

31st October 2018

Tom Tugendhat, MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Secretary of State

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October about the FCO's processes for filling senior vacancies.

The FCO's Senior Appointments Board (SAB) makes all senior appointment decisions based on merit, following a fair and open competition including interviews. The SAB is chaired by the Permanent Under-Secretary and comprises senior members of the FCO Board and a non-executive representative.

Jobs are advertised internally and, as a default, across Whitehall too. The SAB assesses applicants' suitability based on their skill sets, experience and performance. The SAB also considers the wider organisational needs, now and in the future. All senior appointments are ratified by the Prime Minister and by me. For Heads of Mission roles, the Queen approves the FCO's recommendation.

In order to get commercial skills at the top of the Diplomatic Service I have decided to extend this openness beyond Whitehall for one or two appointments per year, through advertising also to the private sector. The Prime Minister is entitled, under an exemption in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, to make political appointments, including for diplomatic roles. It is not unusual to have one or two political appointees in the diplomatic service at any one time. Currently there is one, Lord Llewellyn, in Paris.

We do not routinely publicise our forward look of appointments, which can change according to business need. I am happy for you to arrange an oral briefing with my team to discuss what is likely to be coming up cover the next quarter.

Non-executive members of the FCO's Supervisory Board are appointed through fair and open competitions and in close consultation with the Cabinet Office. Advertisements are published on our website and promoted by external recruitment agencies on a case-by-case basis. All applications are sifted by a panel, including a non-executive member. The interviews are held by a panel, chaired by the PUS and including a non-executive member. The panel's recommendation is

considered and approved by the Prime Minister and me. The recruitment process for the PUS is managed centrally by the Cabinet Office and follows the same principles of fairness and open competition.

Jeremy Hunt

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