

26th December 2015

Our reference: MIN/91267/2015

Siobhain McDonagh MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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04 JAN 2015



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State

Siobhain

Thank you for your letter of 10 December copied to the Rt. Hon Theresa May MP and the Rt. Hon James Brokenshire MP about financial support to Sri Lanka.

The overarching objective of the £6.6m of Conflict Stability and Security Fund announced by the Prime Minister last month is to support Sri Lanka in implementing the commitments it has made to the international community on promoting peace, accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. As the Prime Minister made clear to President Sirisena in their recent meeting, the armed forces have a crucial role to play in this process, including through demilitarising the north and east and returning military held land to its civilian owners.

While details are to be finalised, we anticipate that the large majority of the £6.6m will be used to continue existing United Kingdom support in Sri Lanka, which includes demining, community policing and anti-corruption. A small amount of funding has been earmarked for support to the armed forces, which we envisage focusing on ethics, law and governance training and on sharing best practice from reshaping the British armed forces, including on re-training those leaving the armed forces and rationalising the defence estate. I share your concern over reports of ongoing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. This is an issue we raise regularly with the government of Sri Lanka and that we work with colleagues at the Home Office to ensure is fully reflected in country guidance for UK Visas and Immigration officials.

I plan to visit Sri Lanka in mid-January, to meet with government, opposition and civil society representatives and to explore further how the United Kingdom can help to support a lasting peace and a prosperous future for all Sri Lankans. You may be aware that I have agreed with the office of James Berry MP that I will meet representatives of the APPG for Tamils ahead of this visit. That meeting is scheduled for 1500 on 11 January.

I thank you and other members of the APPG for your continued interest in this important subject and hope to see as many of you as possible on 11 January to discuss this in more detail.

Hugo Swire

THE RT HON HUGO SWIRE MP
Minister of State