

House of Commons
International Development
Committee
**AFGHANISTAN: THE
TRANSITION FROM
HUMANITARIAN RELIEF
TO RECONSTRUCTION
AND DEVELOPMENT
ASSISTANCE:
GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE to the
Committee's First Report of
Session 2002–03**

Third Special Report of Session
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THIRD SPECIAL REPORT

**The International Development Committee has agreed to the following
Special Report:**

AFGHANISTAN: THE TRANSITION FROM HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S FIRST REPORT OF SESSION 2002–03

The International Development Committee reported to the House on Afghanistan: the Transition from Humanitarian Relief to Reconstruction and Development Assistance in its First Report of Session 2002–03, published on 23 January 2003 as HC 84. The Government Response to that Report was received on 28 March 2003 in the form of a memorandum to the Committee. It is reproduced as an Appendix to this Special Report.

APPENDIX

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE FIRST REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE IN SESSION 2002-03, ON AFGHANISTAN: THE TRANSITION FROM HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

MEMORANDUM FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

II. RESOURCES

1. Recommendation: We welcome the involvement of regional donors in making pledges to Afghanistan. For too long it has been the same set of countries which put their hands in their pockets when it comes to giving development aid. We urge the UK government to seek to encourage other developed countries to play their full part in the international development system (paragraph 13).

Government response: We also welcome the involvement of a number of regional donors in Afghanistan. We agree that other countries could also play a greater role in the international development system. DFID already has some contact with those countries that are observers at the OECD Development Assistance Committee (eg South Korea, Hungary, Poland), both within the DAC and sometimes bilaterally. We encourage them to build poverty reduction into their programmes from the outset and consider how their still limited funds can be used most effectively to this end, building on existing best practice within the donor community.

2. Recommendation: There needs to be a rolling programme of pledging, measured against progress on the ground in Afghanistan, to give all donors a chance to demonstrate their continuing commitment and to ensure that they will not leave Afghanistan as a job half completed. There should also be a timetable within which the international community aims to hand over areas of responsibility to the Afghan Transitional Administration (paragraph 17).

Government response: In January 2002, in Tokyo, the international community pledged \$4.5 billion for Afghanistan. The pledges covered periods from one to 5 years. At the Afghanistan Development Forum (ADF) in Kabul in March, donors reaffirmed their commitment to provide over \$1.8 billion in 2003/04. We agree that it would be best for donors to pledge funds to a rolling medium-term expenditure framework of the Afghanistan Transitional Administration (ATA). We welcome the ATA's presentation of a three year Development Budget at the Afghanistan Development Forum. The ATA announced its intention to hold a further pledging conference to cover estimated needs of \$15–20bn over the next five years later in 2003. The UK at the ADF reaffirmed its Tokyo commitment to provide £40m per year for five years and announced that this could be increased by up to another £40m over the next three years, depending on the performance of Afghanistan, particularly in reforming the public administration.

The ATA has assumed responsibility for the development of Afghanistan and for directing international assistance to priority needs. Donors have undertaken to use their funding to support the priorities set out by the ATA in their Budget, including through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The speed at which donors will move towards direct budget support, however, must be based on evidence of progress in building government capacity, and not a pre-determined timetable.

3. Recommendation: Sufficient funds must be available for both reconstruction and humanitarian relief and better information about needs will be important in determining how much money is required. We understand the problems involved in separating

humanitarian and reconstruction spending but consider that DFID and the international community needs to have a clear strategy, or at least set out milestones, for moving from humanitarian relief towards supporting reconstruction and development. This could involve the prioritisation of humanitarian work which also provides long-term benefits, such as the supply of clean drinking water. (paragraph 21).

Government response: We agree. In 2002–3 approximately 50% of our funding was for humanitarian assistance. For future years we are planning to increase substantially the proportion of our programme for longer-term reconstruction and development. The ongoing humanitarian component of our strategy will contribute to our longer-term development strategy, by aiming to reduce the vulnerability of poor people and promoting the reintegration of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.

