



**Government Response to the House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee Report of Session 2012-13
BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AND THE 'ARAB SPRING'**

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
by Command of Her Majesty

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SECOND REPORT FROM THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF SESSION 2012-13

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AND THE 'ARAB SPRING'

RESPONSE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

1. The Command Paper sets out the Government's response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report of 19th July into British foreign policy and the 'Arab Spring'.
2. As the Committee recognises, the momentous events of the Arab Spring have created opportunities and challenges for the FCO: to our consular, security and prosperity objectives. The Government welcomes the Committee's recognition inter alia of Britain's values-based approach to the Arab Spring, the hard work of the FCO's consular and emergency staff in response to the crises of early 2011, and our rapid and decisive approach in Libya following UN Security Council Resolution 1973.
3. As we continue to support the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan people in their transition to more open, democratic and inclusive societies, we welcome the Committee's recommendations to strengthen our approach further. We will continue to welcome scrutiny from Parliament and to seek feedback from the media, civil society, business and other institutions.
4. The Committee's recommendations are set out in bold in the text below, followed by the Government's response. Headlines and recommendation/paragraph numbers refer to those in the Committee's Report.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Could the FCO have anticipated the Arab Spring?

5. **It is not reasonable to expect diplomats to have predicted the advent of the uprisings with precision. Successful uprisings are, by their very nature, somewhat unpredictable. However, it is concerning that the UK appears to have been taken so completely by surprise and little comfort that other states suffered the same problems. In its response to this report, the FCO should respond to criticisms that it did not have a sufficiently broad base of contacts from different social groups and geographical regions from which to draw information about approaching crises and set out what steps it is taking to improve its ability to anticipate such events in the future. (Reco 1, Paragraph 19)**
6. The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that it would not have been reasonable to predict the uprisings with precision. However, the Government does not accept that it was taken completely by surprise by the Arab Spring. The issues underlying the Arab Spring have been well-documented in UNDP's series of Arab Human Development reports, which have influenced our

policy approach over a number of years. As a result of policy work begun in late 2009 on the growing drivers of discontent in the MENA region, the FCO had set up the Arab Human Development (AHD) team at the end of 2010. The existence of the AHD team (now the Arab Partnership Department) was critical to the Government's rapid and effective response to the Arab Spring, and built on our understanding of the underlying dynamics in the region. When the Arab Spring began, we had already laid important foundations on which to build our strategic response.

7. The Government disagrees that an insufficiently broad base of contacts may have contributed to an inability to anticipate events. Over the past thirty years, the FCO has taken on board the lessons outlined in Nick Browne's report on "British Policy in Iran 1974-78". British Embassies in the region maintain a broad base of contacts to ensure they gather views from a wide range of opinion-formers. Political officers gather information from those in government, and those outside, including the media, judiciary, civil society and activists, to ensure a balance of views. They also regularly visit locations outside capitals and 'walk the streets'. In Egypt in 2010 for example, political/economic officers visited Assiut, Minoufiya, Menya, Fayoum, Zagazig and Sohag.
8. The FCO recognised the growing importance of social media in the MENA region, in particular to engage the youth, in advance of the Arab Spring. In autumn 2009, the Communications Directorate launched a major new programme in order to 'listen, publish and engage' better in the region. By winter 2010 all MENA posts had Facebook sites and many were active (and were actively listening) on Twitter. Most Ambassadors were either blogging or publishing a column in a local newspaper, including former HMA Egypt, Dominic Asquith, whose blog was short-listed for an award by the well-respected 'Islam Online' website. In November 2010, all posts reported formally on the dynamics of social media in their country.
9. Since the Arab Spring, MENAD Embassies have continued to maintain and enhance a wide and diverse range of contacts, including by:
 - Ensuring that political officers regularly visit locations outside capitals.
 - Leveraging the Arab Partnership Fund to build relationships with grass-roots civil society organisations and youth and women's associations, including through road-show tours by political officers.
 - Widening our range of contacts further through social media, including engagement with influential bloggers.
10. **We conclude that the decline in staff numbers in post in the MENA region may have contributed to a lower information gathering capacity but it cannot be conclusively drawn that such a decline had affected the FCO's ability to predict the Arab Spring uprisings. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that had there been more emphasis on political reporting and larger political teams in post, this would have improved the FCO's**

information gathering before the uprisings, and its ability to respond once they had begun. (Reco 2, Paragraph 20)

11. The Government accepts the Committee's recommendation that as a general principle larger political teams in post strengthen information-gathering capacity. Within the context of the FCO's Comprehensive Spending Review settlement, this Government is committed to maintaining a strong and highly skilled global footprint through its network of Embassies. As a result of extensive work through the "network shift" to focus FCO resources on the highest priorities, 15 new front-line positions are being created in MENAD embassies to strengthen capacity to deliver foreign policy objectives.

Did the FCO have the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to the Arab Spring?

12. **We conclude that the work done by the FCO in its Middle East and North Africa Directorate in 2010 to improve Arabic language skills and to revise its strategic approach showed some foresight and demonstrates that the Department had recognised the need for improvement. However, the fact that the Department considered it necessary to plan a 40% increase in the FCO's Arabic speakers implicitly acknowledges that it had significantly degraded its language capacity by 2010. At the outbreak of the Arab Spring these programmes had yet to have a demonstrable impact in raising language skills or significantly changing the Department's approach. (Reco 3, Paragraph 25)**
13. The Government welcomes the recognition of the efforts already made in advance of the Arab Spring to improve Arabic language skills in the FCO, and to reverse the degradation of its language capacity in the period to 2010. The Foreign Secretary has made clear the FCO's intention to enhance language skills through the Diplomatic Excellence Initiative. The Foreign Secretary said in his 8 September 2011 speech, "together we are turning around the decline in language teaching in the Foreign Office so that we build a cadre of language expertise to support British foreign policy over the long-term. We plan to spend up to £1m more each year teaching languages – a 30% increase over the 2010-11 financial year, we are increasing the number of jobs overseas for which language requirements will be an absolute requirement which will enable us to make more of an impact on the ground, and I can announce that we will reopen a language centre here in the Foreign Office itself."
14. The investment in Arabic language skills is a long-term process. It takes time to train new FCO officers - approximately 18 months in full-time language training. Additional time is built into training where necessary to ensure that staff develop skills in the variations of Modern Standard Arabic used in different countries. The process of upgrading skills is staggered as it is linked to the end of postings for officers currently in post. So it is natural that the full benefits of the added investment will not be seen immediately. There are currently approximately 25 officers undertaking Arabic language training in preparation for speaker slot positions, or continuing their formal training whilst working in Post. We expect at

least 5 more officers to start full-time training this financial year. In addition to the full-time language programme, approximately 45 staff in London are enrolled in our Arabic lunchtime or after work classes. Many others are making use of the Rosetta Stone e-learning language package, with 560 people registered to learn Arabic through that route.

15. Alongside this enhanced range of training opportunities, the FCO's Human Resources Directorate is also improving the way language skills are taken into account when planning for internal recruitments and in the talent management system for senior staff. This is important to ensure sustained benefits from our investment in language skills. The Government is confident that, over time, this increased focus on language skills will deliver significant benefits.

