



House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee

Global Britain: Government Response to the Sixth Report of the Committee

**Tenth Special Report of
Session 2017–19**

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The Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

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The following Members were also members of the Committee during the Parliament:
Ms Nusrat Ghani MP and Nadhim Zahawi MP

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/facom and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Tom Goldsmith and Hannah Bryce (Clerks), Dr Ariella Huff (Senior Committee Specialist), Ashlee Godwin, Emma Makey, Dr Eoin Martin and Hannah Stone (Committee Specialists), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), Zara Emmett and Matthew Chappell (Committee Assistants) and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

Contacts

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Tenth Special Report

On 12 March 2018, the Foreign Affairs Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2017–19, on Global Britain. The response was received on 6 June 2018. The response is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

This Government takes note of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report on ‘Global Britain’, published on 12 March 2018.

This report sets out the Government’s initial response to the Committee’s conclusions and recommendations. The Committee’s text is in bold and the Government’s response is in plain text. Paragraph numbers refer to the ‘conclusions and recommendations’ of the Committee’s report.

2. For Global Britain to be more than a worthy aspiration, the slogan must be backed by substance.

The Government believes that Global Britain is already backed by substance. In essence, Global Britain is about demonstrating how our country is increasingly open, outward-looking and confident on the world stage. Recent events provide important illustrations.

After the Salisbury poisonings in March, the Government removed 23 undeclared intelligence officers from the Russian embassy in London. But it was the solidarity of Britain’s allies around the world that produced the biggest coordinated expulsion of Russian envoys in the annals of diplomacy. Twenty eight countries on three continents and NATO evicted 130 Russian officials from their respective capitals, bringing the total sent home to 153. This episode might serve as an object lesson in the skill and professionalism of British diplomacy and the strength of our global friendships.

Soon afterwards, 46 presidents and prime ministers gathered in London for one of the biggest summits in British history. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April demonstrated this country’s enduring power to convene. Our ministers and diplomats took the opportunity to secure agreement from all Commonwealth members to advance our shared priorities, including the expansion of girls’ education, protecting the oceans and strengthening cyber security.

The UK has a vital interest in European security and in July we will host a summit of the Berlin Process on the Western Balkans.

The Committee will note that Britain’s global diplomatic network is now expanding. Flags are going up, not being hauled down. The FCO will deploy another 250 UK-based diplomats overseas and open at least 10 more missions, starting with nine new Posts in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

In sum, the Government is strengthening Britain’s ability to safeguard our interests and advance our values across the world. This is Global Britain in action.

2. The Government must commit sufficient resources to achieve its ambitions around the world—including reinforcing the FCO in Asia as well as in Europe.

The Committee might wish to note the following details. In 2015, the FCO's core budget of £1.2 billion was protected for the Spending Review period. New funding is now being made available specifically for Global Britain and EU Exit activity, bringing the core budget up to £1.3bn.

We will open new diplomatic posts in: Lesotho, Swaziland, The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. The 250 extra diplomats will be deployed across the world but with a particular focus on regions—including Asia—where they will deliver the greatest impact. We will provide the Committee with more information in due course.

2. The Government's failure to secure the election of a UK judge to the International Court of Justice in November 2017, as well as damaging UK influence, is clear evidence that the Government needs to work harder and do more to deliver on its promise to strengthen the rules-based international order.

This Government responded on 26 April to the Committee's separate report on this election. For completeness, the relevant section was as follows:

“The Government recognises that defeat in the election means that for the first time there is no UK judge on the ICJ; however it does not accept the Committee's conclusion that the election result is damaging to the UK's overall influence at the UN.”

The Government is confident of our ability to represent the UK's interests through the UN and other multilateral bodies. In May we brought together 11 countries formally to ask the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to convene a special conference of states parties in order to reinforce the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Committee will note that on 31 May a British barrister, Karim Khan QC, was appointed as head of the UN Investigative Team into Daesh crimes in Iraq. This investigation was itself the product of a British-sponsored UN Resolution.