4. Recommendation: We believe that the use of loans, as part of a managed economic strategy, will allow the Afghan economy to develop, decreasing its reliance on grant aid and helping to demonstrate that Afghanistan: “is a place where investors can put money with confidence, knowing that they can get a return on their investment and they will be able to repatriate the profits” (paragraph 25).

Government response: We agree. DFID has taken the lead among donors in helping to clear Afghanistan’s arrears to the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in order to facilitate concessional borrowing. However, anything less than total forgiveness of Afghanistan’s outstanding bilateral debts will endanger the sustainability of current plans for concessional borrowing from the IFIs. The importance of developing a sustainable debt management strategy can therefore not be overemphasised.

5. Conclusion: The Afghan Transitional Administration struggles to maintain its credibility because it is under-resourced and not seen by Afghans as delivering those basic public services that people expect from their governments, let alone broader reconstruction. It is essential that the Afghan Transitional Administration establishes its legitimacy; the future stability of the entire country depends on this Administration’s ability to govern until an elected government takes over. (paragraph 27).

Government response: We agree that it is important that the Transitional Administration is seen to deliver by the Afghan people. This requires reform and good public information as well as control of resources.

6. Conclusion: There is a tension between the desire to have Afghan-led development and the need to channel resources where there is the capacity to spend them. (paragraph 33).

Government response: We agree that there is a tension between Afghan-led development and the need to channel resources where there is the capacity to use them effectively—we are working to try to achieve this in parallel.

At the recent Afghanistan Development Forum, the ATA set out key principles for development assistance to ensure that both of these objectives are met. The ATA has set out a development strategy and its priorities for the next three years in its National Development Budget. Donors are asked to channel their funds in order to ensure that these priorities are delivered. The ATA has requested that donors channel some funding through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). However as the administration has limited capacity, it has asked donors to disburse the rest of their funds directly to implementing national priority development programmes.

7. Recommendation: Capacity and institution building will need to be given a higher priority and quickly if the Afghan Transitional Administration is to govern effectively and plan for the longer term. (paragraph 35).

Government response: Capacity and institution building is essential. It is already beginning in key areas—for example work on a budget process, payroll and banking arrangements, and measures to maximise domestic revenue collection. This needs to be extended across the whole of government, as well as to the private sector. Addressing these structural issues must continue to be balanced with meeting more immediate needs.

8. Recommendation: We understand the Secretary of State’s concerns about the Afghan Transitional Administration and echo her call for urgent civil service reform. But we also think that putting some money into the parts of the Administration which have reformed would not necessarily be a wasteful exercise. It would help identify where weaknesses lie. At some point soon donors have to take a risk and be willing to allow more funds to be channelled through those areas in which the Afghan Transitional Administration has demonstrated significant progress (paragraph 36).

Government response: We do not agree that putting money through government systems is the best way to determine where the weaknesses lie. Such weaknesses should be assessed before UK public money is channelled through other governments’ budgets. However, we agree that the Afghanistan Transitional Administration is not monolithic. Therefore, we are ready to channel financial assistance through the Administration where it shows it can deliver effective services to the Afghan people. We have, for example, encouraged the ATA and the World Bank to ensure that resources for the operating and maintenance budgets of provinces are provided by the ARTF. In other cases, we will have to continue to fund implementing organisations directly, until the Administration has the capacity to manage such funds themselves.

9. Recommendation: What is needed are not more co-ordination meetings but rather a rationalisation of existing procedures (paragraph 38).

10. Recommendation: We welcome the transfer of the Afghan Support Group’s responsibilities to the Afghan Transitional Administration as part of the move towards a development forum informed by and involving consultative groups (paragraph 38).

Government response (9 & 10): We agree that the new consultative group process, leading to an annual Development Forum, should rationalise donor co-ordination mechanisms under Afghan leadership. We are determined to help to make this a success.

11. Recommendation: We are concerned that UNAMA is not, in practice, co-ordinating the strategies of the UN Agencies and as such is unable to act as an “effective bridge between the international community and the will of the Afghan Transitional Administration”. The UN should be given due credit for its work on what is a difficult task but, in line with its mandate which it was given at Bonn, the UN should consider how it can improve the co-ordination which it is providing. UNAMA should be playing the lead role in countering the perception that the UN is operating as a parallel structure to the Afghan Transitional Administration rather than an assistant to and advocate for Afghan-led reconstruction (paragraph 39).

Government response: We believe that UNAMA has done a good job in difficult circumstances but that co-ordination of UN agencies could always be improved. We have provided assistance to UNAMA to help them fulfil their co-ordination responsibilities. We believe that all donors and the ATA itself, as well as UNAMA, could do more to dispel the false claims that have been

made by senior figures that the UN is operating as a parallel structure to the ATA. The recent budget process has demonstrated very good co-ordination between the ATA and UNAMA.

12. Conclusion: NGOs have been providing services across all sectors in Afghanistan throughout the 23 years of conflict and, in some cases, for even longer. The larger NGOs have provided substantial public services, such as health and education, where there would otherwise be none. They have also acted as implementing partners to the UN within their own mandates, carrying out the work on their behalf to reach the vulnerable. At the moment, in the absence of public service delivery through the Afghan Transitional Administration, NGOs remain the main service providers (paragraph 40).

Government response: Local and international NGOs, the private sector, and UN agencies are all key service providers in areas where the government itself lacks the capacity or reach to provide them.

13. Recommendation: It is right that international aid workers receive international salaries but local employees should also receive fair pay which, at the very least, lifts them out of poverty (paragraph 41).

Government response: We agree. DFID keeps the salaries and benefits of its staff appointed in-country under review, to ensure that it provides a fair wage, consistent with local market conditions. Local salaries in Afghanistan's public service are very low. The number of civil servants is too high and effectiveness extremely low. This should be addressed as part of wider public administration reforms to improve productivity.

14. Recommendation: Keeping administrative costs and overheads down must be a priority for all donors but especially for those, such as the UN, which are not directly accountable to electorates. It is interesting to note that the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit have interpreted the UN approach of leaving a light institutional footprint as being a "well intentioned and much needed initiative to control agency management costs". One way to address criticisms of high transaction costs would be to ensure full transparency in the spending following disbursement although it is important that any measures to increase transparency are resource neutral in their impact (paragraph 44).

Government response: We agree. UNAMA is currently in the early stages of work to harmonise procurement costs across UN agencies, and to increase transparency. The ATA is also looking to set up a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit as part of its work on increasing the efficiency of development programmes. We will monitor both these initiatives and continue to support efforts to minimise transaction costs, in order that official development assistance has the maximum impact in Afghanistan.

15. Recommendation: We recommend that greater use is made of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) with the aim of it becoming the main pool of donor funding from which the Afghan Transitional Administration, UN and NGOs can bid for allocations. Use of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) can solve the tension between, on the one hand, a wish to see reconstruction led by Afghans and for the international community to leave a "light footprint" and, on the other, the wish to move resources where there is the capacity to use them (paragraph 46).

Government response: We agree in principle that the ARTF is a good transitional solution for pooling donor resources for Afghanistan, where the conditions are not yet right for direct budget support. We are working to ensure that it is in practice an effective channel for development

assistance. We welcome the initiative of the ATA at the ADF to increase the proportion of the ARTF which will be used for development investments, rather than recurrent salary costs, which are problematic as indicated in our response to recommendation 13.

III. SECURITY

16. Conclusion: Persistent insecurity hampers humanitarian relief and is one of the main obstacles to reconstruction. (paragraph 49).

Government response: We agree that persistent insecurity hampers both humanitarian relief and reconstruction. This is particularly true in the south of the country. Both the UN and NGOs continue to provide relief throughout the country. They keep the scale of their operations under review in the light of the levels of security threat.

17. Conclusion: Without a specific peacekeeping mandate Joint Regional Teams (JRTs) will be able to do little to bring security to the population and may not enhance the aid effort either. We are also concerned about the lack of information about JRTs and recommend that the UK Government issue a statement detailing British involvement and setting out the mandate, range of duties and composition of existing and planned JRTs (paragraph 56).

Government response: Provincial Reconstruction Teams (previously called JRTs) are now being rolled out across the country. Initial reports indicate that the first PRTs have been favourably received in the provinces to which they have deployed, with a reduction of reported security incidents and improvements in the security environment for reconstruction activities. The UK Government is committed in principle to leading a PRT and is currently engaged in the necessary planning work. Consultations with the NGOs have informed that work and we should expect to continue to maintain that close liaison in the event that we deploy a UK-led PRT. We have involved NGOs closely in the consultation process and will continue to do so when the UK PRT is rolled out. Further information will be issued on the details of the prospective UK-led PRT once a decision has been taken on its deployment.

18. Recommendation: Special emphasis will need to be placed on making the police and military genuinely integrated ethnic forces, not simply an extension of Northern Alliance power (paragraph 59).

Government response: The £5 million UK contribution to ANA salaries was conditional on the ANA being established as a multi-ethnic force under the control of a civilian MOD. We are satisfied that the US-led training and reform programme and President Karzai's ANA decree of 2 December 2002 satisfy these conditions. The Germans are similarly focussed on producing a police force that is ethnically inclusive, gender-sensitive and aware of its human rights obligations. The FCO is looking to play a more active role in police reform and multi-ethnicity and transparency will again be preconditions of UK support.

19. Recommendation: We see no clear alternative to the approach described by the Secretary of State as saying to the warlords: "Security is now coming outside Kabul, the international community is not going away, American power is not going away, the government will be strengthened, there will be a national army. "Come inside the tent or you are nowhere." (paragraph 60).

Government response: Noted.

20. Recommendation: Given the timescale involved, we believe that the creation of a national army should proceed in step with progress in building the democratic institutions and systems of accountability to the political administration to allow it to function as an army should. (paragraph 60).

Government response: We agree. The creation of a transparent, civilian run Ministry of Defence is central to the military reform process and also to the US led assistance programme.

21. Recommendation: We are concerned that too great an emphasis may be placed on the creation of a national police force. This strikes us as one area where an incremental and sectoral approach may be more rewarding. A priority for central government is the protection of Afghanistan's porous borders and the securing of customs and other revenues. The establishment of a border protection force might confer considerable benefit in the medium term, as a precursor to the final establishment of a national service. (paragraph 61).

Government response: The German government is leading on Police reform. They are finalising a strategy for training that will ensure consistent standards for all provincial police forces, and help separate police from their loyalties to local militia leaders. The size of the task of creating a police force means that the reform will be incremental. However, we are keen to minimise the risk that a sectoral or regional approach would bring differing standards and codes of police conduct. It would also not address the problem of local factional loyalties as provincial governments are not yet fully accountable to the centre. The question of whether to continue with Kabul-based training or to embark on a new programme of provincial training cadres has yet to be decided. The UK has pledged a £0.5m contribution to a US/Nordic initiative to establish a border police training programme. The Nordic countries involved are not yet committed to taking this on.

22. Recommendation: We hope that DFID will also play a major part in driving forward a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme and that it emphasises the importance of this issue to other donors along with the need to give financial settlements to former fighters (paragraph).

Government response: By the end of the financial year 2002–03, the UK will have disbursed nearly £2.5 million to the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme for DDR, from joint FCO-MOD-DFID Global Conflict Prevention Pool funds. The UK pledged just over £2 million (US\$3.5 million) of this at the Tokyo DDR conference in February as part of the international community's support under a UN/Japanese lead (including a US\$35 million pledge from the Japanese). We are very aware of the need to provide financial support to ex-combatants and are looking at ways of doing so, especially for former militia members who transfer into the new national army.

23. Conclusion: We are conscious, however, that no disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme will succeed unless it is underpinned by the employment opportunities that will come with economic development (paragraph 63).

Government response: We agree.

24. Recommendation: Policy towards regional power holders needs to be reviewed continually in the light of what we hope will be the Afghan Transitional Administration's growing legitimacy and eventual control over revenue collection (paragraph 65).

Government response: We agree. The UK and international donors continue to support extending the legitimacy of the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA) in the regions. The ATA has undertaken to increase the flow of revenue from the provinces to Central Government. At the ADF, the ATA undertook to publish a White Paper on customs reform within the next weeks. It intends to increase revenues remitted to the centre by over 100% in 2003/04. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will play a key role in extending the influence of Central Government.

25. Conclusion: We believe the funding of “warlords” by the international community to be a short-sighted approach to the fight against terrorism which undermines the long-term objective of achieving stability and security within the country and across the region (paragraph 65).

Government response: We agree. We encourage the international community not to fund warlords and instead to put resources into strengthening the position of the Afghan Transitional Administration. Many former warlords realise Afghanistan has changed, and that it is now in their best interests to work with the Bonn Agreement. In an effort to break their stranglehold on power, President Karzai’s decree of 16 December separated military and administrative powers in the regions. We understand that most regional leaders have expressed willingness to comply and we now need to ensure they do so. We are actively involved in the further institution building and security sector reform that will need to be effective before central government is able to establish its authority throughout the country.

The Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration signed by Afghanistan and her neighbours in Kabul in December 2002 is an important step forward in developing policies of non-interference, friendship, mutual respect and co-operation between the signatories. The government is considering ways to encourage the signatories of the declaration to develop it into an effective
b a s i s f o r p r a c t i c a l a c t i o n .

26. Recommendation: We are concerned about reports of human rights abuses against prisoners and note the comments made by the International Committee of the Red Cross, calling for prisoners to have their legal status determined on an individual basis. There is also, we consider, a lack of equity in the policy under which a line has been drawn under warlords’ past crimes, while those acting under their authority have been imprisoned. We recommend an examination of the situation of such prisoners and their release where possible (paragraph 65).

Government response: We welcome the progress the Afghan Transitional Administration have made to overturn the Taliban’s laws. However, it has much more work to do to implement international human rights standards. The international effort to restore security and stability to Afghanistan will be vital to build an environment in which human rights can flourish.

The NGO Penal Reform International received FCO funding last year to launch a penal reform programme in Afghanistan. The programme includes training of prison officials and some rehabilitation of prisons; and has the support of the Ministry of the Interior and the Commissioner of Prisons. The British Embassy in Kabul has raised the treatment of prisoners with the Afghan Transitional Administration, most recently in November 2002.

It is for the Afghan Transitional Authority and the Afghan people themselves to decide how to deal with past crimes. We stand ready to play a supportive role if assistance is requested. We would expect the UN to be at the heart of any investigation into alleged war crimes. We welcomed the establishment of the Human Rights Commission in June 2002 and are providing £1 million to support its work. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission is already

considering how best to address the difficult issue of transitional justice. The key to success in Afghanistan is to develop institutions that allow Afghans to make choices for themselves.

We have provided £1m in emergency funding to the ICRC this year. This is intended to assist the ICRC with the full range of their activities in Afghanistan.

27. Conclusion: The problem seems not to be a lack of law, but a lack of clarity over which laws are enforceable, and a lack of any mechanism through which to enforce them (paragraph 66).

28. Conclusion: At present there is no clear indication of where suitable people to appoint as judges, lawyers or police officers will be found. Such practical concerns underpin the whole security issue and the successful operation of a fully-functioning criminal justice system. (paragraph 66).

Government response (27&28): The Italians are the lead donor on Justice Sector Reform and held a conference in Rome from 19–20 December, which agreed on the development of a new co-ordination mechanism for assistance in this sector. UNDP and the Judicial Reform Commission (JRC) have agreed a programme for Rebuilding the Justice Sector in Afghanistan. This programme includes the rationalisation and codification of the Afghan legal code and the development and education of cadres of judges, lawyers and justice sector professionals involved in prosecution of cases, including the police. The UK has pledged to contribute £1m from the Global Conflict Prevention Pool over the next year to this programme. Nationwide surveys will start soon on the physical infrastructure of courts and the available number of judges including their present educational status.

29. Conclusion: We welcome the signing on the 22 December 2002 of a regional non-interference declaration by Afghanistan's closest neighbours, although we are concerned about the absence of Russia, India and Saudi Arabia as key signatories (paragraph 67).

Government response: We refer also to the answer given to question 25. The Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration signed by Afghanistan and her neighbours in Kabul in December 2002 is an important step forward in developing policies of non-interference, friendship, mutual respect and co-operation between the signatories. We are considering ways to encourage the signatories of the declaration to develop it into an effective basis for practical implementation.

We continue to raise the need for constructive dialogue and coordinated assistance towards Afghanistan between regional countries that might be pursuing separate interests.

The Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration was agreed between Afghanistan and those countries that border her. Russia, India and Saudi Arabia were not asked to sign the Declaration as they are not immediate neighbours of Afghanistan.

30. Recommendation: We recommend that DFID and other donors, together with the UNDP, carry out an assessment of how opening up regional trade might help the Afghan economy, benefit long-term reconstruction and provide alternative livelihoods for militiamen and poppy farmers (paragraph 67).

Government response: The World Bank is committed to carrying out a study on regional trade issues and prospects. We will work with them on the study in the framework of the local Consultative Group on Trade and Investment.

IV. CONTINUING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

31. Recommendation: You cannot ignore the need to build structures and institutions if you are ever to move beyond providing humanitarian relief (paragraph 69).

Government response: We agree. Building the structures, institutions and capacity for long-term development must happen in parallel with meeting immediate humanitarian needs. We refer also to the responses given to 3 and 7, above.

32. Recommendation: Food for work programmes address the issue of availability of food. But often the food is available, the problem is that people do not have the money to buy it (paragraph 70).

Government response: We agree that cash-for-work programmes will very often be more appropriate than food-for-work programmes. We have urged WFP in this direction, and they have agreed that food aid should only be provided to approximately 2m of the 4.3m Afghans classified as ‘vulnerable’ in the expectation that the remainder will be covered by cash for work programmes. A major ‘National Emergency Employment Programme’ had been launched, with multi-donor funding, to address this need.

33. Recommendation: Afghanistan is the victim of a chronic rather than an acute food shortage. Food aid in Afghanistan is now the wrong response, as it is in other parts of the world where it has also failed to address food shortages. What is needed is an improvement in food security (paragraph 70).

34. Recommendation: There are still vulnerable communities inside Afghanistan but, by and large, we endorse a move from food to cash for work. We understand the difficulties of such a transition in an fragile economy but the response has to be to build the economy rather than persist in policies which undermine food production. (paragraph 70).

Government response: There will always be some need for food aid for particular vulnerable groups and remote communities that have been subject to natural disasters. However we support an emphasis on improved food security. This will entail not only an emphasis on cash for work schemes to improve access and affordability, but also attention to the efficiency and sustainability of agricultural systems to improve self reliance of rural communities and supply food to the domestic market.

V. DRUGS

35. Recommendation: The success of the (poppy) eradication programme was soured when, in Kabul, Ashraf Ghani complained that the donor community had failed to honour what he saw as its side of the bargain by providing support for alternative livelihoods as a compensation package. He described it as the single issue which had lost him most credibility within the government and in the regions affected. (paragraph 71).

Government response: Alternative livelihoods are key to the sustainability of any attempts to eliminate poppy cultivation and support has been provided. Caution should be applied in providing any immediate income replacement measures, in areas affected by eradication, as perverse incentives may be created which encourage further growing of poppy. Sustainable alternative livelihoods can only be built gradually through broad economic development. This is primarily the responsibility of Afghanistan itself. Substantial assistance is being provided from

the international community but there is a tendency to blame either the UN or the international community for lack of progress on difficult issues.