The consular response in Tunisia and Egypt

16. **We conclude that the Government provided a good consular service to British nationals in Egypt and Tunisia, providing well-judged and practical advice. We congratulate the FCO for its decision not to advise against travel to the Red Sea resorts. (Reco 4, Paragraph 32)**
17. We thank the Committee for its conclusions on our consular service and travel advice. In the case of the Red Sea resorts, the decision not to advise against travel was based entirely on our judgement of the level of risk to British nationals in that area. It also enabled the important local tourist industry to continue operating, which was well received by tour operators and the local authorities. The Government makes every effort to ensure that our travel advice provides accurate and credible advice to British nationals, whose safety is always our primary concern.
18. **In its response to this report the FCO should confirm that its consular evacuation plans elsewhere in the region take into account the much higher number of independent British travellers, who may require more consular assistance than those on package holidays. (Reco 5, Paragraph 33)**
19. In developing our Crisis Management Plans for this region and elsewhere in our network, the Government takes account of all British nationals and other eligible persons, be they residents, tourists, or independent travellers.
20. We recognise the valuable service provided in a crisis to those British nationals whose travel is facilitated by tour operators, and liaise with both operators and their associations in providing assistance when incidents occur. We incorporate in our planning ways in which we can identify, communicate with and provide assistance to other groups, including residents and independent travellers. This includes through our travel advice, social media, telephone helpline and warden networks, as well as forming contacts with local authorities and expatriate associations who can alert us to British nationals requiring assistance. We strongly advise all British nationals to stay up to date with our Travel Advice and subscribe to receive updates for the country they are in.

The consular response in Libya

- 21. The evacuation of British nationals exposed serious weaknesses in the FCO's emergency consular response systems, particularly with regard to chartering flights for evacuations. The Foreign Secretary was right to commission a full and detailed review, and we commend the FCO for producing detailed conclusions. While we hope that this will improve the FCO's response, some of these new procedures are yet to be tested. (Reco 6, Paragraph 38)**
22. The crises of early 2011 presented an unprecedented series of challenges for the FCO's crisis management capability. The conclusions of the Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures highlighted lessons and necessary refinements to our crisis management systems, in order to ensure we deliver the best possible service to British Nationals. Although we have not faced a crisis of a similar scale or duration to those in early 2011, many of the improvements to FCO systems and practices have been tested in crises since then, most notably the evacuation of Embassy staff from Tehran (November 2011), the sinking of the cruise ship Costa Concordia (January 2012), the political unrest in the Maldives (February 2012), the bus crash in France (February 2012), our response to the political situation in Syria (2012) and the evacuation of British nationals from the Khorog region of Tajikistan (July 2012).
23. On each occasion, we used a number of improved systems. These included the Gold/Silver/Bronze command and control system in London, which promoted clear and quick decision-making and communication, and the London Crisis Response Teams, enabling us to scale up our crisis response quickly and sustainably. As reported in the Foreign Secretary's update to Parliament on 21 February 2012, we have developed closer relationships with commercial and MoD aviation charter specialists and developed guidelines to cover chartering processes, including building redundancies into charter operations. Since the Foreign Secretary's update, we have launched a new framework for crisis management planning across the network, complemented by new crisis guidance for our staff. The FCO's Crisis Centre in London has also been upgraded to expand its operational capacity and we will shortly launch a new Middle East and South Asia Rapid Deployment Team.
24. We have made important and sustainable improvements to our crisis planning and response systems, including extension of the FCO's Crisis Centre, but it is true that each crisis throws up a unique set of challenges. We are committed to ensuring that we learn the lessons from each one, based on a thorough and objective assessment of our response. We recognise the need to avoid complacency and will ensure that we continue to carry out regular reviews of our systems. We are continuing a regular programme of testing at overseas Posts and in London, including at board-level.
25. At the same time, we have also updated our public communications on crises. In our new "Support for British nationals abroad" guide, published in September 2011, we highlight to British nationals that there may be limits to the assistance that we can provide in a crisis and that they should take sensible precautions,

including to have comprehensive travel insurance, particularly if they are travelling to or living in a high risk location for terrorism, unrest or natural disasters.

26. **We commend the hundreds of FCO staff who worked long hours over a number of months during rolling crises. The staff in Libya and the FCO's Rapid Deployment Teams deserve particular recognition for their work to ensure British nationals reached safety. (Reco 7, Paragraph 39)**
27. The Government welcomes the Committee's recognition of the hard work of our staff who worked tirelessly over several months to assist British nationals affected by the Arab Spring, particularly those who served on the ground.
28. **We conclude that the problems encountered by locally engaged staff in reaching work during the crises, and the subsequent strain placed on remaining staff, are of particular concern in the light of the FCO's policy of engaging an ever greater number of locally engaged staff. We recommend that in its response to this report the Government provide details of how it intends to mitigate the effects of these problems in future crises. (Reco 8, Paragraph 40)**
29. Locally engaged staff continue to provide an important part of our crisis response and have shown great dedication to their roles during times of crisis. We recognise that crisis situations can hamper the ability of locally engaged staff to reach their workplace. To mitigate this risk we have a number of measures in place:
- Ensuring that crisis roles assigned to staff at post all have first and second deputy roles, to provide resilience if staff are absent from the office or if shift systems need to be put in place.
 - Recognising that in a crisis the number of staff at post may require reinforcement, we can utilise Rapid Deployment Teams (RDTs), drawn from three global hubs, who have specific training to fill crisis roles in country. In recognition of the potential high demand for reinforcing Post staffing, we are expanding our RDT cadre from three hubs to four, to include a new team drawn from the Middle East and South Asia region.
 - In a crisis situation, Posts can also draw upon Regional Resilience Teams, drawn from the local region, who can reinforce consular staff at post.
30. **We recommend that the Government review its policies in order to ensure that it is satisfied it is providing the best possible level of diplomatic protection to its locally engaged staff, and that they are aware of the limits of this protection. (Reco 9, para 14).**
31. The Government takes its duty of care to all staff very seriously and uses the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) where possible to protect locally engaged staff. However, there are limitations to the protection that the VCDR can offer locally engaged staff. The guidance on immunity was redrafted towards the end of 2011 and communicated to all Diplomatic Posts requesting Heads of Missions draw to the attention of their locally engaged staff what we can and cannot do in terms of obtaining immunity for them.

32. As the range of functions locally engaged staff carry out continues to evolve, we are looking closely at what we can do to ensure that we do not expose our local staff when taking on more high profile roles. We advise posts to carefully consider immunity risk factors when designing job specifications and allocating duties, especially in difficult political environments where staff may be more at risk. As part of a larger review of our management of locally engaged staff, due to report to the FCO Board at the end of September 2012, we are reviewing a range of duty of care issues for locally engaged staff, including the guidance we issue to Posts to help them make decisions about which tasks are appropriate to localise and how to give staff clarity on the limits of protection they may have.

Political and diplomatic responses in Tunisia and Egypt

33. We conclude that the Government was right to focus on human rights protection and to call for political reform rather than making an explicit call for President Ben Ali or President Mubarak to step down. (Reco 10, Paragraph 45)

34. We welcome the Committee's support for the Government's policy on Egypt and Tunisia during the revolutions. Our approach was shaped by our values, and focused on the need to respect the legitimate aspirations of citizens for dignity, and economic and political freedoms. We were clear this was change led by the people of the region, and that it was not for the UK to seek to impose our view of the way forward.

35. We recommend that the Government provide the Committee with an explanation of the difference between the times taken to achieve an EU-wide asset freeze for ex-President Ben Ali and for ex-President Mubarak. (Reco 11, Paragraph 48)

36. The interim Tunisian authorities quickly provided the information required by the EU in order to act in respect of Ben Ali after he fled Tunisia. In the case of Egypt, it took longer to clarify the Egyptian national judicial process that sanctions would support. Without this it was not possible for the EU to agree a new sanctions regime (which required unanimity amongst EU Member States). It also took some time for the Egyptian administration to make available to the EU the necessary clear and specific justifications for designating the individuals, including in relation to former President Mubarak.

