Dear Tom,

I was looking forward to giving evidence to the Committee on 24 July 2019 on the Global Campaign for Media Freedom and was sorry this was not possible, given the change that day in Prime Ministerial and Ministerial appointments.

I welcome your and the Committee’s interest and support for the campaign. Please find answers to the Committee’s questions in the enclosed memorandum. We look forward to receiving your report, which will be a valuable contribution to enhancing how we develop the campaign over the coming months and years.

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON
Minister of State for the Commonwealth, UN and South Asia
Prime Minister’s Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict
Prime Minister’s Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR MEDIA FREEDOM
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE UPDATE AUGUST 2019

In November 2018, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office launched the campaign to shine a global spotlight on the issue of media freedom and increase the costs to those who attempt to restrict it.

As part of the campaign, the UK and Canada co-hosted a Global Conference for Media Freedom at Printworks in London on 10-11 July 2019. The Conference brought together representatives from governments, civil society and the media in the first ever Ministerial gathering of its kind. Over 60 Ministers and 1500 delegates from 100 countries participated.

Over the two days there were 25 different panel discussions on a variety of issues around media freedom. The Conference set out the importance of media freedom to democracy, global stability and prosperity, and galvanised more support from governments and other actors behind the protection of journalists and wider media freedom.

We envisage the campaign running for five years to achieve sustainable impact, led each year by a different country. Canada have committed to leading the campaign in 2020 and will host the next annual conference, with the UK staying involved through a small steering committee with past and future hosts. Countries are already lining up for future years.
As announced at the Conference, we have launched a Media Freedom Coalition to champion media freedom globally. That will include a range of countries from all regions of the world who are committed to this cause. Members of the Coalition are committing to take action on individual cases through a contact group between foreign ministries and diplomatic missions to raise issues around restrictions on media freedom and lobby on cases of abuses against the media both privately and in public as appropriate.

We will work with UNESCO and civil society partners to assist countries in developing National Action Plans on the Safety and Protection of Journalists. A new dedicated international Task Force, including multilateral bodies such as UNESCO, the OSCE and Open Government Partnership, will assist governments in developing such Plans. The UK and Canada also initiated the Global Media Defence Fund to provide more financial assistance on media freedom, including training and legal assistance for journalists at risk.

How, and with what metrics, will the success of this campaign be measured? For example, at the hoped-for Global Conference on Media Freedom next year? And does the FCO also have countries where it has prioritised wanting to achieve impact?

Since the very start of the campaign and through to the preparations for the Conference, we have maintained close consultation with a variety of stakeholders from media, academia and civil society to ensure regular feedback on how the campaign is developing. Following the Conference, various stakeholders commented positively on how the FCO had conducted much more extensive consultations on this campaign than they had experienced previously. This was seen as a key factor in how the campaign is providing a strong platform for mobilising support on media freedom and considering how to increase the costs and accountability for those who restrict it.

We recognise that measurement of the campaign is complex. We are unlikely to be able to attribute improvements in media freedom in specific countries directly to the efforts made through the campaign. However, we are aiming to ensure that we base what we do on the best available evidence from experts, design campaign initiatives that respond to that evidence and then measure how successfully we deliver them. If there are improvements in media freedom in specific countries that occur in the places where we have undertaken specific efforts, we will not be able to claim these are because of our work, but we should be able to identify where they have had a potential contributory impact.

We will measure success of the campaign through three principal means:

i) Impact of the Media Freedom Coalition in raising the profile of media freedom issues within multilateral fora and through lobbying on specific cases;

ii) Development of national action plans on the safety of journalists, leading to a change in policies, legislation or actions that improve media freedom in individual countries;

iii) Implementation of programmes in individual countries to improve media freedom and the support available to journalists at risk, including through the Global Media Defence Fund and bilateral funding.

The Media Freedom Coalition and its contact group, announced at the Conference, will bring an international focus to the problem of media freedom and will hold countries who sign up to the campaign Pledge1 and commit to improving media freedom to account on their

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1 The campaign Pledge is available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-pledge-on-media-freedom/global-pledge-on-
progress. We anticipate members of the Coalition making collective statements in international and regional fora, which will increase the scrutiny and pressure being given to these issues. So one measure will be the frequency and effect of such statements. The Coalition and civil society will also work together to harness diplomatic resources from a wider range of governments to lobby countries rapidly and effectively on specific cases. We are in discussion with the various expert groups on this set of issues, including the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters without Borders, and the various Special Rapporteurs, to agree modalities.

Wider stakeholders from civil society and multilateral organisations will work with the international Task Force on national action plans on the safety of journalists to help provide the support countries need to improve their media freedom landscape. Through the Coalition and Task Force, we will encourage each government to consider how they can address the underlying issues that impact on their ranking in the various press freedom indices. Over time, this should result in adjustments to legislation, policies and actions that improve media freedom. As increasing numbers of countries improve, this should leave those who are not making such efforts more isolated in international circles.

