

Witness Name: Dame Antonia Romeo

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UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY

MODULE 5

WITNESS STATEMENT OF DAME ANTONIA ROMEO

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I, Dame Antonia Romeo, will say as follows:

Section 1: Introduction and Opening Remarks

- 1.1. I make this statement in response to a Rule 9 request received from the UK Covid-19 Inquiry on 19 September 2024 (**the Rule 9 request**).
- 1.2. I was Permanent Secretary in the Department for International Trade (**DIT**) at the start of the pandemic and remained in this role to January 2021. This statement covers that 11-month period. The functions of DIT were absorbed into the Department for Business and Trade (**DBT**) in February 2023. I will refer to DIT throughout this statement. In January 2021, I was appointed as Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Justice.
- 1.3. The views expressed in this statement are founded on my personal knowledge and experience, and the personal views expressed are my own. I have been assisted in the preparation of this statement by officials at DBT representing the former DIT and by referring to documents from my own records or those which have been made available to me by DBT.
- 1.4. I exhibit documents supporting, illustrating or providing context for matters addressed in this statement or which will otherwise assist in an understanding of the matters addressed in it. I refer to the exhibits to this statement by AR followed by the relevant number, each exhibit being numbered sequentially.
- 1.5. Andrew Mitchell, Director General at DIT from April 2020, has provided an extensive corporate witness statement on behalf of DIT in relation to this Module of the Inquiry. Where appropriate, I have referred to or cross-referenced the content of that statement.
- 1.6. DIT was established in 2016 following the EU referendum. The Department was established to support businesses to export, increase international investment, open-up markets, and champion free trade.
- 1.7. On 16 March 2020, a letter was sent from the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Mark Sedwill, to all heads of departments. This letter asked that all departments “...*make the C-19 campaign their main effort alongside essential operational business*” [AR/01

INQ000492370]. Following receipt of this letter, I agreed with the Secretary of State for Trade that we would refocus the Department's work on three key categories, with other work paused or rephased. These categories, as set out at paragraph 2.35 of the DIT corporate witness statement, were:

- a) The immediate Covid-19 campaign;
- b) Ongoing business-critical work; and
- c) Strategic work required to deliver an ambitious trade-related economic stimulus package later in the year.

1.8. As Permanent Secretary of the Department, my role was as principal policy adviser to the Secretary of State, who was accountable to Parliament for DIT's actions and performance, and as Accounting Officer (**AO**) responsible for stewardship of the resources of the Department, in support of the Government's priorities. I was also responsible for the effective day-to-day running of the Department. Given the breadth and depth of the Department's activities, I was not directly involved in every piece of advice which went to Ministers; nor every decision taken in the Department.

1.9. Throughout the 11 months I was Permanent Secretary of the Department during the pandemic, I directed my main efforts to:

- a) Ensuring we had in place the processes and structures to do what HMG and the country required of us;
- b) Ensuring we had clarity and accountability for the work of the Department and its teams, and clear structures and roles in place to enable DIT staff to do their jobs;
- c) Supporting the Secretary of State as normal on DIT's top priorities;
- d) Supporting and effectively leading the team, with increased focus on communications to DIT colleagues;
- e) Capturing and learning the lessons of the pandemic and DIT's response; and
- f) From 27 April 2020, as Senior Responsible Officer (**SRO**) of Project DEFEND, working to the First Secretary of State (**FSS**) at Ministerial level.

Section 2: Background, Role and Experience

- 2.1. The positions I had prior to and during the pandemic were as follows:
- a) From 27 March 2017 to 15 January 2021, I was the Permanent Secretary and AO for DIT.
 - b) Currently I am Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Justice, having taken up this role on 18 January 2021.
- 2.2. I have been asked to set out my skills, expertise, and experience prior to the pandemic, relating to public sector procurement; procurement during civil emergencies; coordinating the supply, design and manufacture of specialist equipment; streamlining approvals and procurement processes; scaling up domestic engineering and manufacturing capacity; and domestic and international supply chain management. At the outset of the pandemic, I had been running DIT for nearly three years. It is important to be clear that DIT was not the lead department for public sector procurement; coordinating supply, design and manufacture of specialist equipment; approvals and procurement processes; scaling up domestic engineering and manufacturing capacity; or supply chain management. Nor was DIT responsible for procurement of PPE, rather for supporting the Department of Health and Social Care (**DHSC**) in sourcing PPE supplies overseas (see DIT corporate witness statement at paragraph 2.48). My experience lay in trade, exports and inward investment and working with business, not in public sector procurement, procurement during civil emergencies or coordinating the supply, design and manufacture of specialist equipment – nor did these things form part of my role during the pandemic. During my time at DIT, I had experience in overseeing a global network responsible for promoting exports and securing inward investment which would have involved streamlining approvals on exports or investments. Naturally, this would also have involved some connection with supply chain management internationally, although there was no specific cross-Government work programme on this prior to the pandemic outside of DHSC's usual work on health and medical supply chains. Throughout the pandemic, options and solutions to strengthen supply chains continued to be owned by the relevant individual department's sectoral lead, including DHSC for health supply chains.

Roles During the Pandemic

- 2.3. I have been asked to set out my roles and responsibilities during the pandemic. In my role as Permanent Secretary and AO for DIT, in common with all permanent secretaries, I had oversight of the Department's crisis response including responsibility for the deployment of the Department's resources to meet the crisis, and reorganisation of the Department's work to prioritise the Covid-19 pandemic response alongside essential operational business.
- 2.4. In addition to the above, I had two roles directly related to the Covid-19 response:
- a) On 25 April 2020, I was appointed SRO for Project DEFEND on supply chain resilience of Category One products excluding food by the Cabinet Secretary. Project DEFEND is discussed in further detail below at paragraphs 7.13-7.23. Project DEFEND was a strategic project, and not part of the immediate procurement effort for PPE.
 - b) From 27 April 2020, I was AO for the work the Department did to lead the Global Strategic Sourcing and Engagement Project (**GSSEP**), for which Andrew Mitchell was the SRO, reporting to me. The project was created to support DHSC in sourcing PPE supplies overseas, while DHSC retained their role as overall lead on co-ordination and procurement of PPE, under the leadership of Lord Deighton, as set out further below. The creation of the GSSEP followed a week-long period where governance and oversight arrangements of PPE sourcing and medical supplies were being agreed, following the Cabinet Secretary tasking DIT to produce a strategy for PPE sourcing from each country, on 21 April 2020. This tasking developed into a proposal for a project to oversee international sourcing of medical supplies, which then evolved into the GSSEP. DIT's role in the programme is set out in a letter from the Cabinet Secretary to me, dated 11 May 2020 [AR/02 INQ000492645]. Further detail on this is provided below at 7.1-7.11.
- 2.5. Throughout the pandemic, DHSC remained the contracting authority for PPE and health care equipment. I therefore had no role in the following areas: the value of contracts awarded; spending controls over contracts; ensuring that there was an effective regulatory regime; or effectively distributing key healthcare equipment and supplies.

- 2.6. I was not directly involved in eliminating the risk or presence of fraud or limiting the risks of conflicts of interest although members of my team may have supported work on this. DIT did not assist any authorities within the Devolved Administrations in the detection and seizure of fraudulent or non-compliant key healthcare equipment and supplies.
- 2.7. I have been asked about my role in ensuring compliance with public law procurement principles and regulations. As set out above, DIT was not directly responsible for procurement, which fell to DHSC and Cabinet Office, however, my team would have needed to ensure that any work DIT was doing, under our Commercial Team led by Paul Kellett (reporting to the DIT Chief Operating Officer, Catherine Vaughan), was compliant. On Project DEFEND, as SRO I was accountable for ensuring the process to appoint Boston Consulting Group (**BCG**) was compliant with HMG processes. I did this by involving the Government's Chief Commercial Officer, at the time Gareth Rhys Williams, on the appointment panel, alongside me and Emily Beynon, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. This is covered in further detail in section 8, below. I also ensured we followed advice from Cabinet Office at all times, on pricing and award of contracts. As the SRO for Project DEFEND, I was involved in coordinating work to review supply chain resilience. Accountability for, and decision making on the resilience of specific supply chains rested with the relevant departments (and their AOs), and my role was to oversee coordination and system design. Work on domestic supply chains was overseen by Lord Deighton as head of the PPE Taskforce, and I had no role in domestic manufacturing, albeit as SRO for Project DEFEND I was involved in coordinating work to understand and encourage general supply chain resilience, which will have included some domestic manufacturing, noting that accountability for ensuring/improving resilience remained with the relevant departments.
- 2.8. I have been asked about my role in managing expenditure and placing orders for procurement of PPE and other healthcare equipment alongside HM Treasury (**HMT**) and DHSC. As discussed above, the role of DIT was not to manage expenditure or place orders of PPE or health care equipment. DIT's role was international sourcing and my team, under Andrew Mitchell as SRO of GSSEP, will have been engaged with the procurement process in that capacity but were not responsible for actual contracting.

Department of International Trade Structures Established to Respond to the Pandemic

- 2.9. From February to mid-March 2020 DIT's response to the Covid-19 pandemic was focused on the initial response as the implications of the pandemic began to emerge and we managed the logistics of working during a pandemic. In February 2020, DIT set up a Departmental Operations Centre (**DOC**) to provide an additional layer of coordination to our response. The DOC was DIT's single point of contact for internal teams and other Government departments (**OGDs**) requiring support for the pandemic response. As part of the DOC, Gold, Silver and Bronze crisis command structures were put in place. Gold command had strategic-level responsibility for DIT's pandemic response and coordinated the leadership which included me, the Minister for Exports, the Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP and the Secretary of State for International Trade, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP. Silver command was responsible for operational level coordination, and Bronze command for the Department's tactical level crisis response strategy.
- 2.10. From late-March 2020, the Department became more directly involved in HMG's effort to counter the pandemic. Until the end of April 2020, we were developing structures to support the Government's overall response to Covid-19. Initially this was done through the Joint Assistance Coordination Team (**JACT**) under Andrew Mitchell's leadership. On 20 April 2020 it became clear that better and clearer structures would be needed to grip the sourcing and supply chain work, and over the next week or so discussions were ongoing about how to best achieve this. This led to the creation of GSSEP with Andrew Mitchell as SRO, which was set up on 27 April 2020. By this time Lord Deighton had been appointed to oversee the PPE Taskforce focussing on sourcing potential opportunities overseas for PPE and assisting with procurement, to which DIT would contribute. The PPE Taskforce had five work strands and the GSSEP supported the international side of one of these strands, 'supply'. DIT were not the contract owners, or the contracting authority, and DIT and I made it clear throughout that it was not our role to sign or award contracts for PPE or other healthcare equipment. The DIT corporate witness statement at 13.13 gives more detail on contract authorisation.
- 2.11. From the end of April 2020, the GSSEP was running in support of the Deighton-led taskforce, and alongside this we set up and ran Project DEFEND from late April. I was overall Permanent Secretary level SRO for Project DEFEND, and this work was led by Lucy Buzzoni, Deputy Director at the time, reporting to John Mahon, who was Director General for Exports (later Andrew Mitchell took over at Director General level). While

Project DEFEND was not directly related to the tactical response to Covid-19, the purpose of the project was to set a strategic plan for supply chain resilience for the future.