Response to the Libyan uprising

37. We conclude that securing a UN resolution was vital to the legitimacy of subsequent intervention and a significant diplomatic achievement (Reco 12, Paragraph 52)

38. The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion on the importance of securing a UN Security Council Resolution to the legitimacy of subsequent intervention, and that this represented a significant diplomatic achievement. UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (UNSCR 1973) authorised all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in Libya. The consequent action proved vital in preventing major loss of life in Benghazi and across Libya.

39. **We conclude that the Government responded to the Libyan crisis boldly on both bilateral and multilateral levels. The UK demonstrated leadership at the United Nations and in the EU to achieve its desired response (Reco 13, Paragraph 58)**
40. The Government welcomes the Committee's recognition of the role played by Britain, including at the United Nations and within the European Union. The case for action in Libya was - and remains - powerful. Britain and the international community could not turn a blind eye to the Qadhafi regime's campaign against the civilian population of Libya. The Arab League called for help and intervention. Britain took a strong lead in calling for, securing and implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. We also led the drive to increase the pressure on the regime to stop the violence through progressively restrictive EU sanctions.

Legacy of UK involvement in MENA region

41. **We conclude that the UK's policy of engaging with autocratic powers in the MENA region while remaining relatively quiet in public on human rights and political reform has linked us in the eyes of many people with those deposed and discredited governments. However, even if the UK had applied more pressure to the previous autocratic governments on human rights and democratic reforms, it would have been unlikely to have brought forward the revolutions. Yet an approach that more consistently advocated the need for human rights and democratic reforms might have helped to improve the human rights situation in each of these states, as well as having a positive impact on the public perception of the UK in the region today. (Reco 14, para 63)**
42. In his Kuwait speech in February 2011, the Prime Minister recognised that the Government needed to adjust its approach in the MENA region. He acknowledged that in the past there had been occasions when Britain may have prioritised its short-term interests above values. He also set out that, 'in a changing world ours must now also be a partnership that recognises the importance of political and economic reform.' Through the Arab Partnership, the Government has placed a values-based approach at the centre of our response to the Arab Spring.
43. The Government does not agree, however, that it was relatively quiet on human rights in the past. Human rights concerns are consistently part of ministerial briefings for visits to the MENA region and are regularly raised with MENA governments. The FCO's Human Rights Report 2010 (covering the period from January to December 2010) included Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen as countries of concern within the MENA region. The Government spoke out in public statements and private dialogues on human rights concerns across the MENA region. This included being the first country to issue a national statement on the sentencing of Syrian human rights defender Mohannad al-Hassani in July 2010; public condemnation by Alistair Burt MP, FCO Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, and our Ambassador to Iraq of the October 2010 attack on Our Lady of Salvation church in Baghdad and; in November 2010 publicly urging the Libyan

government to issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council to visit Libya.

A values-based approach

- 44. We conclude that it is right to place democratic values at the heart of the UK's response to the Arab Spring. The Government is right to consider interests and values as connected, although we share our witnesses' doubts that they will always be in clear alignment (Reco 15, para 68).**
45. The Government welcomes the Committee's support for Britain's response to the Arab Spring. We agree with the Committee's assessment that our interests and our values are connected, but may not always be in clear alignment, at least in the short-term. However, we believe that in the long-term our interests will best be served by an approach shaped by our values. Societies based on citizen consent and participation, with respect for human rights, are most likely to provide lasting prosperity and security for themselves, Britain and our allies.
- 46. The Government must be sensitive to the scepticism with which British statements on human rights and freedom are met in the region. We recommend that the Government avoid discrediting its 'values based' approach by promising more than it can deliver. (Reco 16, para 71)**
47. The Government acknowledges that some in the MENA region will be sceptical about British statements on human rights and freedoms. It is also clear, however, that many people in the region, including human rights and civil society activists, welcome our values-based approach, both publicly and in private.
48. In our approach to the Arab Spring, we have sought not to overpromise on British efforts, instead working to empower and enable those within the region who are working to build genuine political and economic citizen participation.
49. In our public messaging, we have been realistic about Britain's role. The Government has made clear that we do not wish to impose a vision of change from outside, but to respond to and support the legitimate desires of the peoples of the countries concerned for strengthened political and economic participation.
- 50. We conclude that arms sales to the MENA region have been a source of concern for a number of years. In calculating whether to award export licences, the Government should also consider the effect on the public perception of the UK in the region. (Reco 17, Paragraph 75)**
51. When deciding whether to award an export licence, the Government considers each application case-by-case against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. These take into account, inter alia, the UK's national and international commitments; the risk of goods being used for internal repression or to aggravate existing tensions within the destination country; whether the export would affect regional stability; the UK's national security; the behaviour of the recipient country with regard to the international community; the risk that the equipment will be diverted; and the compatibility of the arms export with the technical and economic capacity of the recipient country.

52. If none of the risk thresholds under the mandatory criteria are met we may also take into account other factors including the potential effect of the proposed export on British economic interests, on any collaborative defence projects, on the protection of Britain's essential strategic industrial base and the potential effect on British relations with the recipient country. This last factor incorporates consideration of the effect on public perceptions, to the extent possible, although these can reflect a variety of views, may not be fully informed and can be challenging to gauge.
53. **We conclude that the goodwill that could have been generated by a Prime Ministerial visit to the region at such a critical time was somewhat squandered by the Government's misjudgement in including members of the British arms trade in the delegation to the Gulf, as indeed it has been damaged by decades of arms sales to repressive governments. Regardless of its legality, it was a mistake for the Prime Minister to be seen to be promoting the UK's arms trade on a visit to a region undergoing uprisings in which some authoritarian regimes had used force against their own people. (Reco 18, Paragraph 77)**
54. The Government disagrees with the Committee's conclusion regarding the inclusion of British defence industry representatives during the Prime Minister's visit to the Gulf. The Prime Minister's visit to Kuwait marked the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's forces and included a key-note speech in the Kuwaiti parliament to mark the occasion.
55. The Government's views on defence exports are in line with Article 51 of the UN Charter: every country has the right to defend itself. As not every country either has or wants to have its own defence industry, some level of international trade in defence goods is likely to be essential.
56. The government uses its export licensing powers to ensure that Britain only permits responsible defence exports. Export licensing policy is based on the EU Common Position on Arms Exports. When the Arab Spring began, the Government acted rapidly. All extant licences for the export of military and security equipment to the MENA region were reviewed, in particular the scope for British exports to be used in internal repression. As a consequence of this review, some licences were revoked in respect of exports to Tunisia, Libya and Bahrain.

Accepting new partners: Islamist electoral success

57. **We recommend that the Government prioritise the particular concerns of women and religious minorities as it pursues closer relations with new Islamist governments. (Reco 19, Para 83)**
58. The Government agrees with the Committee that concerns of women and religious minorities are a key priority as we deepen our relationships with new Islam-inspired governments in the region. Equally, we must be careful to judge new governments not on the basis of preconceptions, but on their actions.
59. Where we have human rights concerns, including but not limited to those of women and religious minorities, we will make them clear to the government in

question. This applies in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, where Islam-inspired parties are leading governments, and more broadly across the region.

