



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Secretary of State

22 July 2015

Crispin Blunt MP
Chair
Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Crispin,

It was a pleasure to appear before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee yesterday for our first hearing. There is one point I wanted to follow up on quickly: I regret that I was wrong when I suggested a WMS had issued from Baroness Anelay summarising changes to the Human Rights and Democracy Report. No WMS in fact issued, although a series of responses to PQs on the topic will be issued today from Mr Lidington.

Our manifesto commitment that “we will continue to support universal human rights” is clear. But to make the most of our national strengths and use our influence and global network as effectively as possible, we will now focus our effort around three overarching themes: democratic values and the rule of law; the rules-based international system (e.g. our multilateral diplomacy in the Human Rights Council); and human rights for a stable world (e.g. freedom of religion or belief, our Overseas Security and Justice Assistance framework). These three themes will guide all the work our Embassies, High Commissions and multilateral missions currently carry out on human rights, in locally appropriate ways. In parallel, the Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, will spearhead a series of initiatives addressing specific human rights issues in our manifesto, including our work on PSVI as the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy.

As I mentioned, I have reviewed our approach to the Human Rights and Democracy Report. I want to make it more user friendly and accessible. I also want to ensure that the process is more efficient, enabling us to dedicate more time to tracking and influencing events overseas. So the report will focus on our priorities, be shorter and punchier, and cover recent developments rather than reprinting previously published material. We will re-name the 27 “Countries of Concern” as “Human Rights Priority Countries” and will provide mid-year updates online, the first of which were published on 15 July.

I welcome the importance the Committee attaches to human rights and look forward to further discussions on these and other issues at our next meeting.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'P'.

THE RT HON PHILIP HAMMOND MP