

House of Commons

Foreign Affairs Committee

Formal Minutes

Session 2015–16

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

Crispin Blunt (*Conservative, Reigate*) (Chair)
Mr John Baron (*Conservative, Basildon and Billericay*)
Ann Clwyd (*Labour, Cynon Valley*)
Mike Gapes (*Labour-Co-operative, Ilford South*)
Stephen Gethins (*Scottish National Party, North East Fife*)
Mr Mark Hendrick (*Labour-Co-operative, Preston*)
Adam Holloway (*Conservative, Gravesham*)
Daniel Kawczynski (*Conservative, Shrewsbury and Atcham*)
Yasmin Qureshi (*Labour, Bolton South East*)
Andrew Rosindell (*Conservative, Romford*)
Nadhim Zahawi (*Conservative, Stratford-on-Avon*)

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.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/transcom>. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kenneth Fox (Clerk), Nick Beech (Second Clerk), Zoe Oliver-Watts (Senior Committee Specialist), Dr Ariella Huff (Committee Specialist), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), Su Panchanathan (Committee Assistant) and Alex Paterson (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 14 Tothill Street, London SW1H (NB. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6263; the Committee's e-mail address is transcom@parliament.uk).

Proceedings of the Committee

Tuesday 14 July 2015

(Morning)

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Stephen Gethins

Mr Mark Hendrick
Adam Holloway
Daniel Kawczynski
Andrew Rosindell

1. Crispin Blunt took the Chair

2. Declaration of interests

Ordered, That Members interests be published on the internet.

3. Confidentiality of private proceedings

The Committee discussed this matter.

4. Resources

The Committee discussed this matter.

5. Ways of working

The Committee discussed this matter.

Ordered, That the Committee will generally take oral evidence in public.

Ordered, That witnesses should be permitted to publish written evidence to the Committee on their own initiative.

Ordered, That the Clerk should be permitted to brief witnesses on likely topics of interest to the Committee in advance of oral evidence sessions.

Ordered, That the Committee will not normally investigate individual cases.

6. Powers delegated to the Chair

Ordered, That, in order to ensure that Committee business is discharged efficiently, the Chair shall:—

draft the agenda for committee meetings;

handle correspondence on Committee matters which is not sufficiently significant to require approval by the Committee;

arrange informal meetings in Westminster on matters relating to the Committee's remit;

decide which parliamentary proceedings Committee reports should be tagged to for debate in the House.

7. Day and time of meeting

Ordered, That the Committee will meet on Tuesdays at 2.30pm.

8. Future programme

The Committee discussed this matter.

Resolved, That the Committee's inquiry programme for 2015-16 should include inquiries into: Libya—the UK's responsibilities and its policy since the intervention in 2011; European Union—costs and benefits of membership, with a focus on the implications for UK foreign policy and the UK's international standing; ISIS/ISIL/Da'esh—the threat to the UK's interests and how to deal with it; UK engagement with political Islam; UK-Russia strategic relationship, including policy on Ukraine.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 14 July at 2.30
pm

Tuesday 14 July 2015

(Afternoon)

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Stephen Gethins
Daniel Kawczynski

Yasmin Qureshi
Andrew Rosindell
Nadhim Zahawi

1. Future programme

The Committee discussed this matter.

Ordered, That the Chair write to the respective Chairs of the Defence, International Development and Business, Innovation and Skills Committees on the collective scrutiny of arms export controls.

Ordered, That the Chair have leave to attend the CFSP/CDSP Conference of National Parliament Chairs in Luxembourg on 5/6 September 2015.

2. Norwegian Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee

The Committee discussed this matter.

Resolved, That the Committee will meet the Norwegian Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee on Thursday 15 October.