- 2.12. As AO, it was crucial for me to be clear for what DIT was and was not responsible. In the period of discussing governance structures for international supply, and setting up the GSSEP, I was therefore very focused on ensuring the Cabinet Secretary and DHSC understood what DIT could offer and where we did or did not have the necessary expertise. For example, in my letter to the Cabinet Secretary of 23 April 2020 (setting out a proposed approach to international procurement of PPE, set out in detail at paragraph 7.4, below), I proposed that purchasing authority should remain with DHSC, and set out that, should the proposal be accepted, there should be a requirement for DHSC to provide an overall picture for the future demand for PPE, and for swift payment and contracting by DHSC and Cabinet Office [AR/03 INQ000493876].
- 2.13. I made a range of changes to the governance of DIT to ensure that the Department was prepared to respond and adapt to the requirements of the pandemic. On 13 March 2020 I increased the frequency of the Department's Executive Committee (**ExCo**), which was responsible for DIT's overall performance and delivery against its mission, and objectives, from once to twice per week (and eventually three times per week), with one meeting per week dedicated solely to Covid-19 issues and with the Gold-Silver-Bronze structure reporting to ExCo members at every meeting, to provide senior assurance and strategic oversight. I also established a Directors General Prioritisation Group (**DGPG**), chaired by the then Chief Operating Officer, Catherine Vaughan, to oversee our day-to-day work to respond to the pandemic, which covered areas such as resource reallocation across DIT.
- 2.14. In addition, in March 2020, I requested my team set up 'Project Rearview' to assess, in real time, the Department's overall response to the pandemic. This adopted best practice methodology in line with the 'Chilcot Checklist'. Project Rearview is covered in more detail in section 10. The final Rearview reports set out in detail the structural and governance changes, details of reprioritisation decisions, and details of responsibilities assumed by DIT in the period.

Key Meetings

- 2.15. I have set out below a list of the main meetings that I would have attended which are relevant to the scope of module 5 (further details of these meetings are set out in the

statement where relevant and a more comprehensive list of meetings is included at Annex A):

- a) No.10 daily strategy meetings, as required by No. 10 or the FSS;
- b) International Ministerial Implementation Group (**IMIG**) meetings;
- c) Twice weekly meetings of Cabinet Office Briefing Room Officials (**COBR(O)**) as needed;
- d) Meetings of the DIT ExCo and other internal meetings;
- e) Daily DIT Secretary of State and Ministerial team calls to prioritise immediate tasks;
- f) Project DEFEND Steering Committee meetings, which I chaired from 30 April 2020 until 30 July 2020. Readouts from these meetings provided at AR/04 INQ000492436 and AR/05 INQ000494164;
- g) A number of PPE meetings chaired by the PM or the Cabinet Secretary as needed;
- h) Regular bilateral meetings with the FSS;
- i) Meetings of National Security Council Officials, as required, which were Chaired by the National Security Advisor or Deputy National Security Advisor;
- j) Wednesday Morning meetings – a weekly meeting of permanent secretaries, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and held in the Cabinet Office. Attendees at these meetings were referred to as “Wednesday Morning Colleagues”;
- k) I also attended some meetings with businesses to gain understanding of their supply chains;
- l) There were additionally *ad hoc* meetings with Heads of Departments and other senior officials, often chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, either held in the Cabinet Office or on Microsoft Teams.

Section 3: Working with Ministers, Officials, Other Government Departments and Devolved Administrations

- 3.1. I have been asked to outline my working relationships, during the pandemic, with DIT Ministers and officials as well as OGDs.

DIT Ministers and Officials

- 3.2. During my time at DIT, Elizabeth Truss was Secretary of State for International Trade. The work of the Department was overseen by her. The only exception to this was on Project DEFEND where the Prime Minister had commissioned the project but delegated oversight of it to the FSS. So unusually, on this work, departmental officials were working directly to the FSS, however we ensured the Secretary of State for International Trade was kept updated. In terms of other Ministers, initially Graham Stuart was the minister responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic response, and had oversight of the DOC. As set out in paragraph 2.29 of the DIT corporate witness statement, the Rt Hon Greg Hands was the Minister initially responsible for international engagement work, with the Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena assuming responsibility for that area from 5 May 2020.
- 3.3. Andrew Mitchell was employed by the Department as Director General from April 2020 until November 2023. He led both JACT and GSSEP between March and August 2020, and Project DEFEND from August 2020. I worked closely with Andrew Mitchell as the lead Director General and he reported to me on the work being undertaken by the JACT, GSSEP and Project DEFEND. I appointed Andrew on a temporary promotion basis in April 2020, when it became clear we needed someone at Director General level to oversee the Department's work on international supply.
- 3.4. I worked with Catherine Vaughan who was DIT Chief Operating Officer from September 2017 until after I left in January 2021. Catherine chaired the Rearview Steering Group (which is outlined in section 10 below) and provided me with Accounting Officer advice in relation to Project DEFEND as I have set out in section 8 below. She also led on the Department's day to day work on Covid-19, chairing the DGPG and overseeing the DOC.
- 3.5. Paul Kellett was employed as Commercial Director during my time at the Department. He reported to Catherine Vaughan as Chief Operating Officer. My office was copied in on some correspondence from Paul Kellett in relation to JACT, GSSEP and Project DEFEND and my office would have communicated with him in relation to these

projects. There were other DIT officials with whom I worked, including Darren Tierney (Director General, Policy and Programmes), Fred Perry (Deputy Director, DIT JACT), John Alty (Director General, Trade Policy), Harjinder Kang (Director, HLSB) and Martin Kent (Director, Global Trade and Investment).

Other Government Departments

- 3.6. DIT was a member of the IMIG which focussed on international coordination for responding to the pandemic. The IMIG was one of four new Ministerial Implementation Groups (**MIGs**) established as a response to the pandemic. The IMIG was chaired by the Rt Hon Dominic Raab (Foreign Secretary and FSS) who represented DIT's work on international sourcing at IMIG and No. 10 Strategy meetings in his role FSS. I attended such meetings as DIT Permanent Secretary as well as meetings of the successor groups to the IMIG, the Covid Operations Committee (**Covid-O**) and Covid Strategy Committee (**Covid-S**). Following my appointment as SRO of Project DEFEND I attended regular meetings with the FSS. In my role in Project DEFEND I was also involved with coordination meetings with OGDs on supply chain resilience via the DEFEND Steering Board.
- 3.7. DIT and BEIS worked closely together, with the area of most overlap being on business and investment. For example, in the period before the pandemic I co-chaired the Business Investment Committee with Alex Chisholm, the Permanent Secretary of State for BEIS. During the pandemic some joint work continued, for example Zoom meetings between the Secretaries of State, on which I would sometimes support. However, most normal investment promotion work had been dialled down because both departments were focusing on the pandemic, and the result of this was reduced interaction given that we were both part of the wider PPE taskforce being led by Lord Deighton. After Lord Deighton was appointed to lead the national effort on domestic production of essential PPE on 19 April 2020, I had one or two calls with him to work out structures, governance, and DIT's relationship with the PPE Taskforce. Following this Andrew Mitchell was Lord Deighton's main contact as Director General of GSSEP.
- 3.8. I did not have a great degree of direct involvement with Jonathan Marron, Director General, DHSC or Gareth Rhys Williams, Government Chief Commercial Officer, with the exception that the latter supported me in running a competition to appoint the external consultants to support HMG on Project DEFEND.

- 3.9. In the early phase while we were working out how HMG would structure itself on PPE supplies and sourcing, I worked with the NHS England Commercial Director, Dame Emily Lawson, who was leading on the work. Once we had the structures in place to facilitate DIT's relationship with NHS England, Andrew Mitchell took on this relationship.
- 3.10. I worked closely with the Cabinet Secretary as my line manager, and I reported to him on DIT's activities, in particular Project DEFEND, where he had appointed me as SRO. I worked briefly with Simon Ridley, Director General at Cabinet Office, who was leading on work setting up structures for global procurement of key healthcare equipment and supplies.
- 3.11. Prior to the pandemic, DIT officials in the overseas network reported both to DIT via the relevant DG and also to FCO via the Head of Mission. All work in the overseas network was therefore a joint endeavour between DIT and FCO. This remained true during the pandemic, with the exception of the DIT team based in the British Embassy Beijing (**the China Team**), where work had begun at post¹ very early in the pandemic. This work was self-contained at the China post and reported into No. 10 and Cabinet Office via FCO. The China Team (of FCO and DIT officials) reported to HMA Beijing as the Ambassador responsible for the Government's work in China, and I had very little direct involvement with the team. The China Team is discussed in further detail below in section 5.
- 3.12. I have been asked to address how DIT Commercial assisted DHSC and Cabinet Office with due diligence. As set out at section 4 of the DIT corporate witness statement DIT Commercial did not assist with what would be understood as 'due diligence' in a formal sense by Government Commercial Function (**GCF**). Commercial teams in JACT and GSSEP did however carry out some initial verification checks on companies before passing leads to DHSC to carry out substantive due diligence.

Devolved Administrations

- 3.13. Although I did not have any particular role in assisting the Devolved Administrations in their procurement of key healthcare equipment and supplies during the pandemic, I was involved in discussions around offering assistance, through the JACT, to the Devolved Administrations regarding demand for PPE [AR/06 INQ000533284]. As set

¹ The term 'post' or 'posts' refers to where teams work overseas, usually in embassies, high commissions and consulates.

out in section 15 of the DIT corporate witness statement, on 11 April 2020, John Alty wrote to posts to state that the procurement effort was on behalf of the whole of the UK [AR/07 INQ000492404]. On 16 April 2020, I was copied into a letter written by Chris Wormald (Permanent Secretary, DHSC) to the Devolved Administrations setting out that embassies had been asked to work on a “*single UK ‘ask’ international procurement*” and noting that the data already being collated by DHSC would be used to inform DHSC asks of the JACT and overseas network [AR/08 INQ000533289].

- 3.14. As detailed in section 11 of the DIT witness corporate statement, in phase 2 of Project DEFEND (which ran from June 2020), reflecting the expanding scope of the project, a Devolved Administration Steering Committee was established to discuss potential areas for the involvement of the Devolved Administrations in phase 2 and beyond. The Devolved Administrations Steering Committee contributed to the assessment of phase 2 supply chains, focussing on increasing domestic supply chain resilience and identifying, strengthening, and protecting existing UK supply chains [AR/09 INQ000496654].

Section 4: Preparedness

- 4.1. As set out above, prior to the pandemic I was not involved in the procurement of healthcare equipment or with plans for procurement during civil emergencies. In respect of preparedness as it applied to our ability to engage with our embassies, it seemed to me that the work by the China Team had been set up swiftly and effectively, albeit that it would have been better to involve DIT and other parts of Government in this work at an earlier stage because it would have allowed us to replicate the work more swiftly across other countries from which we later needed to source PPE. Once that work was underway, I think that the GSSEP work, led by Andrew Mitchell, to use the wider DIT network alongside the FCO network to engage with foreign governments, source new suppliers, and develop strategic partnerships with major suppliers and supply countries was effective and marshalled our full resources in support of the Covid-19 effort. More detail on GSSEP is set out in section 7.
- 4.2. To my knowledge, prior to the pandemic there was no team in the Centre, or in Government more generally, that was responsible for economic security i.e. supporting supply chain resilience. The lack of knowledge in our supply chains led the Cabinet Secretary to commission me to lead a piece of work to interrogate where the vulnerabilities lay in our critical goods supply chains, and to look at a full set of options for addressing those vulnerabilities. In order quickly to build up a knowledge base on the UK and global supply chains, as discussed in more detail at section 8, below, we engaged private consultants to carry out detailed mapping work on supply chains. The requirement to create Project DEFEND, which was set up specifically to interrogate our supply chains and take action to strengthen them where necessary, reflected the fact that supply chain resilience was a gap in the Government's economic security strategy at that time.

Section 5: Embassies and Trade Envoys

- 5.1. Section 2 of the DIT corporate witness statement sets out that from 15 March 2020 DIT staff working in embassies, high commissions and consulates around the world assisted in identifying supplies of ventilators. Following the work, overseas posts received further commissions to identify potential new suppliers of PPE and other healthcare equipment from many markets, including China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey, and the USA. DIT staff worked closely with FCO colleagues internationally. I recall that the Malaysia team were very effective and quickly stood things up under Natalie Black's (HM Trade Commissioner for Asia Pacific) leadership. The JACT was set up in late March 2020 in order centrally to triage and collate leads from the overseas network and relay these to DHSC. The JACT used DIT staff in overseas posts to identify supply sources based on the requirements at the time, passing these details on to DHSC. The work of the JACT under Andrew Mitchell's leadership is explained in further detail at section 6, below. Other than some initial teething issues with the China model as set out at section 5 below, from my recollection ways of working with posts were fairly good.
- 5.2. I have been asked about the adaptations made to the UK's systems of gathering data and communicating with its embassies and trade envoys. As set out in sections 4 and 7 of the DIT corporate witness statement, this work was initially led through the JACT and later the GSSEP and is discussed in further detail below.

The China Team

- 5.3. On 26 March 2020, I was invited to join two cross-Government meetings, convened by No. 10, to discuss efforts to secure ventilators; the meetings were to be held the following day. I was asked to provide, at the meetings, an update on DIT's efforts in securing ventilators internationally [AR/10 INQ000492376]. Ahead of these meetings, my office requested a call with John Edwards (Deputy HM Trade Commissioner (HMTTC) for China) to update on the work being undertaken in China as well as requesting details of other countries from which we might source ventilators and any export controls currently in place. John Edwards responded to say that his team had stood up a dedicated unit at post on 15 March 2020 to procure medical equipment after being directly tasked to do so by No. 10. The unit at post worked directly to DHSC who approved specifications and prices. It was also noted that the unit provided some direct support to the BEIS ventilator challenge team. Emails are

available at AR/11 INQ000493789. I had not been involved in tasking the China Team with this work and was content for it to be led out of post and overseen by the Ambassador, because I thought clarity on accountability was important, and it was better to be completely clear that the Ambassador was accountable for that work.

- 5.4. As set out above the working arrangements in respect of sourcing of healthcare equipment differed for the China Team, who worked directly into DHSC. The work carried out by the China Team was self-contained and DIT staff reported to the FCO so I had no direct involvement with their work. I am therefore unable to offer views as to work carried out by the China Team, or the role of [Company A], in assisting with due diligence.

Intergovernmental Interventions

- 5.5. As set out at section 10 of the DIT corporate witness statement, early in the Covid-19 response DIT utilised their expertise and networks to assist with a paracetamol shortage, emails detailing this provided at AR/12 INQ000493755. This resulted in a number of calls between the Secretary of State and her Indian counterpart, Minister Piyush Goyal, and led to DIT securing approval for the export of 2.8m packets of paracetamol to the UK. During the calls between the Secretary of State and Minister Goyal, whilst no conditionality was set there was some discussion as to whether there was scope for cooperation between India and the UK on medical supplies, emails detailing this provided at AR/13 INQ000533290. On 21 April 2020 a submission was sent from Bijan Hakimian, head of trade policy for India and South Asia, to the Secretary of State regarding the suggestion that preferential PPE supply to the UK from India would be on offer in return for tariff reductions on textiles. The submission recommended that alternative options should be explored ahead of offering tariff reductions [AR/14 INQ000533609]. The Secretary of State agreed with this approach and asked Bijan to work up an offer for India taking into account a comprehensive assessment of needs and what could realistically be provided. A follow up note for the Secretary of State was prepared by Bijan and sent to me for clearance on 24 April 2020. Email and note provided at AR/15 INQ000533299 and AR/16 INQ000533300. The note suggested engagement through potential calls from across government with key Indian ministers and officials, including a call between me and the India Textiles Secretary.
- 5.6. On 1 May 2020 I had a call with the Indian Textiles Secretary, Ravi Kapoor. During the call Mr Kapoor stated that India was now comfortable with its capacity of PPE and

were interested in exporting surplus capacity and keen to explore whether the UK could offer anything in return for the Indian export ban on PPE being lifted (e.g. lowering textiles tariffs). I set out that this would be challenging but agreed to look at alternative potential offers. During the call I agreed to send a follow up letter to Mr Kapoor setting out the UK's interest, a readout of the call is provided at AR/17 INQ000533304. On 22 May 2020 a follow up letter was sent to Mr Kapoor providing further details of the UK's PPE purchasing requirements and noting the ongoing conversations between the Secretary of State and Minister Goyal. Cover email and letter provided at AR/18 INQ000533305 and AR/19 INQ000533306.

Section 6: JACT

- 6.1. On 24 March 2020 I attended a COBR(O) meeting chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss arrangements for Covid-19 response across Government, and to receive an update from the four MIGs. At the meeting it was clear that there was a lot of work underway, including on global supply chains and trade and investment with which DIT was not, at the time, involved. Following the meeting I asked for advice from my senior team on which workstreams we should be involved with, expressing the view that DIT should play a role in a number of areas including global supply chains work, global leadership on trade flows, easements to support trade and investment, and business support, for example with SMEs [AR/20 INQ000533282].
- 6.2. The No. 10 meetings held on 27 March 2020 mentioned at paragraph 5.3, above, were my first direct involvement with the international medical supplies sourcing work. In those meetings I was tasked, alongside FCO and NHS (Emily Lawson), to press for an increase in supply from China including via the intermediaries market. (DIT, FCO and NHS were also instructed to decide a single point of UK contact for commercial interlocutors overseas. DIT was additionally tasked with supporting FCO to embed commercial specialists in the British Embassy in Beijing [AR/21 INQ000533284]. While the immediate priority was ventilators, focus would move to PPE and other medical devices and equipment as required. Prior to this, aside from the efforts at post of the China Team discussed above, DIT had not been involved in the work to procure medical equipment or PPE. I asked Andrew Mitchell to coordinate what we had coming onstream globally, starting with the immediate issue of ventilators and moving forward to PPE. This represented the start of the coordinated DIT main effort on PPE supply.
- 6.3. While up to this point FCO had been leading the international supply work, on 27 March 2020, Andrew Mitchell agreed with FCO that DIT would co-lead given the relevance of the DIT overseas network. To coordinate this work, and offers coming in from post, DIT and FCO set up a new joint unit, the JACT. Andrew Mitchell, Anna Clunes (FCO) and Ajay Sharma (FCO) led the JACT as Joint Directors. The JACT was set up as a joint unit between DIT, FCO, and DHSC to coordinate the crisis response for medical equipment. Andrew Mitchell reported to me as his Permanent Secretary, and Ministerial oversight sat with IMIG, with the Foreign Secretary as its Chair. The purpose of the JACT was to build on, mainstream, and extend the work

on international supply undertaken by DHSC and the China Team. This is detailed in emails and slides provided at AR/22 INQ000493791 and AR/23 INQ000492377.

- 6.4. The JACT played an important role in strengthening procurement of medical supplies and led to DIT being able to provide a better collective picture of what had been delivered and what was in the pipeline. There were, however, some initial issues relating to clarity around accountabilities and agreed structures. On 6 April 2020 I had a discussion with the Cabinet Secretary about the need for clear communications on working structures [AR/24 INQ000533285]. Following this, and issues which had arisen around communication with DHSC over a particular consignment of ventilators from China, an email was sent from John Alty to Emily Lawson underlining the need for transparency, clarity on accountabilities and a clear statement of tasking requirements from DHSC [AR/25 INQ000533286]. I later wrote to John Alty to say that I had raised the issue with Mark Sweeney at Cabinet Office and underlined the need for “...CO to be gripping the coordination, ensuring the governance is working, overseeing lines of accountability” [AR/26 INQ000533287]. This is not to say the China operation was not successful, but it involved DHSC and post working directly together with limited involvement of DIT HQ or other departments, which made coordination and scale up difficult. In the early stages, the direct channel from DHSC to the China Team meant that departments were working off different data which created some confusion. This is covered in more detail at paragraph 13.12 of the DIT corporate witness statement.
- 6.5. In practice, the JACT was a short-term fix to a strategic problem which was that the Government had swiftly stood up pockets of work to procure ventilators as the immediate priority, with the work initially run out of FCO and tasked by DHSC. The JACT was an attempt to broaden this out to other products and to join up the FCO network with the DIT network and dock into DHSC and Cabinet Office in a more orderly way. The DIT corporate witness statement at section 4 sets out well the issues with the JACT. My own recollection is that given the pressure the Government was under, the JACT system did not work seamlessly because DHSC had built up relationships with specific individuals at particular posts (mainly China) and contacted them directly in some cases, bypassing the JACT process. There was an ongoing frustration in the JACT team at a lack of clear demand signal from DHSC and some confusion around the roles of DHSC and Cabinet Office. For this reason, when subsequently designing GSSEP, DIT set out clearly the explicit need for a ‘demand signal’ from DHSC, i.e. clear, prioritised specification for what was needed so we

could source the supply. There also appeared to be a lack of clarity early on as to who was meant to be signing the contracts, as set out in further detail in paragraph 13.13 of the DIT corporate witness statement.

- 6.6. As set out at section 4 of the DIT corporate witness statement, following the establishment of the GSSEP, discussed below at section 7, the JACT continued to operate as a separate team within the GSSEP, until its closure on 8 June 2020.
- 6.7. JACT was set up at pace, and I believe it did as well as it could given it was effectively a stop gap which had swiftly scaled up a system developed for China. It would have been more effective if there had been better join up between departments, especially with DHSC. In practice, a month after the JACT was formed the full PPE Taskforce was stood up under Lord Deighton's lead, and DIT's involvement with DHSC on PPE became primarily via the GSSEP. The experience of the JACT underlines that for such entities to work effectively in the future it would be better to set out accountabilities, responsibilities, and interdependencies clearly at the start, to ensure clarity on roles and also ultimate accountability. This applies between posts and the UK, but also between departments, including Cabinet Office and DHSC.

Section 7: GSSEP and Project DEFEND

- 7.1. In the period from late March to late April 2020 there was some uncertainty about who was leading on what. I offered the Cabinet Secretary my views on the governance arrangements he was establishing for Covid programmes, noting the importance of clarity of accountabilities for tasking versus for delivery, and the need for clear tasking, speedy compliance checks, agile decision-making, and ownership of numbers and data. Email provided at AR/27 INQ000533288. My immediate focus as AO was to deploy the DIT capability in full support of the Government's efforts while being clear on precisely what we were accountable for. As I have referred to above in the context of JACT, there were some teething problems in adapting to new ways of working, in particular joining up between departments. The FCO had already been doing work to source ventilators out of China with DHSC going directly to them, and seen from a distance it appeared DHSC wanted to keep control of all sourcing activity but were not best placed to do this until Lord Deighton was appointed by the Health Secretary to lead the national effort on domestic production of essential PPE on 19 April 2020, and from 27 April 2020 to head the PPE Taskforce.
- 7.2. During this period, I had discussions with the Cabinet Secretary on how to best structure our international supply work. My view was that at the early stages our approach was not sufficiently strategic. We did not have a grid of Government procurement strategies by country, and DHSC/NHS were approaching countries directly leading to a lack of coordination. I thought that the Cabinet Office and DHSC should own the core grid of what was needed from where, with other departments contributing where relevant. I also felt that we lacked sufficient discipline and grip on who was talking to companies and who owned Government to Government relationships, with insufficient coordination and grip on the overall governance. On 20 April 2020 the Cabinet Secretary requested a call with me as there was concern about the "...*lack of overall grip on supply chains work (both domestic and international)*" [AR/28 INQ000493856]. He, therefore, wanted me to lead a short piece of work on all supply chain issues to understand our vulnerabilities and dependencies. We also discussed a need for a longer term look at what were essential goods for the UK and how we could deepen our understanding of supply chains on those goods, particularly with a view to future resilience of the UK's supply chains.
- 7.3. On 21 April 2020, I attended a meeting, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, alongside representatives from Cabinet Office, DIT, DHSC, HMT and No. 10. At this meeting it

was agreed that Lord Deighton would lead on domestic supply and DIT would lead on coordinating international supply. We were also tasked with producing a note setting out the strategic approach to increasing international supply of PPE to cover how we would make the UK the 'world's best customer'. A readout and formal set of actions from the meeting are provided at AR/29 INQ000492420 and AR/30INQ000492644.

- 7.4. Following on from this meeting, on 23 April 2020, at the Cabinet Secretary's request, I wrote to him with a proposal setting out a strategic approach to international procurement of medical supplies with the aim of making the UK the "*best buyer of PPE in the world.*" The letter, plan and accompanying email are at AR/03 INQ000493876, AR/31 INQ000493875, and AR/32 INQ000489610. The plan proposed the establishment of a cross-Whitehall programme, called 'IPROMS' (International Procurement of Medical Supplies), overseeing a single coordinated delivery system for international procurement of medical supplies to be led by cross-Government teams including DIT, Cabinet Office, DHSC, and FCO, with DIT as the lead department. I did not think it was (or should be) DIT's job to be the actual contracting authority rather than supporting the process via sourcing, and as set out at section 4 of the DIT corporate witness statement, there were concerns around whether DIT had the requisite skillset to lead on the contracting and procurement aspects of the work. I therefore explicitly noted in my letter to the Cabinet Secretary that "*purchasing authority would remain with DHSC*", and DHSC and Cabinet Office would be responsible for "*...swift payments and contracting*".
- 7.5. Later the same day, 23 April 2020, I attended a meeting chaired by the Cabinet Secretary to discuss overall Government approach to PPE, including the Cabinet Office plan to establish a cross government endeavour to maximise supply of PPE against demand, the PPE Programme Plan is provided at AR/33 INQ000489614. In the meeting I set out the plan for international supply work, including "*...strategies for ministerial engagement, the need for a prioritised demand specification including price points and a single coordinated delivery system with appropriate accountability*". At the meeting it was stated that Lord Deighton was mobilising people to operationalise the plan for domestic manufacturing and was to coordinate with me, Emily Lawson (NHS) and Simon Ridley (Cabinet Office). Also, at the meeting it was agreed that DHSC was to remain the contract owners for purchase of PPE [AR/34 INQ000493878].

- 7.6. On 27 April 2020, I spoke with Lord Deighton about the future of the PPE programme and the model being developed under his leadership. We discussed the difficulties in separating international supply from domestic supply and that it would therefore be best for one person to lead the whole programme. Lord Deighton felt that he had been appointed to lead the whole PPE programme and therefore wanted to make the judgement calls on what we did in China and how to run the Cabinet Office acquisition process. The best model to make this work would be for me to appoint a DIT team to work on international supply as part of Lord Deighton's team. In an email to the Cabinet Secretary later that day I stated that *"In this model PD (not me) will be accountable for international supply as well as demand and domestic supply/make."* [AR/35 INQ000533302]. Throughout this period, I had been focused on ensuring clarity of accountabilities and for what DIT was responsible. It made sense to me for Lord Deighton to lead this overall programme given that he had been appointed by the Health Secretary, and DHSC were retaining overall responsibility for both domestic and international procurement. Further to this, Lord Deighton was plugged in with No. 10, so was well placed to make sure that DHSC were joined up with the Centre. I was keen to ensure DIT played a full role via Andrew Mitchell's leadership of the GSSEP.
- 7.7. Following this, and as set out at section 4 of the DIT corporate witness statement, the proposed IPROMS programme was not, in the end, adopted, and the Cabinet Office PPE Programme Plan became the cross-Whitehall PPE Taskforce led by Lord Deighton, with DIT now playing a supporting role leading supply chains and strategic sourcing, and Andrew Mitchell appointed as DG SRO for that element of the programme.

GSSEP

- 7.8. Under the new approach, on 27 April 2020, the GSSEP was established to support DHSC in sourcing supplies overseas reporting into the PPE Taskforce led by Lord Deighton. While the JACT had been jointly led by DIT and FCO, the GSSEP was led by DIT with Andrew Mitchell as SRO reporting to me. The FSS had overall responsibility for the GSSEP, first as chair of the IMIG and later as chair of the Small Ministerial Group. In my regular meetings with the FSS I provided updates on the work of GSSEP as well as DEFEND. The Terms of Reference set out the GSSEP's overarching objective as being to *"...oversee the development and delivery of HMG's international sourcing strategy for supply-chain resilience for critical medical*

supplies." [AR/36 INQ000493957]. At the outset of the GSSEP, the focus was on sourcing essential medical supplies including PPE, medicines, and ventilators, with an inbuilt ability to scale up and source other medical equipment as required.

- 7.9. The Cabinet Secretary wrote to me on 11 May 2020 about the Cabinet Office's review of objectives and milestones of all Covid-19 programmes to ensure that the portfolio would deliver the Government's overall plan. The covering email, letter and attachment are provided at AR/37 INQ000489799, AR/02 INQ000492645, and AR/38 INQ000492646. The letter alongside its attachments set out the delivery confidence for GSSEP, the one programme for which DIT had the lead. Delivery confidence and plan maturity was rated as Level 1 (amber) which meant the "*[w]orkstream was off track but SRO has plan to get it on track*". The letter asked that both I and the Secretary of State take a personal interest in the programmes for which DIT had the lead and reassure ourselves that the programme management maturity reach a rating of at least Level 3 without delay. I replied to this letter on 15 May 2020 stating that this was an accurate representation of GSSEP as two critical dependencies on DHSC had not been resolved, securing a 'demand signal' for what DIT needed to source against, and a commitment by DHSC/Cabinet Office for fast turnaround of priority PPE leads from overseas posts. I said that my team were working on these issues and that once Andrew Mitchell, as SRO, was confident these were in place the delivery confidence rating would be raised to Level 2 (green). My letter, attachment and the covering email are provided at AR/39 INQ000493988, AR/40 INQ000489658 and AR/41 INQ000493987.
- 7.10. On 12 June 2020 I wrote to the FSS with an update on GSSEP and DEFEND to say that demand modelling showed that we had bridged the supply gap for all crucial PPE products until September 2020, with the priority now shifting to future PPE and supply chain resilience [AR/42 INQ000494076]. As set out at section 9 of the DIT corporate witness statement, by the end of June 2020 the UK was meeting its demand for medical supplies across all categories and proactive short-term sourcing work was paused and a plan was drawn up to integrate GSSEP into DEFEND. On 6 August 2020 Andrew Mitchell wrote to me to confirm the closure of GSSEP and the merging of its remaining responsibilities into Project DEFEND [AR/43 INQ000494167].
- 7.11. In my view GSSEP was broadly effective in that it met its first objective, which was closing the demand-supply gap for critical medical supplies. As is clear from the programme delivery confidence, GSSEP's effectiveness was hindered by the fact that

it was reliant on timely demand signals from DHSC which it did not always receive. On the second objective of diversifying markets to provide for long term resilience, I believe it was partially successful as it diversified procurement beyond China and put in train the work for further diversification of supply chains. However, GSSEP was designed to focus on the short term and as a result I am not sure that we achieved the long term objectives for key product groups. As one of GSSEP's main objectives related to long term resilience, once the PPE supply gap had been bridged, and it began to concentrate on this, it made sense to bring GSSEP and DEFEND together, given the latter's focus on the resilience of supply chains in the long term.

International Partners Initiative

- 7.12. The International Partners Initiative (IPI) was set up to ensure, should the UK face a second wave of Covid-19 in the winter of 2020, that there were measures in place to obtain sufficient PPE supplies to meet demand. The IPI was tasked with coordinating the policy and operational effort necessary to establish formal cooperation with Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the 5-eyes partners, and potentially the G7 countries. The IPI was set up as part of GSSEP, with Ruth Lyons (Deputy Director, GSSEP) appointed as the DIT lead, reporting to Martin Kent, Andrew Mitchell as GSSEP SRO, and the GSSEP Board. On 14 July 2020 I was provided with a submission from Ruth Lyons detailing a plan to transition IPI to FCO as its more natural home [AR/44 INQ000494129]. On 21 July 2020 I cleared the submission, and handover to FCO took effect from 3 August 2020. This is set out in an email chain between DIT officials at AR/45 INQ000489743.

Project DEFEND

- 7.13. As GSSEP, on its creation, was focused directly on pandemic response, the Cabinet Secretary and I agreed that there was also the need for a programme to look at supply chain resilience for essential goods more broadly. On 25 April 2020, DIT was asked to establish and lead a cross-Government project on supply chain resilience [AR/46 INQ000489616]. Project DEFEND was designed as a strategic project to ensure future resilience of critical supply chains of all Category One and other critical goods (excluding food). The project covered global supply chains across multiple sectors (including medical supply chains) and was intended to work alongside the immediate pandemic response on critical medical supply chains. Project DEFEND was launched on 27 April 2020 under my lead with support from John Mahon as Director General and Lucy Buzzoni as Deputy Director [AR/47 INQ000492508]. On Project DEFEND I

reported to the Cabinet Secretary as my line manager. As set out above at paragraph 3.2, the Prime Minister had delegated ministerial leadership of this work to the FSS. This system, while unusual, worked well because the FSS had direct oversight of the FCO which played a crucial role in international supply via Government to Government relationships, and could also coordinate and lead strategic work across Government.

7.14. Project DEFEND ran from 27 April 2020 and was still in operation when I left DIT in January 2021. It was divided into four phases:

- a) Phase one was a four week sprint, involving consultants to provide a clear and evidenced picture of our current dependencies on future global markets and of the role the UK played in global value chains;
- b) Phase two looked at developing and executing actions based on our evolving view of supply chain resilience;
- c) Phase three focused on consolidating the first two phases and supporting other Government departments to ensure they took forward appropriate mitigations in respect of the supply chains they owned; and
- d) Phase four was designed to embed the first three phases.

7.15. This work was overseen by a Ministerial Small Group chaired by the FSS and supported at Permanent Secretary/Director General level by a cross-government Steering Committee chaired by me (before this role passed to Andrew Mitchell after I left the Department). At its inception, the membership of the Steering Committee included HM Treasury, BEIS, DHSC, FCO, MoD, DEFRA, DCMS, DfT, Cabinet Office Secretariats and No. 10.

7.16. On 30 April 2020 I wrote to Wednesday Morning Colleagues to announce the establishment of Project DEFEND, set out its scope and invite involvement from all interested parties [AR/48 INQ000489629]. In the letter I noted that the Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary were the “*ultimate customers*” for DEFEND and that weekly updates would be provided to No. 10 stating that the intention was to look beyond resilience in our current critical goods to those which would be critical in the next 5 - 10 years.

7.17. I provided a further update to Wednesday Morning Colleagues in a letter dated 1 June 2020 when the first phase of Project DEFEND had been completed [AR/49 INQ000496639]. In the letter I stated that significant progress had been made and

that in relation to medical supply chains the project had “...identified the complexity of global supply chains, insufficient stockpiles and a high percentage of imports as vulnerabilities.” I also set out that phase two of the work was to begin the following week and would extend the supply chain analysis to further critical goods and develop ideas and solutions for strengthening supply chains, with those solutions to be taken forward by departments with the relevant sectoral lead (who maintained ownership of the relevant supply chain) working alongside the DIT coordinating team. During the first phase of Project DEFEND I was also updating No. 10 and National Security Council (Officials) colleagues on a regular basis.

- 7.18. On 30 July 2020, I chaired the final Steering Committee meeting of phase 2 of Project DEFEND where we discussed phases 1 and 2 and the work of the project moving forward into phase 3, which it was anticipated would run until the end of October 2020. My briefing for that meeting and the minutes are provided at AR/50 INQ000494160 and AR/05 INQ000494164.
- 7.19. As set out in section 11 of the DIT Corporate Witness Statement, the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy was commissioned at this time to set the UK’s overarching national security and international strategy, bringing together defence, security, resilience, diplomacy, development and trade, as well as elements of economic, and science and technology policy. At the Steering Committee meeting on 30 July 2020, I set out the importance of Project DEFEND feeding into the Integrated Review, particularly the chapters on global issues and resilience. Alongside a number of government departments, the Project DEFEND team took part in policy discussions to feed into the Integrated Review and highlighted the importance of supply chain resilience as an integral part of global security.
- 7.20. On 18 December 2020, I wrote to the FSS with an update about the progress that had been made to date on Project DEFEND and set out DEFEND’s priorities for the coming year [AR/51 INQ000500144]. I noted that the last few months had been “...pivotal for DEFEND’s transition from a COVID-19 crisis response unit to its position today; coordinating and providing support across departments in a cross-government effort to ensure resilience in critical supply chains.” I also emphasised the need to apply the lessons learned from Project DEFEND to improve supply chain resilience in the future. In order to do this, I noted that we would need to address big picture questions relating to supply chain diversification through international economic partnerships, including trade agreements but also through the lens of

national security priorities. I noted that a priority for the year ahead was to continue to develop Project DEFEND's capability and expertise, deepening our intelligence on supply chains and building new systems for reporting and monitoring critical supply chains.

Critical Reflection of Project DEFEND

- 7.21. My view is that Project DEFEND proved to be very effective in what it was intended to achieve and provided a means of moving to a deeper understanding of what our supply chains were. The objectives were to identify vulnerabilities and determine mitigations and, overall, I consider that this was done well. We needed a strategy for resilience which interrogated UK supply chains for Category one and critical goods. There were demonstrable benefits to the work. As I wrote in my update to Wednesday Morning Colleagues on 1 June 2020, in a relatively short period of time we had completed an assessment of 31 Global Supply Chains across multiple sectors. In medical supply chains alone, the project identified the complexity of supply chains, insufficient stockpiles and a high percentage of imports as vulnerabilities. In non-medical supply chains it identified that foreign manufacture, combined with difficulties stockpiling essential chemicals and parts meant there was a high dependency on port access and vulnerabilities to blockages. The project, in phase one, also identified six countries with high supply chain dependency concentration. This was all useful and actionable insight.
- 7.22. In DIT we already had good relationships with trading businesses, so it was easy to leverage these relationships to gain a better understanding of trading flows and supply chains. I spoke to some Chairs and CEOs, both to understand their own supply chains, but also to understand the processes they had in place for understanding their supply chains. Businesses were keen to work with us to support the Government, either on knowledge of supply chains or on actual provision of PPE if they could help.
- 7.23. The longer-term policy objective in this area should clearly be to achieve a level of economic resilience in sectors of national significance. In my view, developing domestic production capabilities is one route but these need to be competitive and this in and of itself does not completely derisk supply chains, given the complexity of modern manufacturing value chains. Therefore, there needs to be a balanced mix of local capabilities, international partnerships, trade agreements and stockpiling.

International Trade Policy

- 7.24. On 11 May 2020 I sent a letter to the FSS which attached a paper discussing potential levers to increase the export of PPE to the UK [AR/52 INQ000500118] and [AR/53 INQ000492457]. The paper was prepared at the FFS's request following discussions the previous week concerning levers which could be used to incentivise overseas governments to reduce export restrictions on PPE to the UK. The paper considered the use of two options for using such levers, ODA² and tariff liberalisation. In my letter I advised that ODA was "...unlikely to be a hugely effective lever and we should consider others." The paper made clear that ODA could not "...be made contingent upon the export of PPE to the UK" and that its "...primary purpose must be to contribute to poverty reduction...".
- 7.25. On 12 May 2020 at my regular bilateral meeting with the FSS we discussed the paper. The FSS expressed that he did not want tariff liberalisation or use of ODA to be ruled out. I advised that the view of the Secretary of State for International Trade was that "...we had to make sure we didn't offer up tariff liberalisation now to secure PPE access, and then find that we had significantly reduced our negotiations leverage across all WTO countries in perpetuity". Readout provided at AR/54 INQ000493971. The FSS's position was reiterated in a letter from his office sent to me the same day [AR/55 INQ000492461]. The letter set out his "strong steer" that we should not rule out consideration of any ODA. On tariff liberalisation it was noted that while he understood the issues this raised he was keen for us not to take any options off the table.
- 7.26. As set out at section 8 of the DIT corporate witness statement, the use of ODA as a lever to reduce export restrictions on PPE was no longer pursued because from June 2020 supplies of PPE into the country were sufficient for this to no longer be necessary.

² ODA is the overseas aid budget used to support and deliver the objectives of the Government's 2015 Aid Strategy the objectives of which include strengthening global peace, security and governance, strengthening resilience and response to crises, promoting global prosperity, and tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable.

Section 8: Private Consultants

- 8.1. As outlined at paragraph 7.2 above, on 20 April 2020 the Cabinet Secretary had discussed tasking me with a short piece of work on all supply chain issues. He had asked that I consider whether consultants would be helpful to support such work and which ones we should use. We had discussions in DIT and agreed internally that consultants would be useful if they brought specific content and knowledge on supply chains, as the thing that Government lacked at the time was detailed data on global supply chains held in one place. The urgency of the commission required that we built up an understanding of supply chains very quickly.

Boston Consulting Group

- 8.2. On 21 April 2020, following calls with Cabinet Office regarding my role in the international supply chains work as outlined above, my office received an email from Isabel Summers, the Cabinet Secretary's Private Secretary, with a draft commission for this work. This included commissioning a consultancy to gather evidence of where supply chains for key products were reliant on overseas networks, so that we could understand the risks this presented and develop mitigations. On 22 April 2020 Emily Beynon emailed the Cabinet Secretary's office and my office saying that she was "*extremely keen*" for us to have an initial meeting with consultants the next morning given the "*...huge desire to make sure this is kicked off asap, with a very large, highly analytical team supporting.*" [AR/56 INQ000533291]. On the same day, my Private Secretary responded to say that we needed to develop Terms of Reference "*...to be given to consultants for the project leading the sprint on supply chain resilience for products necessary for tackling C19, to gather the evidence of where our supply chains for key products are reliant on overseas networks so that we can understand risks and develop mitigations*". We also requested a meeting between me and No. 10 to discuss which consultants to use, who was meant to be appointing them, and how to run the work. It was confirmed by Isabel Summers in a reply to my office that DIT were to choose and appoint the consultants. The benefit of consultants was that they would bring immediate, in-depth knowledge of supply chains across all sectors, which did not exist in one place in Government at the time. Utilising the experience and contacts of private consultants we would be able to use the data provided to feed into our future supply chain resilience work.

- 8.3. On 22 April 2020, Emily Beynon wrote to me regarding the intention for Cabinet Office to have initial calls with McKinsey, BCG and Bain after which follow up calls would be arranged with me [AR/57 INQ000533292]. I was involved in the drafting of the terms of reference which were sent to BCG, McKinsey and Bain on 23 April 2020. Emails at AR/58 INQ000533295 and AR/59 INQ000533294, and terms of reference at AR/60 INQ000533293.
- 8.4. On 23-24 April 2020, I spoke with partners from McKinsey, Bain and BCG. Emails confirming these meetings are provided at AR/61 INQ000533297, AR/62 INQ000533296 and AR/63 INQ000533298. The BCG pitch noted that they were already doing a significant amount of supply chain mapping and flows with category specific demand, supply chain flows and volumes, and key supply chain players. Calculations by the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) showed that the BCG pitch was the best value of those put forward. On 25 April 2020 John Mahon (DIT Director General Exports, who would be leading the DEFEND work for me) advised that, following conversations with Gareth Rhys Williams, he thought it was in order to proceed with the BCG offer. As the AO for the project, I was obviously focused on value for money, while noting the pressure from the Centre to appoint consultants quickly, I therefore raised whether we might go back to seek a further price reduction. The view from both John Mahon and Gareth Rhys Williams was that while of course they wanted the price to be lower, any further discussion on pricing adjustment would take time. This was work that needed to be progressed very urgently. Both John Mahon and Gareth Rhys Williams thought we should proceed with BCG. On the same day I wrote to CCS and Gareth Rhys Williams to confirm my agreement to proceeding with the BCG pitch on the basis that CCS thought this was "...*decent value for HMG*" [AR/64 INQ000535050].
- 8.5. Following this, on 25 April 2020 BCG were appointed as the delivery partner to look at supply chain vulnerability through Project DEFEND. Email at AR/65 INQ000533301. The proposal from BCG was approved by the Secretary of State for International Trade on 25 April 2020.
- 8.6. The appointment of the consultants for phase 1 of Project DEFEND was done at pace and I was prepared to move forward on the basis of CCS's assurance. For the extension of the project (phase 2), I asked for the usual AO advice from my Chief Operating Officer against the four AO tests³ in Managing Public Money (as was my

³ Regularity; Propriety; Value for money; Feasibility.

usual practice for such project extensions). On 1 June 2020, Catherine Vaughan sent AO advice to me on the appointment of BCG to carry out phase 2 [AR/66 INQ000494033]. I approved the appointment of BCG in my role as AO. The relevant email chains, submission dated 4 June 2020 and letter from BCG are provided at AR/67 INQ000489696 (email), AR/68 INQ000494050 (submission), AR/69 INQ000496633 (letter from BCG), AR/70 INQ000489697 (email chain to/from myself), and AR/71 INQ000496637 (email chain). The contract was subsequently approved at ministerial level by the Secretary of State for International Trade. The submission and covering email are provided at AR/72 INQ000496646 and AR/73 INQ000492588. An email to my office, dated 4 June 2020, which provided the updated submission also gave answers to a number of questions I had raised, including re-assurance that the costings for the project had been reviewed by CCS; were in line with other cross-Whitehall BCG contracts; and were in line with expectations [AR/67 INQ000489696]. The contract with BCG was extended for eight weeks starting on 4 June 2020. Engagement letter at AR/74 INQ000496658.

- 8.7. BCG team members were invited to weekly Steering Committee, Ministerial Small Group and working level meetings. At the end of each phase, BCG helped to develop and monitor mitigation strategies for risks identified in each supply chain.
- 8.8. At a GSSEP Steering Committee Meeting held on 30 July 2020, I voiced my thanks to BCG, for their work, including enabling us “...to make this an evidence rich and analysis heavy project, which I think has been one of its great strengths.” Meeting note provided at AR/06 INQ000494164.

Project Protect

- 8.9. On 25 April 2020, I wrote to my senior team to set out four possible projects that I thought might require consultants. The purpose of this was to ensure alignment in our use of consultants and reduce duplication or confusion. These were:
 - a) The first phase of project DEFEND under John Mahon’s leadership;
 - b) A project mapping supply chains focusing in particular on PPE (Project Protect);
 - c) The longer-term work of project DEFEND on non-Category 1 supply chains; and
 - d) Establishment of a programme management office had we been made lead on ‘International Procurement for Medical Supplies’ (in the end this was not needed).

In this note I asked Andrew Mitchell to ensure that Project Protect was deconflicted from the first project [AR/75 INQ000533303].

- 8.10. John Mahon was the lead on Project Protect and took forward the procurement for the consultants. Ernst & Young (EY) provided a tender and were awarded the contract after the candidates were evaluated by DIT, Cabinet Office and Crown Commercial Services. Email and consultancy approvals form provided at AR/75 INQ000533303 and AR/76 INQ000496621.
- 8.11. On 28 April 2020, EY started work on the short-term project, known as Project Protect, to analyse the global PPE market and produce category strategies for a number of key products. The engagement letter is provided at AR/77 INQ000496638. Project Protect ran from 28 April 2020 and concluded on 24 May 2020. It ran in parallel with Project DEFEND and sought to focus on PPE supply chains as an area of high need. I had no direct involvement with the project which was led by Crispin Simon, who was Director of Strategic Projects and lead of the GSSEP International team, and overseen by Andrew Mitchell as SRO for the GSSEP. As set out at section 8 of the DIT corporate witness statement, Project Protect build upon work carried out by Cabinet Office and was to fit into the wider HMG sourcing strategy.
- 8.12. On 5 June 2020, in addressing a table of spending on consultancy services, my office picked up an apparent error in relation to the EY consultancy costs to GSSEP. The EY costs had been listed as having been cleared by a submission to me, whereas I had previously indicated that while I had noted this spending, I had not actually approved it because the spending had already taken place, email provided at AR/78 INQ000496637. In a response to this email from Liz Helps (DIT Deputy Director, Strategic Finance) she apologised for this error and noted that retrospective approval would be obtained from the Secretary of State for International Trade.

Section 9: Ayanda Capital Limited

- 9.1. I have been asked to set out my involvement in the contract with Ayanda Capital for PPE. I was not involved with the award of a PPE contract to Ayanda Capital in April 2020 nor was I party to any discussions around the award of the contract at this time. The issue only crossed my desk in October 2020 in the context of a National Audit Office (**NAO**) report on government procurement during the pandemic. I have set out my involvement at this later stage below.
- 9.2. On 14 October 2020, Alex Chisholm, Permanent Secretary at Cabinet Office, contacted me by text flagging an issue about procurement contracts in which in the view of the NAO conflicts of interest were undermanaged. He gave the example of a company called Ayanda Capital Limited (**Ayanda**) and Andrew Mills, a senior board advisor to Ayanda. My private secretary asked Catherine Vaughan and Paul Kellett to provide advice to me on this issue and, in particular, background on why the NAO may perceive a conflict, what was done to mitigate it and what policies DIT had in place around managing conflicts of interest [AR/79 INQ000533307].
- 9.3. In response to the commission, Paul Kellett sent me a submission that day regarding the signing of a PPE contract for the supply of FFP2 masks with Ayanda [AR/80 INQ000496139].
- 9.4. This submission has been summarised in the DIT corporate witness statement on behalf of DIT in the following terms:

"This was in response to a query from the Chief Operating Officer of the Civil Service regarding potential conflict of interest concerning Andrew Mills and his connections to DIT. The submission stated that Andrew Mills initially registered and progressed the opportunity through DHSC who had "engaged with the China team to conduct some local due diligence on the supplier and product that was being offered which was actioned" although as outlined above it was DIT who had forwarded the offer to the China team to carry out the due diligence checks. The submission noted that Andrew Mills subsequently contacted DIT officials to express concern about media reports of good opportunities for provision of PPE that had been missed. The submission continued, "On receipt of this email, Martin [Kent] highlighted this request to Gus Wiseman (a key DIT lead in JACT) who used the route ("VIP channel") that it had established with DHSC to ensure that credible leads that

came to DIT were seen quickly by DHSC; however on checking, DHSC confirmed they were indeed handling the case (with support from the China team doing due diligence locally)" (paragraph 14.16)

- 9.5. Following receipt of the submission and before replying to Alex Chisholm I asked my office to seek further clarification on the issue, in particular checking whether Catherine Vaughan (Chief Operating Officer) was satisfied that there had not been a conflict or perception of conflict. I was concerned to ensure that DIT had followed the usual process at all times and that there was no risk of conflict, and I did not feel the submission explicitly addressed this point. On 15 October 2020, my office wrote to Catherine Vaughan and Paul Kellett asking for confirmation that they were saying there "... wasn't a conflict because it went through the system in the usual way?" and asking them to confirm that they were "...satisfied that there wasn't a conflict (or perception of conflict) here" and were "satisfied that in raising with DHSC officials, DIT officials were not conflicted or this conflict was managed?". In a further email that day sent to Catherine and Paul from my office it was noted that "*There seems to be a particular question about whether there was a conflict in DIT's handling [of the lead]. AR doesn't think there was a challenge on our role but we would have to be comfortable that nothing different happened from the norm as a result of [f] the individual being a DIT BoT [Board of Trade] advisor at the time.*" [AR/81 INQ000533308]. In a further email, sent on 16 October 2020, my private secretary stated that "*If we cannot say that we followed the usual process then it seems there might have been different treatment in this case from others. If that is the case then we cannot say there was no conflict: if we treated this company differently from others then there is obviously a risk of conflict. The key question for us is was there a conflict or not? Demonstrating no conflict means that we treated the company on [sic] the same way as others (at the same stage). If we cannot say that then the Perm Sec does not see how we can say there was no conflict.*" [AR/82 INQ000533309].
- 9.6. On the basis of the email exchanges between my office, Catherine Vaughan and Paul Kellett, the following reply to Alex Chisholm was drafted:

"On Ayanda, this was a DHSC lead which originated on the DHSC portal. DHSC engaged with the China team to conduct some local due diligence, as with all new suppliers, but DHSC were responsible for contracting. Given DIT had no decision making responsibility in the process, it is difficult to understand what conflict could have arisen? The process followed was the

same as that followed for other offers at the time that came direct into the department. It would be good to have more clarity on the NAO's concerns, to ensure they've understood the scope of our role correctly and check there is not another issue of which we're not aware, that would merit further consideration. Let me know if either I or my Commercial Director should speak to C&AG on this." [AR/82 INQ000533309].