To assess impact of programmes on media freedom in individual countries, specific metrics will be developed against the relevant programme framework. The measurement framework for the Global Media Defence Fund is being developed by UNESCO, who will administer it on behalf of the various donors who are contributing.

We anticipate the annual Conference, the next one to be hosted by Canada, will review the overall progress made by the Media Freedom Coalition, Task Force and Global Media Defence Fund and see what more can be done.

For the UK Government’s part of the campaign effort, we are holding discussions with a number of UK academic institutions on how to undertake a monitoring and evaluation process for the campaign.

The FCO gave two different figures and two different forms of wording for the Funds that support its media freedom campaign, in its two submissions to the inquiry so far. In March, it said £294,000 from the “Global Britain Fund”. In July, it said £4.5+ million, from the “International Fund”. Why has the amount, and the name of the Funds, changed?

In March 2019, £294,000 was allocated to media freedom projects from FCO departmental programme budgets for the financial year 2019/20. From the start of the 2019/20 financial year, what was formerly called the FCO departmental programme budget (known internally as the Global Britain Fund) became known as the International Programme. In April 2019, the Global Campaign was allocated an additional £4.1m from the International Programme.

This allocation to the Global Campaign from the International Programme comprises both ODA and non-ODA allocations that cover funding for the Global Conference for Media Freedom which took place in London on 10-11 July as well as for a range of programmes to promote media freedom across the globe, which are being developed through our diplomatic missions. Hence the total funding allocated for media freedom through the International Programme Fund for 2019/20 of approximately £4.5m. Our previous submission outlined the anticipated costs for the Global Conference that will fall to this budget allocation.
The FCO’s March submission refers to an “existing” international legal framework, the “UN Convention on Journalist Protection.” But no such Convention exists. What was the FCO referring to? There is a draft Convention on this subject, drafted by the International Federation of Journalists. But the IFJ says that the FCO has not supported this. Why?

The reference to the “UN Convention on Journalist Protection” was erroneously included in the previous submission as an example of a current human rights structure.

There are existing international human rights frameworks and instruments in place which provide sufficient protection for all. The problem is one of implementation and not of standards. We are currently considering how the Global Campaign can best add value and reinforce existing mechanisms, including those of the UN and other international organisations, to have real impact on the ground.

The UK has committed £3 million to a new Global Media Defence Fund. What will it and won’t it pay for? For example, many witnesses have told us how independent media organisations are struggling to fund their core operations. Will the UK be seeking to assist them with this?

The new Global Media Defence Fund – to be administered by UNESCO – will support, train and provide legal support for journalists in the most dangerous parts of the world.

The UK will provide £3 million over the course of 5 years, and Canada will make an additional Can $1 million contribution for the FY 2019-2020 to help kick-start the Fund.

The fund will support media freedom in a variety of ways, including:

- defending journalists, including through supporting access to legal services;
- training journalists, including in personal safety;
- establishing peer support networks for freelance journalists;
- supporting countries in developing National Action Plans through a dedicated Task Force involving UNESCO and others;
- assisting the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom by funding its Secretariat and the commissioning of research.

The Global Media Defence Fund does not focus on wider sustainability of free, independent media, which is being considered through other mechanisms.

We agree that it is important to find ways to enable sustainable financing models for the core operations of independent media organisations. At the Global Conference for Media Freedom, DFID announced up to £12 million to support creative ways for independent media outlets to develop better business models, with a focus on Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Sierra Leone. DFID is also participating in donor discussions to improve the quality, quantity and coordination of independent media development support. Luminate have commissioned a study on options for future financing models for sustaining free, independent media, being conducted by BBC Media Action. Initial findings from this research were discussed at the Global Conference.
The additional funding to the World Service ends in March 2020. We understand there’s been a six-month extension. Is that correct? Will the FCO commit to at least extend that by a further six months, to give the BBC more financial certainty?

The FCO supports the BBC’s mission to bring high quality and impartial news to global audiences. The World Service brings the UK to the world, providing a link to the UK for people and communities who would not otherwise have this opportunity. It helps the BBC’s international mission to address the global gap in trusted international news, by providing accurate, impartial and independent news and analysis of the highest quality.

The BBC’s World Service’s ‘World2020’ programme, which is funded by HMG, has helped to propel the BBC to its highest ever global viewership, with a weekly audience of 426m in 2018/19, up from 376m in 2017/18. ‘World2020’ has expanded the BBC World Service’s digital, TV and audio offering, including new and enhanced services. 12 new language services have been launched and are Yoruba, Pidgin, Igbo (Nigeria) Amharic, Oromo (Ethiopia), Tigrinya (Eritrea) Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Telugu (India), Korean and Serbian. This is one of the largest expansions of the BBC World Service in over 70 years. Funding for the programme has been agreed up to 30 September 2020 and we continue to discuss funding beyond this period with the BBC and HM Treasury.

The FCO have been liaising with the BBC World Service on how to design and implement the Global Campaign, with the BBC contributing through a number of initiatives, including their Director General acting as a keynote speaker at the plenary session of the Global Conference, facilitating a discussion hub at the event and providing panellists for parallel sessions.

August 2019