

Press release: International Development Secretary in Somalia: “The UK averted famine last year, but the job is not yet done”

Penny Mordaunt and the UK Ambassador to Somalia David Concar listen to the UN Secretary General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Peter de Clercq during a meeting with UN humanitarian aid workers in Mogadishu. Picture: UN Photo / Omar Abdisalan

The International Development Secretary has travelled to Somalia, where she saw how the UK is tackling both the causes and consequences of instability, including how UK aid is saving lives and helping those impacted by extreme drought.

This was Ms Mordaunt’s first visit to Somalia as International Development Secretary.

During the visit, Ms Mordaunt saw how life-saving water, food and healthcare provided by DFID helped avert famine in 2017, in the face of devastating drought across East Africa.

She was also told about the extreme and challenging climate conditions, which the country will continue to face in 2018. Low levels of forecasted rain threaten crops and livestock, leaving half the Somali population hungry and at risk of disease. Without sustained relief and recovery there is a real risk of famine in the near future.

The International Development Secretary said:

The devastating consequences of drought in Somalia remain a major concern. The UK led the global effort to avert famine last year, but the country is facing further difficult conditions in 2018. The job is not yet done.

I am very clear that this is not just Somalia’s problem. The whole world is less safe when instability, poverty and extreme weather triggered by climate change are left to feed extremism and mass migration.

This is why the work we are doing here is so important, from British troops helping develop Somali forces, to world-class diplomats delivering a peaceful future and aid workers providing life-saving water and food. This is why the international community also needs to step up their support to Somalia before more innocent lives are lost.

Ms Mordaunt pledged an additional £21 million for immediate lifesaving aid in Somalia, which will include:

- Screening and treatment for 130,000 children at risk of life-threatening acute malnutrition
- Providing nutrition support for over 300,000 vulnerable people including with cash support
- Maintaining access to water and improved sanitation for over 155,000 people
- Food security and livelihoods support to approximately 40,000 beneficiaries
- Vaccinations for 12.5 million goats against respiratory tract diseases, benefitting over 2 million farmers

Ms Mordaunt met with Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre and members of his Government during the visit.

In a meeting with Peter de Clercq, the UN's humanitarian coordinator in Somalia, she also learned how NGOs and other agencies effectively pooled their resources last year to tackle the debilitating drought. The UN Drought Operations Coordination Centre established in February 2017 played a crucial role in tackling the effects of a fourth bad harvest in a row.

She also learned during the trip about the progress made on vital reforms agreed at last year's landmark Somalia Conference in London; including finding a political settlement, supporting economic recovery and building stability to reduce the risk of violent extremism, which is keeping the UK safe at home. She discussed with civil society and private sector representatives ways to empower youth, women and marginalised groups, including disabled people, in the restoration of democracy and building a more inclusive economy.

Ms Mordaunt's visit follows a two-day trip to Kenya where she saw the UK working in partnership with the government to break down barriers to trade and encourage economic growth, allowing British companies to harness the untapped potential Africa presents for business after Brexit.

Notes to Editors

In 2017, UK aid was first on the scene with life-saving water, food and healthcare after widespread drought across East Africa, saving many thousands of lives. We provided a total of £170 million humanitarian funding, which included providing over 1 million people with access to safe drinking water, and over 1.5 million people with emergency food assistance.

In addition to this £21 million, a further £40 million will be provided as planned in 2018 to sustain the relief and recovery effort, totalling £61 million already planned for the 2018 response.

Somalia is one of the world's smallest and poorest economies. Driving Somalia's economic recovery to support livelihoods and create jobs will be essential for building peace, stability and sustainable development.