Witness Name: David Reed MBE

Statement No: 1

Exhibits: DR/1 – DR/10

Dated: 2 December 2024

THE UNITED KINGDOM COVID 19 INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF DAVID REED

I, **DAVID REED MBE, WILL SAY** as follows:

A. INTRODUCTION

1. My name is David Reed. I am currently Sanctions Director in the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. I was previously Deputy High Commissioner to Canada, based at the British High Commission in Ottawa.

2. I make this statement in response to the request by letter dated 11 June 2024 for evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 made on behalf of Baroness Hallett, Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry ("**the Inquiry**"). I have followed the sequence of that request, and used the headings within it, in the text which follows.

3. The contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I have seen and considered various true copy documents in the course of preparing this statement, whose database reference I have given in square brackets where relevant.

4. I have been asked to provide evidence for the purposes of Module 5 of the Inquiry, the focus of which I understand to be the procurement and distribution to end-users across the four nations of the United Kingdom of key healthcare related equipment and supplies, including PPE, ventilators and oxygen. I have also considered the Scope for Module 5.

B. BACKGROUND

5. I held the position of Deputy High Commissioner to Canada between August 2018 and August 2022.

My role in procurement of key healthcare equipment and supplies

6. In March 2020, I was asked by the then High Commissioner, Susan le Jeune D'Allegeerscheque to take responsibility for responding to instructions to UK posts from the FCDO/DFID Coronavirus Taskforce (**"the Taskforce"**) to identify possible sources of medical equipment for the benefit of the UK. The focus initially was on ventilators, but later shifted to PPE and testing kits.

7. One of my first tasks was working with our Consul General in Toronto to seek to unblock the supply of ventilators from O-Two Medical Technologies Inc (a medical technology manufacturer in Brampton, Canada) to UK hospitals, which had been impacted by restriction of their US supply chain. This involved coordinated lobbying by UK and Canadian ministers to help unblock supply from the US, followed by lobbying of O-Two to expedite onward delivery to the UK. It ultimately resulted in the delivery of at least 485 ventilators to Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals in London.

8. By late March 2020, the Taskforce had shifted its focus onto international procurement of PPE – principally masks, gloves and gowns. Posts, including the UK Canada Network (comprising the High Commission in Ottawa and Consulates-Generals in Calgary, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver), were asked to urgently identify possible sources of supply. To do this, I established a small team of around five staff (the **"Canada PPE Team"**), drawn principally from the trade and investment teams in the High Commission and Consulates-Generals in Toronto and Montreal. Their role was to identify, through their networks of contacts with Canadian business and government entities and their own research, potential suppliers of medical equipment to the UK.

9. The Canada PPE Team drew heavily on the support of the UK Consul Generals based in Montreal, Calgary, Toronto and Vancouver – who were asked to prioritise potential leads based on company size, reputation and capacity to supply. This work was co-ordinated closely with the North America trade teams based in the US.

10. By mid-April 2020, the team had identified around 20 potential suppliers. Credible leads were passed to the Joint Assistance and Coordination Team (**"JACT"**) in London, alongside basic information requested by JACT on the location of manufacture and the reputation of the company.

The High Priority Lane

11. I have been asked about my understanding of, and any involvement I may have had with, the High Priority Lane.

12. I do not have any knowledge of the High Priority Lane (**"HPL"**), save for that which I have acquired in understanding and responding to the Inquiry's request for evidence. I had no involvement in the HPL's conception, establishment, operation or supervision.

13. I am aware that my name is recorded as the "Source of referral" for the supplier Medicom Healthcare Holding within information about PPE procurement in the early pandemic published on the internet by the Department of Health and Social Care (**"DHSC"**) (at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ppe-procurement-in-the-early-pandemic). I was notified of this in advance of publication of that information by letter from the Director, PPE Policy and Strategy at DHSC dated 1 November 2021 **DR1 / [FCO00002188] and DR2 / [FCO00002189]**. I address my relevant involvement in the following section.

C. REFERRALS

14. One of the leads which the Canada PPE team identified as credible was AMD Medicom Inc (**"Medicom"**).

15. On 22 April 2020, the trade and investment team at the British Consulate-General in Montreal spoke to the CEO of Medicom, Ronald Reuben, and his team. The content of the discussion was summarised in an email from the Investment Officer for DIT in Montreal, into which I was copied, dated 23 April 2020 **DR3 / [FCO00002190]**.

16. Among other things, Medicom communicated that it was looking to establish a brownfield facility in the UK that would be compatible with its business model and

production process for the manufacture of N95 medical respiratory masks. It further stated that it could expedite operations so as to supply the UK with masks within months.

17. Given those matters, and the potential gain from securing foreign direct investment, I asked the team to prioritise this lead and for it to be fed back to JACT. This was done on 23 April **DR3 / [FCO00002190]**.

18. I understand that it is because I led the team which referred Medicom to the JACT that I came to be recorded as the 'source of referral' in the table of HPL suppliers and referrers published by DHSC.

19. The lead was picked up by a combination of Will Turnbull (the North America lead in the Healthcare & Life Sciences team in DIT) and Marie-Aude Pilkington (on the investment side), together with the new Canada lead in JACT, Rebecca Norton-Price.

20. I was clear with Ms Norton-Price and her colleagues that I saw Medicom as having the highest potential from within the leads the Canada PPE Team had shared with London and, together with HMTC North America Antony Phillipson, asked for it be given enhanced attention **DR4 / [FCO00002183]**. This was partly driven by a concern that a slow speed of response by JACT might mean that opportunities were missed in the context of a highly competitive market for PPE.

21. The Medicom lead was given high priority by JACT and developed into two strands of work:

    a. The negotiation of a contract for supply of N95 masks from one of Medicom's European subsidiaries. The contract was negotiated directly by the DHSC team, without any involvement of the Canada Network (beyond confirming the company's good standing in Canada). I understand a contract was agreed in May.

    b. The establishment of a UK factory. The investment team based in the Consulate-General Montreal, working with the investment teams in DIT London, provided support with, for example, the identification of suitable sites. A contract was signed on 19 June 2020. A factory was established in Northampton and was fully operational by June 2021.

22. I was not involved in the detail of either of those strands of work. Separately, I corresponded and spoke with Medicom in June 2020 regarding an urgent request for gloves to meet a short-term need, but in that regard did no more than communicate information between London and Medicom. **DR5 / [FCO00002184]**

23. I continued to take an interest in the two principal strands of work mentioned above, looking for opportunities to celebrate Medicom's investment in the UK as an example of UK/Canada collaboration, for example through press releases or possible UK ministerial visits. This was not least because it was the only PPE lead from those identified by the Canada PPE Team which developed into concrete supply. I kept myself updated on: a) the status of the contract; and b) Medicom's investment in the UK. On a), this involved me or the Canada PPE team asking the UK PPE team for updates in June 2022 on at least two occasions **DR6 / [FCO00002200] DR7 /[FCO00002217].** I had no involvement in the commercial negotiation of the contract but was interested to know when it had been concluded in order to be able to celebrate this as an example of UK/Canada collaboration, either in private contacts with Canadian ministers or senior officials or in public communications. On b), this involved the Canada PPE team speaking to Medicom every few months until establishment of the factory in June 2021 as part of the normal support provided by UK missions to potential investors in the UK.

24. In the same vein, I had some small involvement in correspondence about the Medicom press release announcing the signature of the UK factory contract **DR8 / [FCO00002185]** and provided Medicom with advice on UK quarantine rules and exemptions in September 2020, when a team from the company was planning a short visit as part of a round trip taking in several different countries. **DR9 / [FCO00002186] and DR10 / [FCO00002187]**. I also met with Mr Reuben in Ottawa, and visited the Medicom site in Montreal, posting about such matters on the High Commission's social media account. In those interactions, as previously, I was not engaged in, or aware of the detail of, any commercial negotiations.

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: PD

Name: DAVID REED

Dated: 02/12/2024