Dear Stephen

Thank you for your letter of 5 June, enclosing correspondence regarding allegations of infringements of human rights and democratic freedoms in Uganda.

The UK, alongside the EU and other missions in Kampala, released a statement on 3 May this year calling on the Ugandan Government to guarantee freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of assembly as enshrined in the Ugandan Constitution. We continue to raise our concerns directly with the Ugandan Government.

This follows a joint statement in August 2018 expressing deep concern following the arrest and alleged torture of opposition MPs, including Robert Kyagulanyi, and members of the public. The statement called on all tiers of the Ugandan Government, political parties and civil society to cooperate to ensure that the events that had caused suffering to Ugandan citizens and damaged the country’s global image were addressed swiftly and transparently with full respect for the rule of law.

In 2014, the UK allocated £30m for governance programming in Uganda over five years (2014-2020) with a focus on strengthening Ugandan institutions’ efforts to combat corruption, and to build the capacity of local governments to provide quality services to their citizens and be accountable to them. As a result of this support, along with USAID and the EU as co-funding partners, the Strengthening Uganda’s Anti-Corruption and Accountability Regime (SUGAR) programme through which this funding is provided has achieved the following:

- Increased the number of corruption cases handled by the judiciary; the conviction rate rose from 47% to 72% in the last two years
- Contributed to establishing Uganda’s asset recovery systems. A number of court orders for asset recovery have been issued, now worth more than £18m
- The bill of health for partner districts audit has improved from 12% to 94%. This means external audit gave unqualified audit opinion to 94% of UK aided districts up from 12% before the programme started
• UK supported districts have increased their ability to generate revenue from near 0% to between 2% and 15%
• Some of these districts have suffered refugee influxes. With this programme support, the refugee affected districts have increased their capacity to manage and coordinate efforts on refugee influx

As SUGAR comes to an end, the UK is exploring more work on accountability, corruption, inclusion and participation.

The Ugandan Constitutional Court, in reference to the presidential age limit, ruled in May 2019 to uphold the Constitution Amendment Bill approved by Parliament on 20 December 2017. Changes to the Constitution of Uganda are a matter for the Ugandan parliament and the Ugandan people. It is important that all Ugandans have the freedom to express their views on the issue in a peaceful manner.

HARRIETT BALDWIN