36. Conclusion: The gradual build-up of a law enforcement and judicial system will, we hope, marginalise the illegal activity of poppy production. There will then be a chance to offer farmers something which, while not as lucrative as poppy growing, will nevertheless have tangible benefits. The Secretary of State told us that although poppy farmers could not realistically be tempted away from poppy cultivation with the promise of equally valuable crops, they could and should be offered the alternative of “a better life that is a legitimate life” which would also allow them to reap the benefits of stability and provision of public services such as education for their children. We commend this approach. Of course, none of this deflects from the UK’s responsibility to address its own demand for the drug. As Clare Short pointed out, “if we get Afghanistan to the point where there is no drug production, it will come to the UK from somewhere else.” (paragraph 75).

Government response: Noted.

VI. GENDER

37. Recommendation: DFID has a good track record in its commitment to gender issues and could act as an advocate for a thorough gender main-streaming approach within all donor activities and in political dialogue with the government. DFID should ensure that funding is provided for a gender audit (paragraph 78).

Government response: DFID is committed to supporting gender mainstreaming and has mainstreamed the approach with regard to its own programmes. Both DFID and the FCO advocate gender mainstreaming to our international partners, and the approach has been adopted by the Government and the UN. UNIFEM is working with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to develop its national strategy and to mainstream gender into the work of other Ministries, including through a gender analysis of data on government programmes. We are closely monitoring the work of the Constitutional Commission, whose draft constitution should provide a legal framework for women’s rights.

We are committed to working with the ATA to support their efforts in mainstreaming gender equality into the reconstruction effort. We do not currently intend to provide support directly to the Ministry of Women.

38. Recommendation: We believe that education to secondary level, for both boys and girls, must be a priority and, in the long-term, will be the best method of addressing gender issues. (paragraph 79).

Government response: Education to secondary level for both boys and girls is a major challenge for Afghanistan and one of the key priorities in the Transitional Administration’s National Development Framework. Educational status is a key proxy measure for gender equity, as well as an important method for increasing awareness of gender and human rights issues. But gender issues must be addressed across all aspects of Afghanistan’s development, as described above.

VII. REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

39. Recommendation: What is essential is that the Afghan Transitional Administration has a sustainable refugee return programme. Neighbouring states will have to be helped as well if forced or unsustainable repatriation is to be avoided (paragraph 81).

Government response: We have recently provided £3.5m to the ICRC, UNHCR and WFP to assist with refugee returns and support for refugee and IDP camps, both inside and outside the country. We are concerned to ensure that refugee returns are sustainable so as not to overload the fragile capacity and infrastructure of those areas with a high expected number of returnees. We agree that this is critical both to ensuring continued and improved provision of services to those in the region and to those who have recently returned. It is also important that the returns are stable and are provisioned adequately so as to avoid enflaming ethnic and regional grievances.

Support to those organisations working with refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including support to ensure that refugee camps outside the country are properly funded, will form a major plank in the humanitarian component of our strategy for the coming year.

VIII. HUMAN RIGHTS

40. Conclusion: The task now is to create a constitution, build institutions and a structure of accountability within which these regional power holders have to operate. We hope that the Human Rights Commission will be a vehicle for this. (paragraph 82).

Government response: We agree. The constitution making process is critical for establishing a framework for inclusive government in which all significant interest groups have a stake. Key to the success of this process is ensuring an appropriate level of consultation, and feeding in of lessons learnt from elsewhere—for example on an appropriate balance between local autonomy and central control. DFID are providing support to the United Nations to facilitate the consultation process.

We understand that the first draft of the new constitution is in keeping with the principles set out in the Bonn Agreement. However there is an opportunity for fundamentalists to affect the text before or at the Constitutional Loya Jirga in October. We are supporting the work of the joint Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission/UNOHCHR/UNAMA programme of work for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission who are establishing offices outside of Kabul.

Secretary of State for International Development

28 March 2003