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5 November 2020

Dear Joan,

Thank you for your letter of 13th October, on behalf of the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, with regard to the review of the Scottish Government's approach to international development debated in the Scottish Parliament on 6th October 2020.

I am pleased to accept the Committee's invitation to give evidence on the review at the Committee meeting - on the morning of 3rd December 2020, as confirmed by the Committee Clerks.

As regards the Committee's request for more detail on the precise remit, terms of reference, methodology and timescale for the review:

Remit and terms of reference for the review

In the Scottish Government's Programme for Government published on 1st September 2020, we set out our intention to review our approach to international development. In both the Programme for Government, and since then in the series of events which I have hosted or attended in relation to the review, I have set out the purpose of this review. This is that I want to ensure that going forward we are focusing our work on areas where we can make the biggest contribution and difference in our partner countries against the backdrop of the new reality of COVID-19. As I highlighted in the recent debate on the review in the Scottish Parliament, every bit of the Scottish Government's work has been affected by Covid, including the vital work in international development. Accordingly, in this area, as in all others, we are faced with a renewed and unexpected challenge. It is for that reason that it felt right to pause and reflect on the programme at this time.

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The review will allow us to consider how to future-proof our programme, but also to consider the impact of movements such as Black Lives Matter in the context of international development. As I set out in the Scottish Parliamentary debate that I led on 6th October - earlier this year, I listened to my colleague Humza Yousaf make one of the most powerful contributions in the chamber that I have ever heard; he spoke of the whiteness of Scotland's judicial system and outlined the dire need for progress for Scotland's black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. I left the chamber that day and thought about the vast and overwhelming number of white faces I have met in person, or virtually, since taking up office in February. I therefore also want to use this review to consider how we – the Scottish Government and the wider sector in Scotland - should respond to the concerns about “white gaze” in the international development sector, playing our part to properly consider the issues and set an example from Scotland.

In terms of the review's remit, when I wrote to the Conveners of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Groups on International Development, Malawi and Fair Trade on 4th September, I set out my clear intention that our programme as a whole would be considered within the review. I also set out that, in particular, I want to give consideration to the balance of spend in future between Scotland and our partner countries, in light of our commitment to partner-led development. Further, that I was keen that we review our approach against and in line with a set of key Principles, to ensure, for example, that our programme: supports partner-led development; takes an inclusive approach that breaks “white gaze”, in line with concerns raised recently by the Black Lives Matters movement; and is future-proofed in relation to both COVID-19 and climate change.

We have published those draft Principles, and they are available publicly on our Scottish Government website: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/international-development/2020-covid-19-review/>.

Methodology and timescale for the review

As regards your query on methodology for the review, I have explained to Parliament and through our review events that we are not running a formal written consultation in the way that we did in 2016, where at that time we were aiming to arrive at a new Scottish Government international development policy. Within this 2020 review, our partner countries are not changing. What we are looking at and reviewing instead is our approach to our work: to ensure that going forward we are focusing our work on areas where we can make the biggest contribution and difference in our partner countries against the backdrop of the new reality of COVID-19; and with a resulting refresh of our Strategy in mind.

However, I am engaging on the review through a series of both meetings and public events:

- reflecting my commitment to partner-led and inclusive development, my aim has been to discuss with each of our partner country Governments as to their thematic priorities for our partnership for this next phase of post COVID-19 recovery; together with the in-country roundtable events with civil society in our partner countries on the review (for example, in Malawi, the Malawi Scotland Partnership hosted an event for me on 14 October to hear Malawians views direct), their views will help us reshape our programme for the next few years to respond to the new backdrop of COVID-19;
- in Scotland, I have been keen to discuss with the sector and others our draft set of key Principles – how we ensure our programme: supports needs led development; takes an inclusive approach that breaks “white gaze”; and is future-proofed in relation to both COVID-19 and climate change – and those events for the sector in Scotland have begun already;

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- I have hosted an academic roundtable, with leading academics from universities and other educational institutions across our partner countries – joined by academics from Scotland - on the challenges they see as we progress through the pandemic; discussing with them the draft Principles that we have drawn up for our Programme; and
- in line with my commitment to be open and work with partners through this review, I have also been clear with the organisations that we currently core fund that, given that our programme as a whole will be considered within the review, this will include core funding arrangements under the International Development Fund. Core funding arrangements are a key part of our current programme and therefore it is right that this spend is equally considered as part of the review. I will be meeting each of the organisations that we currently core fund – Scotland’s International Development Alliance, the Scotland Malawi Partnership, the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, and the Malawi Scotland Partnership – over the next few weeks to discuss, in light of our draft Principles: how they will respond to address issues of “white gaze”, what they might do differently with Scottish Government core funding, and how they might refocus/remodel those elements of their current business plans which are core funded by the Scottish Government in line with the Principles.

The full list of public events which I will host or attend, as part of the Scottish Government review of its approach to international development, are again set out on the Scottish Government’s website: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/international-development/2020-covid-19-review/>, and include that in the weeks since the Debate:

- I have attended Scotland’s International Development Alliance quarterly roundtable on 7th October, to discuss the review and other lives issues with their members;
- I have attended a roundtable hosted for me by the Malawi Scotland Partnership in Lilongwe with Malawi civil society to listen to their views in relation to prioritisation of thematic areas in light of COVID-19;
- I have hosted a Civil Society workshop with the Scottish international development sector, on 28th October (with this session again to be repeated on 3rd November to enable wider access), to reflect on, and discuss, the draft set of Principles underpinning our Review;
- I am arranging similar roundtables to that hosted for me by MaSP in Malawi, now to hear direct from Zambian and Rwandan civil society through virtual roundtables; and
- on 4 November, I attended the International Development CPG, in the same way that I attended the Malawi CPG in September.

The Committee may also wish to be aware of the range of review reports relating to international development and humanitarian assistance, that we had commissioned over the last year and which I am also considering as part of the review process. These include: the Fair Trade in Scotland review; the International Small Grants Programme Review; the School Partnerships and School Visits in a Global Citizenship Context review; and the Humanitarian Emergency Fund Review. Again, in a spirit of openness, all of these Reports have been published on our webpage, as above.

Finally, in terms of time frames, I have set out my intention to have completed the review by the end of this year, in order to respond to COVID-19.

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I look forward to meeting with the Committee on 3rd December.

Yours sincerely,

JENNY GILRUTH

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