



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

April 2019

*Dear Constituent,*

Thank you for contacting me about overseas aid.

I think it is important to point out that spending in this area is markedly better than in comparison to the past – many of the last Labour Government's wasteful projects have been scrapped and money is no longer sent to countries that don't need it.

Since 2010, steps have been taken to make our aid spending more accountable and focused, by reforming the UK's aid strategy, cutting wasteful programmes and making sure spending is firmly in the UK's national interest. The Government is determined to make sure that our aid is spent where it is most needed and all spending is rigorously checked as programmes progress.

Much of the UK's aid is now focused on work that keeps us, the British people, safer. Aid is now being spent on issues such as supporting Syrian refugees, to fighting Ebola and vaccinating children against preventable diseases; all of which address issues that are not constrained by national borders, and without action could have consequences for the UK and the rest of the world. Therefore, although continuing to spend 0.7% GNI on foreign aid, the Government is making sure money is going to the right places that need it the most – money that will help those most in need, whilst also keeping us safe.

To my mind, if we are serious about alleviating poverty permanently, we need to remove barriers to trade, such as those imposed by the European Union (EU) – I have seen first-hand examples of where EU policies have stopped African goods that we would buy coming into the UK. Surely the best way forward is 'trade, not aid'? Free trade has helped to lift more than 1 billion people out of poverty since 1990!

Trade is an important part of economic development and prosperity. I believe that the way to end poverty is wealth creation, not aid dependency; that poor countries need more investment and trade, not less; and that we need to empower the poorest to work and trade their way out of poverty, not treat them as passive recipients of our support.

The Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act, has enshrined in law a UK trade preferences scheme for developing countries. This will, as a minimum, maintain the same level of access as our current EU trade preference scheme. After the UK has left the EU, the



Government will seek to improve upon these trade arrangements, helping further alleviate poverty in developing countries.

The Act commits to maintaining full tariff exemptions on UK imports from 48 of the world's Least Developed Countries, as well as offering generous tariff reductions to other developing countries. With UK imports of goods from these Least Developed Countries more than doubling in value between 2010 and 2017, I am confident that maintaining these exemptions will help grow their economies still further.

I welcomed the announcement of £18 million in funding for 51 of the world's poorest countries. This funding from the Government will help these countries to produce products fit for export, trade more easily across borders, and access untapped new markets which have the potential to create thousands of jobs and lift their citizens out of poverty.

Now that the UK is leaving the EU we will be able to negotiate and sign trading agreements across the world which we could not as a member of the EU. This includes interest from nations of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), an area with a value of just under \$3 trillion, and continuing to grow at average rates above 5% per year – an area that is a prime example of how the concept of 'trade, not aid' can work in practice thanks to the 'Four Tigers' and the 'Emerging Ten'.

A lot has changed in this area of policy and a lot more will change when we leave the EU. I am confident that, with the right tools, the UK can help countries trade their way out poverty and build mutually beneficial economies of the future.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**