Module 2 Corporate Statement

201. In concluding this, the FCDO's First Module 2 Corporate Statement, I refer the Inquiry to the FCDO's Second Module 2 Corporate Statement, in which I describe how the FCDO continued the work of its two predecessor departments on Covid-19 during the period 2 September 2020 to 24 February 2022.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Dated 18th May 2023

PD

SIR PHILIP ROBERT BARTON KCMG OBE

On behalf of: The Secretary of
State for Foreign,
Commonwealth and
Development Affairs
By: Sir Philip Robert Barton
KCMG OBE
Exhibit: PRB1
No: 1

Date: 18/05/23

in THE MATTER OF:

**THE UNITED KINGDOM
COVID-19 INQUIRY**

**STATEMENT OF SIR PHILIP ROBERT
BARTON KCMG OBE ON BEHALF OF
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND
DEVELOPMENT AFFAIRS**

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