- 9.7. Both Catherine Vaughan and Paul Kellett explicitly confirmed that the above wording was accurate i.e. that the process that was followed was the same as for other offers that came to DIT. I responded to Alex Chisholm to this effect [AR/83 INQ000533310].
- 9.8. Following my message to Alex Chisholm, he suggested that it would be helpful for Paul Kellett to speak to the NAO regarding the Ayanda contract. Paul Kellett spoke to the NAO who advised that he would receive wording from the NAO report specifically regarding DIT and in particular the Ayanda contract on 20 October 2020. My office asked Paul Kellett if we could suggest amendments, and if so for Paul, Catherine Vaughan and Andrew Mitchell to review the wording provided by the NAO and send any proposed amendments for me to consider. [AR/83 INQ000533310]

Section 10: Project Rearview

- 10.1. It has been my practice (since 2013) in a number of roles, that when leading difficult, complex projects it is beneficial to conduct a lessons learned exercise alongside the project, while it is still in flight. The purpose of these exercises is to examine the project through a 'rearview mirror', so that lessons can be learnt and incorporated into later phases of the project.
- 10.2. In late March 2020, I requested that a 'Project Rearview' exercise be set up, in order to track actions and decisions taken in DIT during the pandemic. The review adopted best practice methodology for assessing operational policy and its implementation e.g. the 'Chilcot checklist'. I was conscious that there are risks when doing things at speed, both of making mistakes but also of not learning from those mistakes until after the event. Rearview was intended to shine a light on the reality of what we were doing, test ourselves against best practice, and then learn the lessons to improve our response during the pandemic itself.
- 10.3. The scope for what became Project Rearview is set out at AR/84 INQ000489602 and AR/85 INQ000492394. It listed four objectives:
 - a) To understand how decisions were taken by DIT Ministers and senior decision-making officials on matters of policy relating to COVID-19;
 - b) To understand the approach taken to DIT engagement with wider government and the Centre, including MIGs;
 - c) To understand how decisions were taken by DIT Ministers and senior officials with regard to business continuity and the operation of the department during the COVID-19 outbreak; and
 - d) Review the department's approach to HR management during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 10.4. The Project Rearview Steering Group (**the Steering Group**) was then established by Catherine Vaughan, and first met on 17 April 2020. The meeting minutes are provided at AR/86 INQ000489603. The Steering Group, chaired by Catherine Vaughan, was made up of Directors who were leading key elements of DIT's response to the pandemic. These meetings took place fortnightly and I did not attend them.
- 10.5. In May 2020 I made the decision to make Project Rearview an ongoing, continuous project (because it was clear the pandemic response would persist for some months).

This is reflected in the minutes from the Rearview Steering Group Meeting dated 29 May 2020 [AR/87 INQ000489700].

- 10.6. Phase 1 of Project Rearview ran from 20 May 2020 – 26 October 2020. It covered the identification of high-level themes across DIT workstreams and acted as a collaborative stocktake between different departmental teams. It then set out the project's findings and set out key recommendations. A draft of the Phase 1 Report and a submission explaining how the Report was compiled were first provided to my office on 6 August 2020. Email and draft report at AR/88 INQ000489757 and AR/89 INQ000494170. The draft submission noted that engagement had taken place with both the Department's Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (**ARAC**) and the Government Internal Audit Agency (**GIAA**) who were both supportive of the Department's approach to the project and that the project was being developed to reflect the approach of the EU Exit Review project, because GIAA considered that an example of best practice in lessons learned exercises. The final Phase 1 report is provided at AR/90 INQ000494209. As detailed in section 16 of The DIT Corporate Witness Statement, the report set out a number of thematic recommendations, progress on which were monitored via a tracker, overseen by Catherine Vaughan and the Steering Group.
- 10.7. Phase 2 then covered 13 October 2020 to 23 November 2020. It provided assurance of DIT's Covid-19 response up to and including 1 October 2020. The purpose of phase 2 was to complement the phase 1 work and respond to my request for further detail and assurance on why we had made the decisions we did and what actions we had taken to ensure we were doing the right thing. I was conscious at the time that there would likely be future Public Accounts Committee interest in the work of the Government during the pandemic, and I wanted to ensure we had a contemporaneous log of our actions and decisions to inform that later scrutiny. The Phase 2 report was provided to my office on 2 November 2020. Email and report at AR/91 INQ000489774 and AR/92 INQ000496140.
- 10.8. Phase 3 took place from 23 November 2020 to July 2021. It aimed to consolidate the phase 1 and 2 outcomes and further developed tracking of the Department's pandemic response. The full report is available at AR/93 INQ000496142.
- 10.9. Overall, I think Project Rearview was an effective mechanism for logging the activities and decisions of the Department during the first year of the pandemic. The process itself provided scrutiny to our decision making and allowed us to learn lessons as we

went along, as well as providing assurance to me and the Departmental leadership that we were acting with due consideration to our responsibilities for managing public money and commercial and legal responsibilities while focusing on the priorities for the department and the government.

Section 11: Conclusions and Further Reflections

- 11.1. My main reflections on the performance of the Department during the pandemic is that we were swift to put in place the necessary structures and systems to agree and deliver Ministerial priorities in the first phase. From the point at which we were involved in the wider HMG efforts (coordinated by the centre of government) to support the global procurement of PPE, we worked swiftly to establish first the JACT and then the GSSEP. Looking back at the timeline, I note the compressed period in which we moved from DIT's first involvement in the overall Government procurement work to proposals for new structures to focus on this work, before the government eventually settled on the PPE Taskforce design.
- 11.2. The period between 20 April and 28 April 2020 was the crucial period in deciding upon the cross-Government structures after the initial crisis-response phase. What I recall in the very early phase, is that normal business was deprioritised, and normal administrative ways of working were being suspended as required in order to deliver for the main effort. This meant that structures were being set up and evolved quickly, with different models sometimes operating at different places in the system, while the Centre moved to put in place more formal and streamlined systems. The fact that external experts were being brought in to lead some of the strands of work increased the sense that normal business of Government was being disrupted. In my view, it did not take long for the system to adapt to this new way of working (e.g. the Lord Deighton-led PPE Taskforce).
- 11.3. During this period, my concern was to ensure we were delivering the asks of DIT from the Centre, via Cabinet Office and No. 10 (including direct discussions with the Cabinet Secretary) but also, as set out above, that we were at all times clear on our accountabilities (e.g. exactly what the role of DIT was in PPE procurement, and which department was responsible for actually contracting). Alongside this, in Project DEFEND, we swiftly set up a whole project to interrogate vulnerabilities in supply chains which worked collaboratively across Government and went on to develop into a permanent directorate in DIT responsible for global supply chains.
- 11.4. The work of Project Rearview provided a helpful mechanism for us to learn and improve during the course of the pandemic as well as consider the rationale for actions and decisions being taken. As noted above in section 10, I think the discipline of scrutinising the Department's activity and decision making from an early stage of

the pandemic so that lessons could be learned was a good one, and one that was modelled on best practice.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings 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 of its truth.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 10/01/2025

Annex A: List of Key Meetings

Date	Meeting Type	Chair
03/04/2020	COBR(O)	Katherine Hammond
04/03/2020	NSC(O)	Not stated
13/03/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
16/03/2020	COBR(O)	
18/03/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
20/03/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
24/03/2020	COBR(O)	Cabinet Secretary
25/03/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
26/03/2020	COBR(O)	
27/03/2020	PM chaired meeting re ventilators	PM
30/03/2020	PM Meeting with SoS	N/A
30/03/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
31/03/2020	IMIG	FSS
01/04/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
03/04/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
08/04/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
08/04/2020	EBRS	Charles Roxburgh
15/04/2020	COBR(O)	
21/04/2020	PPE Meeting	Cabinet Secretary
22/04/2020	COBR(O)	
24/04/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
24/04/2020	EBRS	Charles Roxburgh
27/04/2020	PM Strategy Deep Dive: PPE	
28/04/2020	Defend Small Group Meeting	Antonia Romeo
29/04/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
30/04/2020	DEFEND Steering Committee	Antonia Romeo

30/04/2020	IMIG	FSS
01/05/2020	MIG (Healthcare)	Health Secretary
01/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
05/05/2020	Regular Bilateral Meeting with FSS	N/A
06/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
07/05/2020	EBRS	Charles Roxburgh
12/05/2020	Regular Bilateral Meeting with FSS	N/A
13/05/2020	NSC(O)	
13/05/2020	PM PPE Meeting	PM
13/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
14/05/2020	COBR(O)	
15/05/2020	EBRS	Charles Roxburgh
15/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
20/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
21/05/2020	PM PPE Meeting	PM
22/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
27/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
29/05/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
03/06/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
05/06/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
11/06/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
17/06/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
19/06/2020	EBRS	Charles Roxburgh
24/06/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
26/06/2020	EBRS	Charles Roxburgh
26/06/2020	ExCo	Catherine Vaughan
02/07/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS

03/07/2020	ExCo ⁴	Catherine Vaughan
30/07/2020	DEFEND Steering Committee	Antonia Romeo
04/08/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS
02/09/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS
09/09/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS
24/09/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS
30/11/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS
02/12/2020	DEFEND Ministerial Small Group	FSS

⁴ This was the last Covid-19 Friday ExCo after which Covid-19 became a weekly agenda item in the Wednesday meetings.

