

17 February 2021

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Dear Foreign Secretary,

**Official development assistance and modern slavery**

I am writing in my capacity as the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, a statutory provision of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Within this, I have a UK-wide remit to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of modern slavery and human trafficking offences and the identification of victims. Internationally, I have a particular interest in the role of official development assistance (ODA) in tackling modern slavery and am concerned about the impact of cuts to the UK aid budget on these vital efforts.

The UK Government has long demonstrated strong international leadership in the global fight against slavery. The Walk Free Foundation recently recognised the UK's leading role in their Measurement Action Freedom report, which assessed government progress towards achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 8.7<sup>1</sup>. In October 2020 the Independent Commission for Aid Impact published its review of the UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme<sup>2</sup>. This too emphasised the prominent role the UK Government has played in raising the profile of the issue globally. It also made important recommendations to strengthen the evidence base, draw from the experience of survivors, strategically mainstream its approach and work more closely with stakeholders, including the private sector and partner governments. I was encouraged by the Government's response to the review, which reaffirmed its commitment to tackling modern slavery as a priority<sup>3</sup>.

Recent FCDO commissioned research by the UN University clearly articulates how tackling modern slavery contributes to sustainable development by protecting and maximising people's economic agency<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, there are clear synergies between modern slavery and the seven priorities

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<sup>1</sup> Walk Free Foundation (2020) [Measurement Action Freedom Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> ICAI (2020) [The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme](#)

<sup>3</sup> FCDO (2020) [HMG Response to the ICAI recommendations on: UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme](#)

<sup>4</sup> UN University (2021) [Developing Freedom: The Sustainable Development Case for Ending Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking](#)

you have set out to drive global action on development<sup>5</sup>. The UK , along with many other countries, is facing unprecedented challenges. I hope that, in spite of the real economic pressure, the UK can continue to play a leading role in global anti-slavery efforts. As you quite rightly set out in your statement to the House of Commons in November 2020, this is a year of leadership for Global Britain as a force for good in the world<sup>6</sup>.

I look forward to receiving your response. In the interests of transparency, I request that you respond in a way that enables me to publish your letter on my website.

Yours sincerely,



**Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**

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<sup>5</sup> Climate change and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science research, technology; open societies and conflict resolution; humanitarian preparedness and response; trade and economic development.

<sup>6</sup> The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP (2020) [ODA: Foreign Secretary's statement, November 2020](#)