60. We welcome Egyptian President Mursi's statement pledging to respect human rights and tackle discrimination, including against minorities. In his letters to President Mursi in June 2012 and to Prime Minister Qandil in August 2012, the Prime Minister expressed British support for the Egyptian transition, underlining the importance of reconciling the hopes of all Egyptians, and protecting human rights and the rule of law. During his March 2012 visit, Mr. Burt discussed the importance of enshrining the rights of minorities in the new Egyptian Constitution in meetings with Islam-inspired representatives.
61. We also welcome the commitments to human rights made by the three leaders of the governing coalition in Tunisia, including the promise that the new Tunisian Constitution will protect human rights and the equality of citizens. The Ministry of Human Rights actively engages with civil society on human rights and President Marzouki, Prime Minister Jebali and Leader of the Assembly, Ben Jafaar, have all committed to protect the rights of religious minorities. In his letter to Prime Minister Jebali in February 2012, the Prime Minister expressed British support for Tunisia's transition and underlined the importance of upholding the aims of the revolution. The Embassy in Tunis maintains a dialogue on human rights issues with the Tunisian Government and civil society and will continue to monitor progress on these issues.
62. In the context of its wider political reforms, Morocco has made some progress on the rights of women. The new Constitution of July 2011 enshrined equality between men and women, and condemned any discrimination on the basis of gender. We welcome this development and will continue to work closely with the Moroccan Government to encourage full implementation of the Constitution.
63. Through the Arab Partnership Participation Fund we are supporting women's participation. This includes work in Egypt to promote women's participation in local council elections, and regional projects in partnership with Saferworld and the British Council to strengthen women's political and economic participation in several MENA countries, including Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Libya.

UK bilateral support for democratic transitions

64. **We welcome the Arab Partnership programme as a tool to promote political and economic reform in the region and a demonstration of the UK's support for reform and commitment to the region. The FCO should provide us with an annual report on the spending and achievements of the Arab Partnership. (Reco 20, Paragraph 89)**
65. The Government welcomes the Committee's recommendation. The Arab Partnership has been fundamental to the Government's response to the Arab Spring, and is a good example of an effective cross-Government approach in which the FCO and DFID have collaborated closely. We will provide an annual update on the Arab Partnership Fund, following the approach of the written briefing on the Arab Partnership Fund submitted to the Committee in June 2012. The next update will be submitted in spring 2013, covering the 2012/13 financial

year for both the FCO-led Arab Partnership Participation Fund and the DFID-led Arab Partnership Economic Facility.

66. We recommend that the UK be bold in seeking new partners for Arab Partnership funds. In its response to this report the FCO should set out the steps it is taking to improve its communication with alternative organisations that could bid for funding, and to raise public awareness of the programmes it funds in each country. (Reco 21, Paragraph 90)

67. The £40 million Arab Partnership Participation Fund, and the £7 million Country Impact Fund within the £70 million Arab Partnership Economic Facility, are open to bids from both international and local organisations through a competitive and transparent process.

68. Details of projects funded by the Arab Partnership are available on the FCO and DFID websites, as well as the websites of individual Embassies. This financial year (2012/13), we have already taken further steps to reach out to new local partners and to encourage them to bid, including publishing all guidance material and bidding forms for the Fund in Arabic, providing training for potential project partners on design and proposal writing, and undertaking launch events in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

69. The Arab Partnership Department also works with Embassies, FCO Press Office and the regional media hub in Dubai to raise the public profile of the Arab Partnership in the region, including through the national and pan-Arab media. We are also encouraging project partners to increase their own communications activity, which we will monitor through the quarterly reporting process.

70. For the 2013/14 bidding round, we are taking further steps to increase our efforts to reach out to partners based outside capital cities, including through field visits and targeted communication campaigns. We are also reviewing our online guidance material for potential bidders in both Arabic and English to ensure that they are simple and easy to follow.

71. We conclude that at a time when soft power and public diplomacy is more needed than ever, the British Council programmes are vital in generating goodwill and promoting Britain and British education in the region. We particularly commend the British Council's youth engagement work, including its Global Changemakers programme. (Reco 22, Para 95)

72. The Government agrees with the Committee about the value of the British Council's work in the region. We regard the British Council as a strategic partner in delivering the UK's response to the Arab Spring and playing a central role in helping to strengthen Britain's relations with youth in the MENA region.

73. We conclude that the Arab Spring further highlighted the importance of the BBC World Service in providing a vital independent news service to the world and in enhancing the UK's reputation in the region. We welcome the Government's belated move to secure funds for the BBC Arabic Service, and hope the Government's funding will not prove to be a one-off commitment, but rather a sustained investment. However, we remain concerned that cuts made elsewhere in the World Service will prove

detrimental to the UK's national interests. We stand by our previous conclusions that funding for the World Service must be protected and maintained as responsibility for funding transfers from the FCO to the BBC. (Reco 23, Para 99)

74. The Government agrees with the Committee that the BBC Arabic Service provides a valuable service in the region. We pay tribute to the staff of the BBC World Service and BBC Arabic Service who often work in dangerous conditions. It is important that audiences both in the region and globally have access to independent reporting on events in the Middle East and North Africa. The BBC World Service and BBC Arabic Service both help ensure this and add to a rich and diverse media landscape alongside organisations such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya.
75. The Foreign Secretary made clear in his Written Ministerial Statement of 22 June 2011 that the additional funding was for £2.2m per annum to enable the World Service to maintain the current level of investment in the BBC Arabic Service. This additional funding will continue for the duration of the World Service funding from Grant-in-Aid through the FCO and is a sign of the value that we place on the work of the Arabic Service.
76. The BBC Trust has made it clear that they will continue to support the World Service once funding transfers to the Licence Fee in April 2014. The Chair of the BBC Trust, Lord Patten, said to the Committee in November 2011, “both I myself and the Director-General of the BBC have made it clear that we wanted to retain the funding of the World Service”. He also said “we will be careful and, I hope, appropriate guardians of the quality of the World Service”. The Foreign Secretary will continue to be involved in drawing up the priorities, objectives and targets for the BBC World Service after the funding transfers to the License Fee in April 2014.
77. In addition, through the Arab Partnership Fund, we have worked closely with the BBC Arabic Service and BBC Media Action (the new name for the BBC World Service Trust) in the MENA region since the Arab Spring began. We welcome the Committee’s recognition of the ‘*Question Time*’ programme that BBC Arabic broadcasts, in conjunction with BBC Media Action. This has been funded by the Arab Partnership and has had excellent local feedback in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. The widely read Tunisian daily Al Chorouk, described the programme as ‘*a possible solution to save a media that was worn out by dictatorship*’.

Multilateral support: a ‘Marshall Plan’ for the region

78. **It is important that the UK and its Deauville Partners are seen to be keeping their promises to states in the MENA region. The UK should make the Deauville Partnership a priority of its G8 presidency in 2013. The Government should set out in its response to this report more information on the use of the UK’s contribution to the \$38 billion identified by Deauville. (Reco 24, Para 106)**
79. We agree that it is important that Britain and the Deauville Partnership should fulfil their commitments to the MENA countries undergoing transition. The

Foreign Secretary told G8 Foreign Ministers in April 2012 that we remained committed to the Deauville Partnership and that it was a key element of the international community's ongoing support for the political and economic transitions in the MENA region. During the British G8 Presidency next year we will work to ensure that the Partnership makes an effective contribution to addressing the key challenges faced by the transition countries, responding to needs identified by the countries themselves.

80. The Government notes the Committee's request that we provide information on the use of the British contribution to the \$38 billion identified by Deauville. The \$38 billion did not include a direct contribution from Britain, but rather was the sum of total funds available to the Deauville Partners from a number of multilateral development banks and other funds. The breakdown was: World Bank Group: \$10.7bn; African Development Bank: \$7.6bn; Islamic Development Bank: \$5bn; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development: \$2.5bn; European Investment Bank: \$7.5bn; OPEC Fund for International Development: \$0.4bn; Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development: \$3.2bn; Arab Monetary Fund: \$1.15bn. These sums represented the maximum potential funds available to the transition countries from those institutions. The UK, as an important shareholder in some of these institutions, indirectly provides a significant amount of the funding.
81. These funds are not automatically allocated to the transition countries: they need to agree terms for access to these funds. We have encouraged Deauville Partners to take up these offers of financial support, but in some cases they have been reluctant to do so, for domestic political reasons.
82. Britain is making other direct contributions to Deauville Partnership initiatives through its £110 million Arab Partnership Fund. At the G8 Summit on 19 May 2012, countries endorsed the creation under the Deauville Partnership of a new Transition Fund to provide up to \$250 million in grants and technical assistance to help transition countries strengthen institutions critical to economic development and implement country-owned reforms. We are working closely with Partner countries to finalise the Fund's design and are prepared to make a substantial and early contribution to the Fund. Britain also strongly supported the extension of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) mandate to the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean, which will provide up to €4 billion in investment over the next three years and a further €2.5 billion annually from 2015. Britain has contributed £5 million to an EBRD Donor Fund to support the Bank's initial activities in its expanded area of operation.
83. ***We share the Government's frustration that Egypt did not accept international funding last year. The UK, as a key member of the international financial organisations, should engage with the new loan negotiations to ensure that they result in an offer of funds that is acceptable to Egypt. (Reco 25, Paragraph 109)***
84. The Government will continue to work with international partners, international financial institutions and others to seek to secure sufficient international financial support for Egypt. However, the IMF loan negotiations are conducted directly between the IMF and the Egyptian authorities. Britain is not a party to these

bilateral negotiations, although we engage with both sides. As a member of the Executive Board of the IMF, we will contribute to the final decision on the IMF loan at the Board in Washington.

85. We are encouraging the Egyptian authorities and the IMF to ensure that an agreed financing package is linked to a robust set of macroeconomic policy measures needed to restore investor confidence and promote the stability of the Egyptian economy. At the invitation of the Egyptian authorities, IMF Managing Director, Christine Lagarde, visited Egypt on 21-22 August 2012, demonstrating the IMF's continued commitment to support Egypt. Egypt has now officially requested increasing the IMF loan from \$3.2 billion to \$4.8 billion. The Egyptian authorities expect the agreement to be signed in early December.
86. We believe the Egyptian authorities are aware that they need timely international support and that a successful IMF loan agreement should pave the way for financial support from other parties. We are encouraged by the recent signing of a \$200 million loan from the World Bank to support labour intensive investments.
- 87. *We conclude that the EU response to the Arab Spring has been somewhat mixed. We welcome the EU's stated commitment to a new approach, but there have so far been limited results. We recognise the difficulties in engaging with countries that are undergoing transitions but we are disappointed that the EU has yet to engage with Egypt during a critical period for that country. (Reco 26, para 117)***
88. The Government also welcomes the EU's commitment to a new approach in response to the Arab Spring, which this Government played an important role in securing. This was clearly set out in the March 2011 joint communication of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Baroness Ashton, and the Commission, "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean".
89. The EU's offer is primarily based on long-term support. Thus, although results so far may have been limited, important foundations have been laid. Mandates to negotiate Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) with Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco have been agreed, and negotiations on new mobility partnerships with Tunisia and Morocco are underway. The DCFTAs in particular, although lengthy to conclude, will lead to significant integration and access to the European Single Market, the largest in the world. Additional funding, including €1 billion in funding and support for civil society through the Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme and a new Civil Society Facility, has been made available to the region through the revised European Neighbourhood Policy.
90. We note the Committee's conclusion that the EU has yet to engage with Egypt, but suggest that this conclusion does not fully reflect the extent of EU efforts. The High Representative has made several visits to Cairo, the most recent being 18-19 July 2012, and the Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean has been there on a monthly basis. The EU stepped up its support to civil society in the immediate period after the revolution and has been clear that it will consider macro-financial assistance once an agreement is reached with the IMF. The EU is also keen to hold a first Task Force meeting for Egypt in autumn 2012.

91. ***We further conclude that the number of separate EU funding programmes contributes to a lack of transparency about where and how money is spent. We regret that this inhibits proper parliamentary scrutiny in this area. (Reco 27, Para 118)***
92. The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that a multiplicity of separate EU funding programmes does not facilitate transparency and public oversight. This reflects the complex structures of the EU, as well as the different functions of the different instruments. We continue to advocate for more proactive and simple communications on ENP spending.
93. The new European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) has now been designed for 2014-2020. The new ENI, as any regulation, will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny and should therefore help to alleviate some of the issues around transparency for the next six years of programming.
94. ***We conclude that for many years the UK did not do enough to prevent, or apply conditions to, the EU's provision of support to authoritarian governments in Egypt and Tunisia before the revolutions and that this has consequences for attempts to do so now. It is right that there be a relationship between aid and improvements in human rights, but this should be done sensitively and in a phased manner, with conditionality increasing gradually rather than being imposed immediately on struggling and fragile democracies. (Reco 28, Paragraph 125)***
95. Britain has consistently led the way amongst EU Member States in pressing for strengthened conditionality to the EU's provision of support. Partly as a result of British lobbying, the ENP does now include greater application of conditionality, and the principle of 'more-for-more' (i.e. more support in return for more reform). This does not mean shutting the door on new democracies but using EU assistance as an incentive for better political and economic governance. We are also lobbying for the new European Neighbourhood Instrument to include provisions to reduce funding when countries retrench on reform in a serious or sustained manner.
96. We agree with the Committee that the assessment of whether these commitments have been met needs to take account of the context in which the country is operating, including an understanding of the difficult challenges facing countries in transition.

UK-Tunisia bilateral relationship

97. ***We conclude that the UK should continue to pursue stronger ties with Tunisia and should encourage Tunisian former exiles to maintain a relationship with the UK and with the British embassy in Tunisia even after they have returned to their first home. (Reco 29, Paragraph 131)***
98. Following the change in leadership in Tunisia, the Government moved quickly to build relations with the emerging authorities and support the political transition. We agree with the Committee that it is important to continue building strong ties with Tunisia, including with former exiles who have returned.

99. The Embassy has been active in fostering strong links with former exiles including within the coalition government, opposition members and National Constituent Assembly. Members of the Committee met Mr Rachid Ghannouchi during their visit to Tunisia in February 2012. Chatham House will host an event in November 2012 to award a joint prize to President Marzouki and Mr Ghannouchi in recognition of their role in the transition. This visit will be an important opportunity to reinforce Tunisian links with Britain.
100. **We conclude that there is great potential for the UK and Tunisia to improve their bilateral trade and investment to their mutual benefit. (Reco 30, Paragraph 133)**
101. The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that there is great potential for Britain and Tunisia to improve bilateral trade and investment to mutual benefit. The Government has been discussing with the Tunisian Government ways to increase bilateral trade and investment, and to support economic reform. Our Embassy, supported by the FCO and UKTI, will continue to make trade and investment promotion a top priority. Foreign Minister Rafik Abdessalem expressed a shared goal of increasing British business presence in Tunisia when he attended a working lunch with the Foreign Secretary in March 2012.
102. There are encouraging signs that British companies are increasingly looking at opportunities in Tunisia and registering interest in various sectors, including renewable energy. The number of British tourists visiting Tunisia is also gradually increasing. In March 2012, the Embassy in Tunis hosted a two-day workshop in Kasserine to promote cultural tourism and share expertise, including through a presentation from a local UKTI representative on our experience in the sector.
103. In parallel, we are supporting regional efforts to foster an interconnected Maghreb region, and the opening of economic opportunities to the benefit of the countries of the Maghreb. One example of this was the British Wilton Park conference on the economy of the Maghreb in July 2012, the first of its kind which brought together Ministers, senior officials and economic experts from the five Maghreb states. Participants discussed the individual and collective challenges in the region in the run-up to the Arab Maghreb Union Summit later this year. We are working with our Maghreb partners to explore further ways to increase our cooperation in support of increased prosperity in the region and to build further on the Wilton Park initiative next year.
104. **We conclude that the value of the Arab Partnership and DFID funding as a tool of UK soft power and sign of British support for democratisation will be limited if its projects are not visible to most of the public in those countries. (Reco 31, Paragraph 134)**
105. We agree with the Committee's conclusion on the importance of public visibility of projects funded by the Arab Partnership Fund. Currently, information on Arab Partnership projects in Tunisia is held on the FCO's main website and on the "UK in Tunisia" website. Locally, we work with project partners to arrange media coverage and press releases for the launch of projects. The recent launch of the Centre for Study of Islam and Democracy project on consensus-building