3. For the UK to demonstrate genuine global leadership, its foreign policy requires coherent strategic direction, supported by adequate resources. This should be based on a clear-eyed assessment of the UK's interest and position in the world. In conducting such an assessment, the Government will need to go further than its memorandum. By the end of that process, it must be able to answer the following questions:

- What does the UK want to achieve in the world?
- What is the UK's unique selling point as a global player, and what do other countries want from the UK?
- What bilateral and multilateral relationships and institutions should the UK prioritise?

- **On what global issues can the UK have the biggest impact and exercise the most leverage?**
- **What does Global Britain mean to the people of the UK, and how might a ‘truly global’ foreign policy benefit them?**
- **What policy-making infrastructure and what resources are needed across Whitehall to realise the Government’s global aspirations, and what specific role should the FCO play in this?**
- **What metrics can be used to measure the success of Global Britain?**

The answers to these questions should be made public so that the British people and others can know what the Government intends by Global Britain, and so that our allies and friends can support and partner with us effectively

The Government welcomes the Committee’s scrutiny and endorses the pertinence of the questions listed above. Our approach rests upon two related premises: that Britain is by history and tradition a profoundly internationalist country and we have considerable strengths to bring to bear.

Taking those in turn, Britain possesses both a unique network of global friendships and proportionately one of the biggest diasporas of any country of our size and wealth. Over five million Britons live overseas, including, for example, 170,000 in the Gulf and 200,000 in South Africa. This means the UK is more immediately and directly affected by global events than many of our neighbours.

A further illustration might be the fact that Britain is responsible for a greater expanse of the world’s oceans than Brazil, Canada or China. Including the Overseas Territories, the UK’s “maritime estate” covers 2.6 million square miles—an area more than twice the size of India. With the cooperation of the Overseas Territories, the Government plans to safeguard 1.5 million square miles of ocean with a “Blue Belt” of marine protected areas by 2020.

Our national strengths begin with Britain’s position as the 5th biggest economy in the world, allowing the UK to have the largest defence and overseas aid budgets in Europe. Today, Britain combines permanent membership of the UN Security Council with possession of a nuclear deterrent, globally deployable armed forces, the biggest financial centre in Europe, highly capable intelligence agencies, a worldwide diplomatic network and representation on every leading multilateral body, including NATO, the G7 and the G20. In the vital field of soft power, independent studies suggest the UK is rivalled only by the United States. No other country of our size and wealth possesses a similar combination of assets.

The challenge is to mobilise these strengths to protect the interests and advance the values of the British people. The overarching goal is to preserve the rules-based international system that has underpinned global prosperity and security for over seven decades.

The Government agrees with the need for coherent strategic direction of foreign policy. We have established a new cross-HMG Global Britain Board, chaired by an FCO Director General, Deborah Bronnert. A Global Britain Taskforce has been created in the FCO to

implement the expansion of the diplomatic network, take forward policy development and devise metrics for measuring progress. The examples already given demonstrate how UK diplomacy is making a real difference.

3. We urge the Prime Minister to make a keynote speech to the House, setting out as a matter of priority the strategic thinking behind our foreign policy and the objectives we are seeking to achieve as a nation.

As you highlight in your report, the Prime Minister has made a number of speeches that outline the overarching ambition for Global Britain, for example at the UN General Assembly on 20 September 2017. In Munich on 17 February 2018 she described our post EU Exit ambitions for security and defence cooperation. The Foreign Secretary also addressed these issues in his Mansion House speech on 29 March 2018.

4. The FCO should begin this process immediately by placing online, in one place, all the statements and speeches that Ministers have made about Global Britain, and all other Government documents in the public domain that set out what Global Britain means, translated into the world's ten most-used languages. This website should be highlighted prominently on the FCO's landing page, allowing both the UK public and audiences overseas to read for themselves the Government's current stated approach to Global Britain.

This Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation to greater publicise the relevant speeches and statements of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. We are responding by making them more accessible and visible on the FCO and Gov.uk websites.

Our global diplomatic network also disseminates key messages through a variety of media, including by translating speeches into local languages. Since August 2016, an internal Global Britain communications campaign has supplied our Posts around the world with a weekly pack of information, messages and speeches.