3. Norfolk Island

The Committee discussed this matter.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 21 July at 9.30
am

Tuesday 21 July 2015

(Morning)

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Stephen Gethins

Daniel Kawczynski
Yasmin Qureshi
Andrew Rosindell
Nadhim Zahawi

1. Future programme

The Committee discussed this matter.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 21 July at 2.30
pm

Tuesday 21 July 2015

(Afternoon)

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Stephen Gethins
Mr Mark Hendrick

Daniel Kawczynski
Yasmin Qureshi
Andrew Rosindell
Nadhim Zahawi

1. Declarations of interest

Ann Clwyd and Stephen Gethins declared interests, in accordance with the Resolution of the House of 13 July 1992 (see Appendix A).

2. Access for Members' staff to Committee meetings

Resolved, That Members' staff may attend private sessions of Committee meetings.

3. Countries of specialism

The Committee discussed this matter.

4. Future programme

The Committee discussed this matter.

Ordered, That the terms of reference for the Libya inquiry and the Costs and benefits of UK membership of the EU inquiry be published on the internet.

5. Specialist Advisers

Resolved, That the Committee invite Dr Robin Niblett, Dr Toby Dodge and Professor Anand Menon to act as Specialist Advisers and to assist the Committee in all aspects of its work.

6. Chilcot inquiry

Ordered, That the following written evidence relating to the Chilcot inquiry be reported to the House for publication on the internet: Letter from Sir John Chilcot to the Chair dated 20 July.

7. Financial scrutiny: Main Estimate 2015-16

Ordered, That the following correspondence be reported to the House for publication on the internet: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Memorandum on the Main Estimate 2015-16; UK Trade and Investment Memorandum on the Main Estimate 2015-16.

8. Parliamentary Intelligence Forum

The Committee discussed this matter.

Ordered, That the Chair have leave to attend the Parliamentary Intelligence Forum hosted by US Congress in Washington in October 2015, and that the Chair seek the approval of the Liaison Committee for expenditure in connection with the visit.

9. Foreign policy developments: July 2015

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State, and Sir Simon Gass, Director, Political, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 8 September at
2.30 pm

Saturday 5 September to Sunday 6 September

The Chair and Dr Ariella Huff, Committee Specialist, visited Luxembourg to attend the CFSP/CDSP Conference of National Parliament Chairs in accordance with the Committee's decision of 14 July.

Tuesday 8 September 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Ann Clwyd	Daniel Kawczynski
Mike Gapes	Yasmin Qureshi
Stephen Gethins	Andrew Rosindell
Mr Mark Hendrick	Nadhim Zahawi

1. Specialist Advisers

Resolved, That Dr Robin Niblett, Dr Toby Dodge and Professor Anand Menon act as Specialist Advisers and assist the Committee in all aspects of its work.

Ordered, That the declarations of interest submitted by Dr Robin Niblett, Dr Toby Dodge and Professor Anand Menon are published on the internet. (See Appendix B)

2. Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options

The Committee discussed this matter.

3. Costs and benefits of EU membership for the UK's role in the world

The Committee discussed this matter.

4. The fight against ISIL: the UK's role

The Committee discussed this matter.

5. Chilcot inquiry

Ordered, That the following written evidence relating to the Chilcot inquiry be reported to the House for publication on the internet: letter from Sir John Chilcot to the Chair dated 5 August; letter from Sir John Chilcot to the Chair dated 8 September.

6. British Virgin Islands

The Committee discussed this matter.

7. Norfolk Island

The Committee discussed this matter.

8. Shaker Aamer

The Committee discussed this matter.

