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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: The Hon Sir Dominic Asquith

1. The Committee¹ has been asked to consider an application from Sir Dominic Asquith on taking up a commission with MacroAdvisory Partners under his independent consultancy. Sir Dominic Asquith was British High Commissioner New Delhi at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, responsible for maintaining and developing relations between the UK and India, from February 2016 – January 2020.

2. His last day in post and Crown service was 31 January 2020.

Application details

3. Sir Dominic Asquith has sought the Committee's advice on taking up a paid, part time role with MacroAdvisory Partners (MAP), under his independent consultancy. He said he had previously joined MAP in 2013. He states MacroAdvisory Partners provides leading investors, corporations and governments with strategic insights on global markets, geopolitics and government policy in a volatile and complex world. He said MAP has a network of senior professionals with backgrounds in diplomacy, intelligence, finance, academia and industry, providing clients with geopolitical risk, investment strategy and macro intelligence counsel. Sir Dominic states he will have a similar role to the one he held before, providing advisory work on Middle East operations. MAP has from the outset always had contact with officials in HMG.

4. Sir Dominic Asquith informed the Committee there is a relationship between MAP and HMG, however he did not have any official dealings with, nor was he involved in any policy decisions or developments that could be seen to affect MAP.

5. He noted that in his role as British High Commissioner New Delhi he did not meet with competitors of MAP, however he did meet with roughly 450 UK companies in India from those with major multinational operations, like BT, HSBC Shell etc to very specialised manufacturers of automotive industry components. He stated he met these companies due to the standard range of responsibilities a head of post is involved in such as: lobbying the host government to resolve their market access issues and promoting in the Indian market

¹ This application for advice was considered by Sir Alex Allan; Jonathan Baume; Baroness Angela Browning; Lord Larry Whitty; Terence Jagger; Mike Weir; Richard Thomas; and John Wood. Dr Susan Liautaud was unavailable.

their products/services. He confirmed to the Committee he does not have any sensitive information about any competitors of MAP.

6. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) was consulted about this application. It confirmed his statements above and further stated he had no influence in decisions affecting MAP, therefore it said this appointment could not be perceived as a reward. It has no concerns regarding this appointment.

The Committee's Consideration

7. The Committee noted that this commission is consistent with the description of consultancy which Sir Dominic Asquith described as providing political and commercial advice to businesses already operating in or seeking to enter the Middle East, which will help them develop their business opportunities.

8. When considering Sir Dominic Asquith's application to take up an appointment with MAP the Committee took into account that he had no dealings with MAP while in office and further, had no policy or contractual responsibility for MAP while in office. Therefore, the Committee considers the risk of this appointment being seen as a reward for decisions made in office is low.

9. The Committee noted that this commission is not directly related to policy or regulation from his time in office, and is drawing on knowledge, skills and experience from his time in government. As High Commissioner for New Delhi, Sir Dominic Asquith could be seen to have access to general sensitive information regarding policy, UK plans and strategies especially in regards to India. This information could be of interest to MAP and its clients particularly if it looks to operate in India. However, the description of his role is advising based on Middle Eastern operations, not Indian. Further, as with all former civil servants, he is prevented from drawing on privileged information from his time in office.

10. The Committee noted there is a relationship between the FCO and MAP. Given Sir Dominic Asquith seniority as the former British High Commissioner, there is a risk it could be perceived his contacts might assist MAP. In particular he will have built a network of contacts in not only the UK Government but also in foreign governments, in particular India. The Committee would therefore like to draw his attention to the lobbying restrictions applied below which make it clear that use of his contacts within HMG and foreign governments to the unfair advantage of MAP or its clients would be inappropriate. Further the restriction on providing advice on the terms of, a bid or contract relating directly to the work of the UK Government prevents him from providing an unfair advantage to MAP in respect of future work with the UK.

11. The Committee also noted there may be potential risks associated with the unknown nature of MAP's clients. Specifically, should they be a company or organisation Sir Dominic Asquith had a commercial relationship with or where he had some influence in respect of their work whilst in post. Therefore, the Committee considered it would be appropriate to impose an additional condition to prevent you from advising MAP's clients where it involves working on matters he had involvement with in office.

12. Taking into account the specific facts in this case, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises Sir Dominic Asquith's work with **MacroAdvisory Partners** be subject to the same conditions as his independent consultancy **as well as the additional condition below:**

- that he should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to him from his time in service;
- for two years from his last day in crown service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying the Government on behalf of those he advises under his independent consultancy (including parent companies, subsidiaries and partners). Nor should he make use, directly or indirectly, of his government and/or Ministerial contacts to influence policy, secure funding/business or otherwise unfairly benefit those he advises under his independent consultancy (including parent companies, subsidiaries and partners);
- for two years from his last day in crown service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying contacts he has developed during his time in service and in other Governments and organisations for the purpose of securing business for any company or organisation (including parent companies, subsidiaries and partners);
- for two years from his last day in crown service, he should not provide advice to any company or organisation on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid with, or contract relating directly to the work of the UK Government; and
- for two years from his last day in crown service, before accepting any commissions for his independent consultancy and or/before extending or otherwise changing the nature of his commissions, he should seek advice from the Committee. The Committee will decide whether each commission is consistent with the terms of the consultancy and consider any relevant factors under the Business Appointment Rules.

In addition, the Committee considered this commission with MacroAdvisory Partners be subject to the following additional condition:

- for two years from his last day in crown service, he should not advise MacroAdvisory Partners or its clients on work with regard to any policy he had specific involvement or responsibility for as British High Commissioner New Delhi at Foreign and Commonwealth Office, or where he had a relationship with the relevant client during his time as British High Commissioner New Delhi at Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

13. By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a Minister or Crown servant has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available. Applicants are also reminded that they may be subject to other duties of confidentiality, whether under the Official Secrets Act or otherwise.

14. The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that the former Crown servant/Minister "should not engage in communication with Government (Ministers, civil servants, including special advisers, and other relevant officials/public office holders) – wherever it takes place - with a view to influencing a Government decision, policy or contract award/grant in relation to their own interests or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted or with which they hold office."

15. I should be grateful if you would ensure that we are informed as soon as Sir Dominic Asquith takes up this position, or if it is announced that he will do so (I enclose a form for this purpose). We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries, since we

do not release information about appointments which have not been taken up or announced, and this could lead to a false assumption being made about whether he had complied with the Rules.

16. I should also be grateful if you would ask that Sir Dominic Asquith informs us if he proposes to extend or otherwise change the nature of his role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for him to make a fresh application.

17. Once this consultancy has been publicly announced or is live we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

Yours sincerely

Isabella Wynn
Committee Secretariat