dialogue around the Constitution received excellent coverage. It included a presentation from a member of the British Embassy and was aired on Al Jazeera.

106. We agree with the Committee that we could do more to strengthen the visibility of our projects, and have begun work to strengthen the public communication strategy for the Arab Partnership Fund. However, there is also a balance to be struck between the visibility of British 'branding' and our implementing partners' need for ownership and independence.

UK-Egypt bilateral relationship

107. ***It is disappointing that the Egyptian people had such a limited and polarising choice of presidential candidates. However, now that Egypt has chosen a president the UK should provide support and assistance to President Mursi to help him achieve much needed stability in Egypt and a transfer to civilian control. (Reco 32, Paragraph 145)***

108. The Government has made clear that we will work with the new Egyptian leadership to support Egypt's transition and deliver our shared interests in stability, security and prosperity. The Prime Minister wrote to President Mursi immediately after his election, expressing our desire to work closely with the Egyptian government and emphasising the need for the new government to deliver the Egyptian people's aspirations for reform, accountability, protection of human rights and the rule of law. The Government will continue the high-level engagement which we have maintained since the revolution to support Egypt's transition to full civilian-led government and economic recovery.

109. Bilaterally, we are providing assistance through the Arab Partnership with projects in Egypt expected to total around £4m this financial year (2012/13). This includes support for democratic institutions, political participation, freedom of expression, media reform and inclusive economic growth. In addition, we are providing funding through regional programmes of the International Financial Institutions for economic reform and private sector development, a significant proportion of which will benefit Egypt. We will also use our G8 Presidency to strengthen the Deauville Partnership and continue to work through the EU to deliver support for Egyptian priorities.

110. Private sector investment will be central to Egypt's economic recovery. The UK is the largest foreign investor in Egypt and the Government has identified Egypt as one of our top 20 markets with significant potential for growth. The Government will continue to help promote the right climate in Egypt for British business and investors.

111. ***We conclude that with the benefit of hindsight, it would have been beneficial if the Prime Minister had met the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in February 2011, particularly given the election of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Dr Mohamed Mursi as President of Egypt in June 2012. (Reco 33, Paragraph 147)***

112. The Government disagrees with the Committee's conclusion regarding the Prime Minister's visit to Egypt in February 2011. It would have been inappropriate

to meet the Muslim Brotherhood at such an early and delicate stage in Egypt's transition, a matter of days after the revolution. We could have been open to accusations of taking sides or attempting to influence the course of the political transition. The Prime Minister met the military and civilian leadership, emphasising the importance of a full transition to civilian, democratic rule, and a range of groups and individuals involved in the Tahrir Square demonstrations.

113. British officials have long had contact with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (EMB), pre-dating the revolution. The Egyptian Government announced on 2 February 2011 that it planned to involve the EMB in its dialogue with opposition groups. We subsequently extended the range of our MB contacts at official level to include any members who were likely to become part of the dialogue, providing they were willing to reject violence as a means of achieving political change, support the democratic process and accept international agreements. The Permanent Under Secretary of the FCO met Mr. Mursi on a visit to Cairo on 2 February 2012.
114. In April 2011, we further extended the possibility for engagement with Muslim Brotherhood representatives to Ministerial contact in Egypt, on the basis of the above principles. The Foreign Secretary visited Cairo on 2 May 2011 and met an activist from the EMB as part of a representative group of Egyptian activists. During his visit to Egypt on 11-13 March 2012, Mr. Burt met the Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Khayrat Al Shater; the Independent Islamist presidential candidate, Abdul Moneim Aboul Futouh; and the leader of the Salafi Al-Nour Party, Emad Ghaffour. We have continued to increase our high level engagement with the EMB and other Islam-inspired political actors in line with our values and our assessment of political developments in Egypt.
115. ***We welcome the Government's willingness to work with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and we urge the Government to deepen its engagement at this early stage in order to demonstrate the assistance and support available to those who respect human rights and democratic reforms. (Reco 34, Paragraph 148)***
116. As the Committee recognises, the Government has made clear that we will work with President Mursi and his government to support democratic transition and economic development in Egypt.
117. We have consulted the Egyptian authorities regarding the upcoming British G8 Presidency so that we can ensure support through Deauville is closely tailored to transition country priorities – and thus act as a more attractive incentive for political reform. We are also working to ensure that EU support reflects progress in the areas of human rights and democratic reforms.
118. ***The human rights situation in Egypt under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' leadership is a matter of serious concern, and we welcome the Government's recognition that extra monitoring is required. The UK should maintain a consistent and robust approach to supporting human rights in Egypt and should prioritise women's rights and the rights of religious minorities as particularly under threat. (Reco 35, Paragraph 150)***

119. The Government agrees with the Committee that Britain should continue to maintain a robust approach to supporting human rights in Egypt, particularly women's rights and the rights of religious minorities. In addition, human rights concerns linked to the security sector are a priority.
120. Progress on human rights will require strong state institutions, including a parliament that can provide accountability, and a Constitution that protects the rights of all Egyptians. We have indicated to the Egyptians that British support is available as they continue with their transition. Through the Arab Partnership, we are already focusing on support to women in Egypt, including their economic empowerment and participation in local council elections. Mr. Burt has met senior Egyptian representatives from the Muslim and Christian faiths to discuss ways of promoting co-operation between faith groups.
121. **We conclude that some degree of scepticism about the UK's intentions is to be expected, but a poor perception of the UK among the Egyptian public is of increasing concern as Egypt's political leaders become more responsive to public opinion. The FCO should dedicate further staff resources to its public diplomacy in Egypt. (Reco 36, Paragraph 151)**
122. We acknowledge that in the past there has been scepticism about British intentions towards Egypt. However, we believe that the British response to the revolution and our commitment to supporting the political transition has been welcomed within Egypt. We have consistently made clear that the transition should enable the aspirations of the Egyptian people to be fulfilled.
123. We are dedicating significant resources to our public diplomacy in the region. We have two members of staff working on public diplomacy in Egypt and have recently recruited a digital diplomacy officer. We are looking to expand the Press and Public Affairs (PPA) team in Cairo with an additional Arabic-speaking Public Diplomacy Officer by 2014.
124. In Egypt, the PPA team provides information about British policies to the Egyptian media and members of the public, including through press releases, digital media, press conferences and briefings by senior Embassy staff and high-level British visitors. The Embassy has organised events to build the UK-Egypt relationship, such as through the GREAT Olympics campaign and Diamond Jubilee celebrations.
125. Ministers and senior officials have also briefed the media to counter inaccurate information, for example in relation to asset recovery. In recent interviews with BBC Radio 4 and the BBC's Newsnight programme, Mr. Burt stressed the importance the British Government attaches to the recovery of stolen assets.
126. The PPA team in Cairo is part of our regional communications network which is composed of 30 regional posts; the London-based Press Office; two regional spokespeople; a Digital Diplomacy Department; a Strategic Campaigns and Public Diplomacy team; and partners in other Whitehall departments. Through this network we successfully managed a series of activities to coincide with the first anniversary of the Arab Spring.