9. UK policy on Syria

Patrick Cockburn, Middle East correspondent, The Independent; James Harkin, freelance reporter; Professor Raymond Hinnebusch, Professor of International Relations and Middle East Politics and Director of the Centre for Syrian Studies, University of St. Andrews, Professor Eugene Rogan, Director, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, Julien Barnes-Dacey, Senior Policy Fellow, Middle East and North Africa programme, European Council on Foreign Relations; Professor Michael Clarke, Director, Royal United Services Institute, Rt Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP, former Attorney-General, gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 9 September
at 2.30 pm

Wednesday 9 September 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Stephen Gethins
Adam Holloway

Mr Mark Hendrick
Daniel Kawczynski
Yasmin Qureshi
Nadhim Zahawi

1. Foreign policy developments: September 2015

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State, Sir Simon Gass, Director General, Political, and Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 15 September at
2.30 pm

Tuesday 15 September 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Ann Clwyd	Daniel Kawczynski
Mike Gapes	Yasmin Qureshi
Stephen Gethins	Andrew Rosindell
Mr Mark Hendrick	Nadhim Zahawi

1. Costs and benefits of EU membership for the UK's role in the world

The Committee discussed this matter.

2. Diego Garcia

The Committee discussed this matter.

3. Chagos Islands

The Committee discussed this matter.

4. The fight against ISIL: the UK's role

The Committee discussed this matter.

5. UK policy on Syria

The Committee discussed this matter.

6. Training

The Committee discussed this matter.

7. Foreign policy developments: September 2015

Ordered, That the following written evidence relating to Foreign policy developments: September 2015 be reported to the House for publication on the internet: letter dated 27 July from the FCO, providing quarterly management information; letter dated 25 August from the

FCO, following up points arising from the oral evidence session with the Foreign Secretary on 21 July; letter dated 29 July from the FCO, following up points arising from the Committee's visit to the FCO on 14 July.

8. Manama Dialogue

The Committee discussed this matter.

Ordered, That the Chair have leave to attend the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain from 30 October to 1 November 2015 in a representative capacity, and that the Chair seek the approval of the Liaison Committee for expenditure in connection with the visit.

9. European Parliament Constitutional Affairs Committee

Resolved, That the Committee will meet the European Parliament Constitutional Affairs Committee on 16 or 17 November.

10. Declaration of interest

Nadhim Zahawi declared an interest, in accordance with the Resolution of the House of 13 July 1992 (see Appendix A).

11. FCO budget and capacity

Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under Secretary, Deborah Bronnert, Chief Operating Officer, and Iain Walker, Finance Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Thursday 8 October at
2.25 pm.]

Thursday 8 October 2015

[The Committee met concurrently with the Defence Committee]

Members present:

Mr John Baron
Crispin Blunt
Mike Gapes
Stephen Gethins

Mr Mark Hendrick
Daniel Kawczynski
Andrew Rosindell

The following members of the Defence Committee were also present (Standing Order 137A):

Members present:

Richard Benyon
Douglas Chapman
James Gray
Dr Julian Lewis
Johnny Mercer

Mrs Madeleine Moon
Jim Shannon
Bob Stewart
John Spellar

Crispin Blunt was called to the Chair (Standing Order No. 137A (1)(d))

1. UK policy on Syria

Lt General Sir Simon Mayall, former Senior Defence Adviser for Middle East, Ministry of Defence, Elizabeth Quintana, Director, Military Sciences Department, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Professor Marc Weller, Professor of International Law and International Constitutional Studies, University of Cambridge; Sarah Lain, Research Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Professor Anoush Ehteshami, Professor of International Relations, Durham University; Ammar Waqqaf, British Syrian Society, Dr Rim Turkmani, Senior Research Fellow, London School of Economics and Political Science; Rami Abdurrahman, Director, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 13 October at
2.30 pm.

Tuesday 13 October 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron	Adam Holloway
Ann Clwyd	Daniel Kawczynski
Mike Gapes	Yasmin Qureshi
Stephen Gethins	Andrew Rosindell
Mr Mark Hendrick	Nadhim Zahawi

1. UK policy on Syria

The Committee discussed this matter.

2. FCO budget and capacity

The Committee discussed this matter.

