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CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

14th May 2021

New Content,

RE: OVERSEAS AID TO SYRIA

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of UK spending on foreign aid, otherwise known as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and your concerns about how this will impact Syria in particular. I have read your comments on this issue with interest.

As we mark the ten-year anniversary of the Syrian conflict, the plight of the Syrian people must not be forgotten. The UK is one of the largest donors to the Syrian humanitarian response, having so far committed over £3.5 billion since 2012 and Ministers in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office have assured me that tackling the humanitarian impact of the Syria crisis remains a priority. Indeed, I welcome the UK's recent pledge to provide at least £205 million in aid in 2021/22.

Certainly, the UK has been, and always will be, open and outward-looking, leading in solving the world's toughest problems and striving to be a global force for good. Whether it is stepping up to support desperate Syrians and Yemenis in conflict zones, leading the way in eradicating Ebola and Malaria, or supporting millions of children to gain a decent education, Ministers are proud that UK aid is keeping the UK safe while helping the world's poorest stand on their own two feet.

Nevertheless, we must be honest about where we are. The UK is currently experiencing its worst economic contraction in 300 years because of the pandemic, with a budget deficit double that caused by the 2008 financial crisis. At this time of unprecedented crisis, tough choices must be made, which is why the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a temporary reduction in the UK's ODA budget from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent of the UK's Gross National Income (GNI).

Ultimately, having raised your concerns with my ministerial colleagues, I have been assured that the UK will return to 0.7 percent as soon as the fiscal situation allows and I will monitor this closely as we emerge from the more severe effects of the pandemic. In the meantime, however, this country remains committed to playing its part internationally in the way you have advocated in your correspondence.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,
Tom

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE