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The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
Prime Minister
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Our Ref: MP02055

13 March 2025

Dear Rt. Hon. Keir Starmer MP,

Cuts to Overseas Development Assistance

I am writing to you to express my extreme concern at the cuts to Overseas Development Assistance that your government has recently announced.

First, I must affirm that I agree wholeheartedly that strengthening the UK's national security and defence commitments is a national priority, especially in the light of increasing global security challenges. I welcome the increase in defence spending to 2.6% of GDP in 2027.

Cutting Overseas Development Assistance is not the way that this increase should be funded. The extent to which this policy lacks foresight cannot be overstated. ODA is a fundamental form of soft power, and one which must be strengthened to protect against the influence of an aggressive Russia and an emboldened China. ODA is an essential tool in tackling poverty, promoting stability, and reducing the causes of conflict and migration, all of which serve the UK's own security interests.

Cutting ODA causes problems, and fixes none. Strengthening our global strategic position cannot be achieved solely through increasing our defence spending - by its very nature, when we spend on defence, we think that war is on the horizon. Preventing war is just as important as arming ourselves, and our ODA is the bedrock of our ability to promote peace around the world.

Fundamentally, the UK's ODA and defence are complementary forces in the protection of our nation, and must be strengthened together.

As you know, our withdrawal of support for overseas development has taken place as the US has abandoned USAID. The vacuum that we have left is perfect for hostile foreign powers to step in and increase their international powers exponentially by bankrolling countries who cannot go without the support of foreign powers.

If the global strategic reasoning was not convincing enough, I hope that the humanitarian reasons may convince you to rethink this decision. The combined diminishing of the UK's ODA, and the withdrawal of USAID, will leave unmet the basic needs of millions of people. To combat this, the UK is releasing \$110 million in emergency funding - this should ring resounding alarm bells. The UN has also announced that it may have to halve food rations to Rohingya refugees if funds are not made available urgently.

There are other ways to fund our defence spending without cutting ODA. The Government must seize frozen Russian assets to support the Ukraine war effort. We must increase the tax on social media firms and other tech giants.

I sincerely hope that you will listen to the pleas of many, and choose to pursue a more farsighted and strategically beneficial method of increasing our defence spending commitments. Please listen to educated voices, such as General Lord Richard Dannatt, the former head of the British Army, who has said that the UK's influence in the world comes through a combination of our hard power and our soft power - including our development funds.

Crucially, we are not weighing up national strength against global responsibility - one cannot exist without the other.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Manuela Perteghella'.

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP
Member of Parliament for Stratford-on-Avon