127. **We conclude that it is too early to judge if a free and democratic Egypt will prove to be a stronger partner in the Middle East Peace Process than Egypt under President Mubarak. (Reco 37, Paragraph 154)**

128. The Government agrees that the role Egypt may play in regional security, including the Middle East Peace Process, is not yet clear. The Government wants to see a strong Egypt contributing to regional peace and stability. We were encouraged by President Mursi's first speech as President, in which he stated that Egypt would respect all international treaties and conventions which Egypt had already signed.

129. We also welcome President Mursi's commitment to take full control of the Sinai Peninsula following incidents on the Egypt/Israel border, most recently on 5 August in which 17 Egyptian soldiers lost their lives. Egypt and Israel share serious concerns about the security situation in the Sinai and we hope they will work together to confront such threats. The Government continues to follow closely the development of the Egyptian government's foreign policy, including on the Middle East Peace Process, and to seek opportunities to work in partnership on shared issues of concern, such as the Sinai.

UK-Libya relationship

130. **The Government is correct to press the Libyan authorities on the need to establish human rights protections in Libya and to eliminate the use of torture in places of detention. We recommend that the Government encourage the Libyan authorities to issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country as soon as practicable. In its response to this report the Government should set out its timetable and objectives for the conference on human rights in Libya that it announced in February 2012. (Reco 38, Paragraph 163)**

131. The Government continues to press the Libyan authorities to deliver the commitments previously made on upholding the rule of law and human rights. In February 2012, the Prime Minister of Libya made clear his willingness to extend a standing invitation to UN Special Rapporteurs to visit the country and we are encouraging the authorities to follow up this up.

132. On detainees, some progress has been made. Figures are hard to confirm, but we understand several thousand detainees have been moved from make-shift facilities under militia control to Ministry of Justice-controlled prisons. A cross-government Committee has also begun to screen all detainees to either charge or release them. We will continue to urge the new authorities to take action to investigate past abuses, prevent further abuses and address the position of minority groups.

133. We are working with the Libyan authorities to provide a range of support, including on reform of the police, the armed forces and the prison service. The Government has also funded human rights training for lawyers and the judiciary, as well as projects promoting women and youth empowerment. Britain will engage with the new government to explore what additional assistance is required to meet Libya's human rights commitments.

134. The Committee asked the Government to set out its timetable and objectives for the conference on human rights which was announced in February. Our plan was to bring together Libyan officials and civil society with international experts and NGOs to work through the assistance required to deliver Libya's human rights commitments. Those plans have been put on hold whilst we agree the best mechanism for delivering the conference with full Libyan buy-in. We will work with the new government on this, including offering our support in convening a human rights conference in a way that leads to real Libyan ownership.
135. **We conclude that the UK should continue to encourage the Libyan authorities to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and deliver Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and Abdullah al-Senussi into its control. The Government should explore options with Libya and the international community to agree that the suspects could be returned at some point in the future to stand trial in Libya. (Reco 39, Paragraph 164)**
136. The Government welcomes the continued co-operation between Libya and the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the case of Saif al-Islam al Qadhafi. We note that Libya's Transitional Government has sought to engage constructively with the ICC regarding the ongoing ICC process and whether any future trial should take place in Libya or The Hague. On 1 May 2012, the Libyan authorities submitted an admissibility challenge to the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber under Article 19 of the Rome Statute, arguing that the Libyan investigation has primacy over that of the ICC. The ICC Judges agreed to consider this challenge and also to grant a postponement for their earlier request that Libya surrender Saif al-Islam to the Court. It is now for the ICC Judges to decide whether to accept this challenge.
137. Abdullah al-Senussi was extradited by the Mauritanian authorities to Libya on 5 September 2012. The Libyan Prime Minister has stated publicly that al-Senussi will receive "a fair trial during which the international standards of dignity will be respected". The Libyan authorities and the International Criminal Court will need to engage on the matter of the ICC's outstanding arrest warrant for al-Senussi. UNSCR1970 requires the Libyan authorities to cooperate fully with the ICC. The Government will continue to encourage the Libyan authorities to cooperate with the ICC on both cases to ensure that any future legal process is conducted according to international standards.
138. **We conclude that it is important that the UK does not squander the goodwill it enjoys in Libya. The Government should maintain its steady approach to the promotion of trading ties during Libya's transition. (Reco 40, Paragraph 166)**
139. The Government and the Libyan authorities remain fully committed to developing a close and wide-reaching relationship that, over the coming years, delivers real benefits to both our countries, establishing Britain as Libya's partner of choice. Through UKTI, the Government has worked hard to position Britain as an attractive commercial partner by building and maintaining strong relationships with key decision makers, identifying those areas ripe for cooperation and ensuring that British commercial expertise is showcased at every level of government.

140. Our strategy in Libya is to prioritise those areas where significant Libyan needs are matched by extensive British expertise, such as healthcare, education and civil security. Since re-establishing a presence in Tripoli in September 2011, UKTI has developed a full sector-based programme including trade missions, conferences and business forums. In Britain, UKTI is working to raise the profile of Libya as a market for British goods and services, especially amongst SMEs, and encouraging British companies to undertake the necessary due diligence in readiness for contracts being tendered by the new Libyan authorities.
141. The Government will continue to leverage its political influence to make the most of the very warm disposition shown by so many Libyans towards Britain. We will achieve this through Ministerial and high level visits and a CEO forum of senior British business people which is looking to build business alliances that extend beyond specific deals into enduring partnerships in key sectors. In parallel, the Government is initiating long-term work to support economic recovery in Libya and improvements to the business environment, which will facilitate the entry of British firms into the market.
142. **We conclude that the Government should negotiate permission for British investigators in the Lockerbie and Yvonne Fletcher cases to have access to Gaddafi regime records in Libya as a matter of urgency. We suspect that resolution of these issues, for all those who suffered personally, may be more important than financial compensation for what was done. We encourage the Government to consider the merits of promoting a resolution which is not contingent on payment by the Libyan authorities to victims if such payment is an obstacle to gaining access to information and records. (Reco 41, Paragraph 167)**
143. Resolving outstanding legacy issues arising from the actions of the Qadhafi regime is a high priority for the Government in its relations with Libya. The Government has raised this with the Libyan authorities at every opportunity. During his visit to Libya on 16 July 2012, the Foreign Secretary underscored the importance of this in a public speech: "I also raised the importance of the UK and Libya continuing to work together to address the legacy of the Qadhafi regime, which has left many victims in both countries. As part of this I emphasised the importance of making progress on open British police investigations into the murder of WPC Fletcher and the Lockerbie attack."
144. The Government welcomes the fact that the Metropolitan Police Service team investigating the murder of WPC Fletcher was able to return to Libya on 17-19 July 2012 to build on initial discussions with the Libyan authorities held in June about future cooperation on the investigation. We hope to see follow-up to this visit very soon. On Lockerbie, the Government is pleased that the Lord Advocate was able to visit Libya on 24-26 April 2012 for discussions about future cooperation on the investigation, and that Libyan Prime Minister al-Kib met the Lord Advocate and the Chief Constable of Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary during his visit to Britain in May 2012. The Government continues to press for investigators from the Scottish authorities to return to Libya very soon for further discussions.

145. The Government shares the Committee's view that achieving a comprehensive resolution and reconciliation for British victims of the Qadhafi regime, including as a result of Qadhafi's support of IRA terrorism, is key. The Government has repeatedly made clear to the Libyan authorities that our aim is to see justice done and closure for victims. Our focus is promoting broad and lasting reconciliation between Libyan and British communities directly affected by Qadhafi's support of terrorism, through a range of activities that will benefit all communities. There are a number of groups in Britain pursuing compensation claims on a private basis. The Government believes that these claims are best pursued privately with the Libyan Government. The FCO will, however, continue to provide facilitation support to these groups, where it has been requested, and encourage the Libyan authorities to engage with representatives of British victims.

146. We are surprised at the Minister's indication that the allegations of British involvement in rendition and subsequent torture of two Libyan nationals have had no effect on the UK-Libya relationship. We conclude that even if the allegations have not caused immediate damage, they may do in the long-term if there is no adequate investigation and resolution of the matter. In its response to this report the Government should set out the progress of police investigations so far, including whether British police have been given all necessary access to information held in Libya, and also provide an estimate as to when it expects police investigations to be completed. (Reco 42, Paragraph 171)

147. The Government agrees that the investigation and resolution of these allegations is of the utmost importance. The Government is co-operating fully with the Metropolitan Police investigation into allegations made by former Libyan detainees about British involvement in their mistreatment by the Qadhafi regime. We do not find that the allegations have hampered UK-Libya relationships. Our contacts with the Libyan authorities are focused on a wide range of mutually beneficial issues.

148. As the police investigation is underway, we are unable to comment further. As with all police investigations, the investigation into these allegations is independent of Government. The FCO is consequently not able to offer an update on the progress of the investigation or its expected timeline. These are matters for the Metropolitan Police.

149. We would be deeply disturbed if assurances given over many years, including assurances given by Ministers to this Committee's predecessors, that the UK had not been involved in the rendition of any individuals are proved to be inaccurate. We expect to return to this issue. (Reco 43, Paragraph 172)

150. The Government notes the Committee's view and stands ready to respond to further questions on this issue from the Committee. The Government fully intends to hold an independent, judge-led inquiry into allegations of British involvement in the improper treatment or rendition of detainees held by other countries, once all related police investigations have concluded, to establish the full facts and draw a line under these issues.

Implications for British foreign policy elsewhere in the region

151. ***The suffering and loss of life in Syria is unacceptable and we welcome the Government's efforts to reach a consensus on international action both within and outside the UN. However, we note with concern that the consequences of the perceived 'stretching' of the terms of the UN resolutions on Libya are now being visited on attempts to secure a UN Security Council resolution which takes a tougher line on Syria. There can be no certainty, however, that a less interventionist approach in Libya would necessarily have led to readier support from Russia or China for vigorous condemnation of President Assad's actions. On balance, therefore, we do not believe that the diplomatic stalemate over Syria should be seen as too high a price to pay for the scale of intervention in Libya. (Reco 44, Paragraph 178)***
152. We agree with the Committee's conclusion that the Government was right to take action in Libya. The circumstances that applied in Libya do not have a direct parallel in Syria. In Libya, we had a clear call from the Arab League for military action, and a mandate from the UN Security Council. In Syria, these conditions do not exist.
153. The Foreign Secretary's letter of 10 August 2012 to the Chairman of the Committee set out Britain's intensive work with international partners to find a solution to the crisis in Syria. The overwhelming vote in favour of the UN General Assembly resolution on 3 August 2012 sent a clear signal that the majority of the world supports political transition in Syria. Russia and China vetoed the resolution - the third time they have prevented action by the Security Council to bring about an end to the crisis in Syria. They are failing in their responsibilities as permanent members of the Security Council to help resolve the crisis in Syria.
154. We accept that international intervention in Libya may be influencing current divisions within the Security Council but see this as indefensible and inexcusable. We disagree with any implication that the mandate in UNSCR 1973, which authorised "all necessary measures", was "stretched". Throughout the conflict in Libya, the Government took its obligations under international law and to the UN extremely seriously. All action taken by the Government under the mandate was fully in accordance with its express terms. UNSCR 1973 is no reason to object to a UNSCR on Syria; nor would another approach toward Libya have guaranteed tougher action on Syria.
155. ***We conclude that the Government is right to support peaceful reform efforts where possible in Bahrain, but it must also be clear in its public criticism of human rights violations if it is to avoid charges of hypocrisy. (Reco 45, Para 179)***
156. The Government welcomes the Committee's conclusion that it is right to support peaceful reform efforts where possible in Bahrain.

157. As a long-standing ally, we are able to have frank conversations with the Government of Bahrain when we feel the authorities are failing in their duty to prevent human rights violations from occurring. Ministers have made regular public statements on human rights in Bahrain from early 2011 to the present day. The Foreign Secretary led the international condemnation in September 2011 when medical personnel were sentenced for their alleged involvement in the unrest. In July 2012, Britain raised its concerns about continued human rights violations in Bahrain in a national statement under Item 10 of the United Nations Human Rights Council. We will also comment regularly on the human rights situation in Bahrain under the FCO's new quarterly human rights review system.
- 158. The Government states that it has learnt lessons from the revolutions. It is important that the UK is seen to be applying these lessons to its relations with other Arab and Gulf states, and more widely, whose governments as yet show no sign of reforming, or that are actively resisting reform. In this regard, the greatest challenges of the Arab Spring may still lie ahead. (Reco 46, Para 184)**
159. One of the key principles shaping the Government's response to the Arab Spring has been recognition of the unique social, political and economic context of each country in the MENA region. Each country is different and has the right to develop its own political model. The Government's approach to the transitioning countries, where revolutions have led to newly formed governments leading change, is different to those countries where tentative reform processes have begun, or those where governments are resisting reform. It is not for us to impose the pace or nature of reform.
160. However, our approach has been consistently marked by a belief that in the long-term, political systems based on consent and legitimacy are more likely to deliver shared objectives of stability, security and prosperity. This belief underlines our response to the Arab Spring across the region and the Government does not shy away from expressing it throughout the region, including in the Gulf.
161. The Arab Partnership Fund is providing technical assistance and access to British expertise to partners in the Gulf in support of this message. In Bahrain we are providing support on justice and human rights, including a visit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons to help the Bahrainis with a system for independent monitoring of detention centres and the provision of expert advice on reform of the legal system. In Oman, we are working with the Thomson Reuters Foundation and TwoFour54, an Abu Dhabi-based media organisation, on communications training for parliamentarians, to improve communication between parliament and the media. We are providing peer support and advice through the British Council and Bar Council Human Rights Committee to Omani lawyers, prosecutors and parliamentarians to strengthen the rule of law and protection of human rights. In Kuwait, we are working with a local NGO to develop independent polling capacity and with the parliament to raise awareness of the role of parliamentarians in promoting transparency and combating corruption.

162. The Government agrees with the Committee that the greatest challenges of the Arab Spring may lie ahead in this respect. Change will span generations. We will need to show strategic patience. We will need to be realistic in our expectations. But, for our and the region's shared security and prosperity interests, the Government will continue to support peaceful reform as the path to the region's long-term stability.



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