Our Ref: CDU1418

Mary Creagh MP
Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

02 March 2018

Dear Mary,

Thank you for your letter of 23 January.

The 25-Year Environment Plan is one of the ways in which the Government has shown its commitment to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Forum that you mention is a well-established group made up of officials engaged in sustainable development (SD) from a wide range of Government Departments and Agencies. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) brings the forum together to share best practice and help to promote thinking in this important area. It has helped shape and develop SD tools and techniques for policymakers and also provides updates on the progress in achieving the Greening Government Commitments. Most recently, the Forum considered how the SDGs could be further embedded within planned activity, with sessions led by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Cabinet Office.

Each Government Department is responsible for embedding delivery of the Goals in the full range of policies and activities for which they are responsible. DFID and the Cabinet Office continue to work closely in support of the cross-government approach to the delivery of the SDGs. You mention the publication of the summary plans and the overview document. The overview document set out how planned activity of departments will contribute towards delivery of the SDGs. For example, DEFRA’s work to ensure a resilient and secure agri-food supply chain will contribute to Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). The URL link to this document is:

As noted in the Government's response to your Committee's report on implementing the Goals in the UK, there are already opportunities for teachers to teach the principles of SDG's within the current curriculum. As set out in its plan on GOV.UK, the Department for Education has plans in place to meet the Goals that relate to its policy responsibilities. For example, work to close the 'word gap' in early years; close the attainment gap in school whilst continuing to raise standards for all; and create high quality technical education options to improve the choice for young people at age 16 will all support Goal 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' The performance of the Department in delivering planned activity will be reported in its Annual Report and Accounts. The Department intends to publish an updated 2018/2019 plan in May.

As you note, the Government will put the UK forward for a voluntary national review (VNR) in 2019 by the UN. The review process will begin later this year. DFID will work closely with other Government Departments, including the Cabinet Office, to ensure that the review takes account of the UK's domestic and international contributions to this global agenda.

As set out in the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts for 2016-17, the Cabinet Office endeavours to embed the Goals within operational service delivery across Government. Through the Greening Government Commitments, Central Government Departments have a responsibility to further reduce emissions, waste and water use, and to continue to buy more sustainable and efficient products and services with the aim of achieving the best long-term, overall value for money. Departments report on the systems they have in place and the action taken to buy sustainably, including to embed compliance with the Government Buying Standards in departmental and centralised procurement contracts, within the context of Government's overarching priorities of value for money and streamlining procurement processes, as well as to understand and reduce supply chain impacts and risks.

I hope this is helpful in setting out the Government's position on this matter.

LORD BATES
Minister of State for International Development

OLIVER DOWDEN CBE MP
Minister for Implementation