Annex B – Exhibit List

Exhibit Number	Paragraph	Inquiry Reference Number	Doc Date	Doc Description
AR/01	1.7	INQ000492370	16/03/2020	Letter from Cabinet Secretary to heads of departments
AR/02	2.4 (b)/7.9	INQ000492645	11/05/2020	Letter from Cabinet Secretary to Antonia Romeo
AR/03	2.12/7.4	INQ000493876	23/04/2020	Letter from Antonia Romeo to Cabinet Secretary proposing that purchasing authority remain with DHSC
AR/04	2.15 (f)	INQ000492436	30/04/2020	Readout from 30 April 2020 DEFEND Steering Committee meeting
AR/05	2.15 (f) / 7.18/ 8.9	INQ000494164	30/07/2020	Readout from 30 July 2020 DEFEND Steering Committee meeting
AR/06	3.13 / 8.8	INQ000533284	06/04/2020–07/04/2020	Emails between Antonia Romeo, Andrew Mitchell and John Alty re the Devolved Administrations
AR/07	3.13	INQ000492404	11/04/2020	Email from John Alty to posts re DA's request for assistance with medical procurement
AR/08	3.13	INQ000533289	16/04/2020	Letter from Permanent Secretary of DHSC to Devolved Administrations re international procurement
AR/09	3.14	INQ000496654	04/06/2020	DIT Power Point presentation on Project DEFEND and supply chain resilience
AR/10	5.3	INQ000492376	26/03/2020	Read out of call with Prime Minister re ventilators
AR/11	5.3	INQ000493789	26/03/2020	Emails between Antonia Romeo, John Edwards and others re procurement of ventilators
AR/12	5.5	INQ000493755	12-13/03/2020	Emails between DIT officials and pharmaceutical manufacturer Perrigo re Indian export restrictions on paracetamol
AR/13	5.5	INQ000533290	19-20/04/2020	Emails between Antonia Romeo, Lord Deighton, Andrew Mitchell and others re scope for cooperation between UK and India on medical supplies.
AR/14	5.5	INQ000533609	21/04/2020	Submission from Bijan Hakimian, Head of Trade Policy for India to Secretary of State
AR/15	5.5	INQ000533299	24/04/2020	Email to Antonia Romeo from Bijan Hakimian requesting clearance for Note re PPE supply from India
AR/16	5.5	INQ000533300	24/04/2020	Follow up DIT Note from Bijan Hakimian re PPE supply from India
AR/17	5.6	INQ000533304	11/05/2020	Readout from meeting on 1 May 2020 between Antonia Romeo and Indian Textiles Secretary, Ravi Kapoor

AR/18	5.6	INQ000533305	22/05/2020	Email from the Permanent Secretary's office to Indian Textiles Secretary Ravi Kapoor
AR/19	5.6	INQ000533306	22/05/2020	Letter to Indian Textiles Secretary from Antonia Romeo re provision of PPE in India
AR/20	6.1	INQ000533282	24-25/05/2020	COBR(O) Read Out and Actions
AR/21	6.2	INQ000533284	27/03/2020	Actions from PM 915 C-19 Strategy Meeting
AR/22	6.3	INQ000493791	27/03/2020	Emails between Antonia Romeo, Andrew Mitchell, FCO and DIT officials agreeing that DIT would co-lead with FCO on international supply work
AR/23	6.3	INQ000492377	27/03/2020	Action slides from daily Cabinet Secretary Officials meeting re DIT (Antonia Romeo) working with FCO and NHS to press for increase in supply from China
AR/24	6.4	INQ000533285	07/04/2020	Draft email to DHSC, Cabinet Office and FCO re China Ventilator Order with amends from the Permanent Secretary
AR/25	6.4	INQ000533286	07/04/2020	Email from John Alty to Emily Lawson re clarity on accountabilities and tasking requirements from DHSC
AR/26	6.4	INQ000533287	08/04/2020	Email from Antonia Romeo to John Alty re Cabinet Office overseeing lines of accountability
AR/27	7.1	INQ000533288	08/04/2020	Email from Antonia Romeo to Cabinet Secretary re governance arrangements and the importance of clarity of accountabilities for tasking versus delivery
AR/28	7.2	INQ000493856	20/04/2020	Emails re brief for call with Cabinet Secretary re supply chains work
AR/29	7.3	INQ000492420	21/04/2020	Readout from meeting with Cabinet Secretary, HMT and No.10 re Lord Deighton leading on domestic and DIT on coordinating international supply
AR/30	7.3	INQ000492644	21/04/2020	Action Items from Cabinet Secretary Officials Meeting
AR/31	7.4	INQ000493875	23/04/2020	DIT Plan on International Procurement of Medical Supplies for the Cabinet Secretary
AR/32	7.4	INQ000489610	23/04/2020	Accompanying email submitting DIT Plan to Cabinet Secretary
AR/33	7.5	INQ000489614	23/04/2020	PPE Programme Plan showing roles and responsibilities for securing supply
AR/34	7.5	INQ000493878	23/04/2020	Readout from Cabinet Secretary chaired meeting on PPE

AR/35	7.6	INQ000533302	27/04/2020	Email from Antonia Romeo to Cabinet Secretary re PPE Programme
AR/36	7.8	INQ000493957	07/05/2020	GSSEP Board – Terms of Reference
AR/37	7.9	INQ000489799	19/05/2020	Email attaching letter from Cabinet Secretary
AR/38	7.9	INQ000492646	19/05/2020	Covid-19 Delivery Report
AR/39	7.9	INQ000493988	15/05/2020	Letter from Antonia Romeo to Cabinet Secretary
AR/40	7.9	INQ000489658	15/05/2020	Email to Cabinet Secretary attaching letter from Antonia Romeo
AR/41	7.9	INQ000493987	15/05/2020	GSSEP Organisation Chart
AR/42	7.10	INQ000494076	16/06/2020	Note from Antonia Romeo to Foreign Secretary
AR/43	7.10	INQ000494167	06/08/2020	Letter to Antonia Romeo from Andrew Mitchell re GSSEP closure
AR/44	7.12	INQ000494129	14/07/2020	Submission to Permanent Secretary re International partners Initiative
AR/45	7.12	INQ000489743	21/07/2020	Email chain approving the Submission
AR/46	7.13	INQ000489616	25/04/2020	Email from Emily Beynon re PM's request for consultant project assessing supply chain vulnerabilities
AR/47	7.13	INQ000492508	22/05/2020	Project DEFEND Phase 1 Organogram
AR/48	7.16	INQ000489629	30/04/2020	Letter from Antonia Romeo to Wednesday Morning Colleagues re Project DEFEND
AR/49	7.17	INQ000496639	09/06/2020	Letter from Antonia Romeo to Wednesday Morning Colleagues re completion of Phase 1 and beginning of Phase 2 of Project DEFEND
AR/50	7.18	INQ000494160	30/07/2020	Brief for Project DEFEND Steering Committee meeting
AR/51	7.20	INQ000500144	18/12/2020	Letter from Antonia Romeo to FSS re progress on Project DEEND
AR/52	7.24	INQ000500118	11/05/2020	Letter from Antonia Romeo and attached paper re levers to increase export of PPE to UK
AR/53	7.24	INQ000492457	11/05/2020	Email to FCO attaching above levers note
AR/54	7.25	INQ000493971	13/05/2020	Readout from meeting between Antonia Romeo and FSS re ODA, tariff liberalisation
AR/55	7.25	INQ000492461	12/05/2020	Letter from FSS to Antonia Romeo re note on levers
AR/56	8.2	INQ000533291	22/04/2020	Email from Isabel Summers at Cabinet Office confirming DIT were to choose the consultants for supply chains work
AR/57	8.3	INQ000533292	22/04/2020	Email from Emily Beynon to Antonia Romeo and Oliver Christian at re supply chains commission and potential consultants
AR/58	8.3	INQ000533295	23/04/2020	Email re Supply Chain Terms of Reference

AR/59	8.3	INQ000533294	23/04/2020	Email from Antonia Romeo re Supply Chains consultancy specification
AR/60	8.3	INQ000533293	23/04/2020	Supply Chain Resilience consultancy Terms of Reference
AR/61	8.4	INQ000533297	24/04/2020	Email confirming meeting with McKinsey
AR/62	8.4	INQ000533296	24/04/2020	Email confirming meeting with BCG
AR/63	8.4	INQ000533298	24/04/2020	Email confirming meeting with Bain
AR/64	8.4	ARO_000000089	25/04/2020	Email from Antonia Romeo to CCS and Gareth Rhys Williams which confirmed agreement to proceed with BCG
AR/65	8.5	INQ000533301	24/04/2020	Draft email for No, 10 re supply chains
AR/66	8.6	INQ000494033	02/06/2020	Project DEFEND Accounting Officer Advice
AR/67	8.6	INQ000489696	24/04/2020	Email re DEFEND BCG Contract
AR/68	8.6	INQ000494050	04/06/2020	Submission to Permanent Secretary re conclusion of Phase 1 by BCG and recommendation that BCG consultancy be extended into Phase 2
AR/69	8.6	INQ000496633	04/06/2020	Proposal from BCG re Project DEFEND
AR/70	8.6	INQ000489697	05/06/2020	Email from Office of Permanent Secretary to DIT officials approving the consultancy spend on BCG
AR/71	8.6	INQ000496637	05/06/2020	Further email noting an error in the approval and that the approval would need to be retrospective for Phase 2
AR/72	8.6	INQ000496646	02/07/2020	Submission to Secretary of State for DIT requesting retrospective approval for the BCG consultancy
AR/73	8.6	INQ000492588	11/08/2020	Retrospective approval from Secretary of State for DIT's Office for the consultancy spend provided
AR/74	8.6	INQ000496658	10/08/2020	Engagement Letter for BCG contract extension dated 4 June 20202
AR/75	8.9/8.10	INQ000533303	28/04/2020	Email from Antonia Romeo re consulting projects
AR/76	8.10	INQ000496621	18/05/2020	Consultancy approvals form
AR/77	8.11	INQ000496638	22/06/2020	Engagement Letter for EY contract extension to start on 28 April 2020
AR/78	8.12	INQ000496637	05/06/2020	Email re clearance for consultancy spend
AR/79	9.2	INQ000533307	14/10/2020	Email from Permanent Secretary's Office re contracts advice
AR/80	9.3	INQ000496139	14/10/2020	Submission to Permanent Secretary re Ayanda
AR/81	9.5	INQ000533308	15/10/2020	Email from Permanent Secretary's Office to Paul Kellett and Catherine Vaughan re clarification of whether there was a conflict of interest
AR/82	9.5/ 9.6	INQ000533309	16/10/2020	Email from Permanent Secretary's Office to Paul Kellett and Catherine Vaughan re contracts advice in

				relation to Ayanda and the usual process
AR/83	9.7/9.8	INQ000533310	16/10/2020	Email from Permanent Secretary's Office to Paul Kellett and Catherine Vaughan re contracts advice in relation to Ayanda and the usual process
AR/84	10.3	INQ000489602	20/04/2020	Scope for Project Rearview
AR/85	10.3	INQ000492394	01/04/2020	Email from Permanent Secretary's office listing action items for Project Rearview
AR/86	10.4	INQ000489603	22/04/2020	Minutes from Rearview Steering Group meeting dated 17 April 2020
AR/87	10.5	INQ000489700	19/05/2020	Minutes of Rearview Steering Group Meeting dated 29 May 2020
AR/88	10.6	INQ000489757	06/08/2020	Email to Permanent Secretary's office attaching draft submission providing an update on Project Rearview, and Draft Rearview Report
AR/89	10.6	INQ000494170	06/08/2020	Project Rearview Report (draft)
AR/90	10.6	INQ000494209	02/11/2020	Project Review Report (final)
AR/91	10.7	INQ000489774	02/11/2020	Email to Permanent Secretary's office attaching Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports
AR/92	10.7	INQ000496140	27/11/2020	Project Rearview - Phase 2 Report
AR/93	10.8	INQ000496142	17/10/2020	Project Rearview – Phase 3 Report