3. The fight against ISIL: the UK's role

Resolved, That the Committee visit Tehran, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Cairo, Amman, Beirut, Erbil, Baghdad and Ankara in November 2015 in connection with its inquiry into The fight against ISIL: the UK's role, and that the Chair seek the approval of the Liaison Committee for expenditure in connection with the visit.

4. Shaker Aamer

Ordered, That the Chair reply to the letter from the Foreign Secretary dated 25 September.

5. Egypt

The Committee discussed this matter.

6. Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options

Professor George Joffé, visiting Professor of Geography, Kings College London, Alison Pargeter, analyst and writer specialising in North Africa and the Middle East, gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 20 October at 10 am.

Tuesday 10 November 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron

Mike Gapes

Mr Mark Hendrick

Daniel Kawczynski

Yasmin Qureshi

1. The fight against ISIL: the UK's role

The Committee considered this matter.

Resolved, That Mr Skandar Keynes accompany the Committee on its visit to Lebanon.

2. UK relations with Russia

Resolved, That the Committee inquire into the UK's relations with Russia.

3. Scrutiny of FCO human rights policy

The Committee discussed this matter.

4. Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options

The Committee discussed this matter.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 17 November at 2.00 pm.

Tuesday 17 November 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron

Mike Gapes

Daniel Kawczynski

Yasmin Qureshi

Mr Mark Hendrick

1. Helsinki Policy Forum

Ordered, That the Chair attend the Helsinki Policy Forum in Berlin on 7 December, and that the Chair do seek approval for funding from the Liaison Committee.

2. Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options

Resolved, that Joseph Walker-Cousins be appointed as a Special Adviser to the Committee for its inquiry into Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options.

3. The fight against ISIL: the UK's role

The Committee considered this matter.

Resolved, That Professor Toby Dodge, Specialist Adviser to the Committee, accompany the Committee on its visit to Iraq.

[Adjourned till Thursday 26 October at 8.55 am.

Thursday 26 November 2015

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Stephen Gethins

Daniel Kawczynski

1. UK policy on Syria

Resolved, That the Prime Minister's response to the Committee's Second Report be reported to the House for publication on the internet.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 1 December at 11.30 am

Tuesday 1 December 2015

MORNING MEETING

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron

Yasmin Qureshi

Stephen Gethins
Daniel Kawczynski

Andrew Rosindell
Nadhim Zahawi

1. UK policy on Syria

The Committee discussed this matter.

[Adjourned till this day at 2.30 pm.]

AFTERNOON MEETING

Members present:

Crispin Blunt, in the Chair

Mr John Baron
Stephen Gethins
Mr Mark Hendrick
Adam Holloway

Daniel Kawczynski
Yasmin Qureshi
Andrew Rosindell
Nadhim Zahawi

1. UK policy on Syria

Motion made and Question put, That the Prime Minister has not adequately addressed concerns contained in the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015-16, in his response provided on 26 November.—(*Mr John Baron*).

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 4

Noes, 3

Mr John Baron
Stephen Gethins
Yasmin Qureshi
Andrew Rosindell

Adam Holloway
Daniel Kawczynski
Nadhim Zahawi

Resolved, That the Prime Minister has not adequately addressed concerns contained in the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015-16, in his response provided on 26 November.

Resolved, That the Committee raise no objection to the FCO Departmental Minute concerning the gifting of support to the Syrian moderate armed opposition, laid before Parliament on 17 November 2015.

2. European Commission 2016 Work Programme

Resolved, That the Committee write to the Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee about the European Commission 2016 Work Programme.

3. Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options

The Rt Hon Lord Hague of Richmond and the Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP gave oral evidence.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 8 December at 2.30 pm.]

APPENDIX A: DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

21 July 2015

Stephen Gethins :

Visiting Namibia in August 2015 to undertake remunerated employment.

Ann Clwyd:

Member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights.

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Iraq and on Cambodia.

15 September 2015

Nadhim Zahawi:

Chief Strategy Officer, Gulf Keystone Petroleum