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DFID Department for
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Development

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From the Private Secretary

John Sawers Esq
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15 March 2001

Dear John,

IRAQ: NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK

The International Development Secretary regrets that DFID was not included in policy discussions leading to your letter of 7 March to Sherard Cowper-Coles. She is concerned that insufficient weight appears to have been given to protecting the basic needs of the ordinary people of Iraq.

The International Development Secretary is concerned that DFID was not invited to contribute to the discussions that led to the formulation of the proposed new policy framework for Iraq and that we only become aware of your letter of 7 March to Sherard Cowper-Coles some days after it was sent.

While she welcomes the general thrust of the new policy towards better targeted sanctions against the Iraqi regime, she remains concerned that it does not appear that sufficient weight has been given to worries about humanitarian needs. You will recall that when sanctions policy was reviewed in 1999 the Prime Minister expressed his concerns to Kofi Annan about the humanitarian situation and, indeed, felt some sense of responsibility for it. (Your letter of 15 April 1999 to John Grant refers).

In essence the situation in Iraq remains unchanged from 1999. In particular it is difficult to believe that Saddam would use greater freedom to import a wide range of civilian goods to make adequate provision for the humanitarian needs of the ordinary people of Iraq. As we know his priorities lie elsewhere. While he already has the freedom to use all the oil for food revenues for humanitarian purchases he has consistently chosen not to do so, despite being under UN scrutiny. Although we have always maintained that Saddam should be held responsible for ensuring the welfare of his people, in reality we have accepted that the international community should do its best to relieve the suffering he has caused. We cannot now with any credibility simply shrug off that responsibility, particularly in the period immediately following changes to the sanctions regime. My Secretary of State believes that, in addition to our moral responsibilities, presentationally this would play very badly, particularly in Britain and the Arab world. She envisages that there may continue to be an important role for the UN in at least recording the use of oil revenues for humanitarian needs and for ensuring independent and accurate monitoring of humanitarian conditions in Iraq.

My Secretary of State also welcomes

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My Secretary of State also welcomes the proposal for the continued provision of a 13% share of oil revenues for the Kurds. However, while it should be relatively easy to set the money aside in a UN account she would be interested to know what plans there are for ensuring that the money will be promptly and properly spent on the humanitarian needs of the Kurds. At present the Government of Iraq purchase goods on behalf of the Kurds. It cannot be presumed that this would be appropriate in the future when the oil for food programme has ended in Baghdad-controlled Iraq. We should remember that before the oil for food programme began Baghdad left the Kurds to fend entirely for themselves.

My Secretary of State believes that it is important that these concerns should be reflected in the revised strategy and would be grateful if steps could be taken to do this.

I am copying this to Sherard Cowper-Coles (FCO), Julian Miller (MOD), "C", Christopher Meyer (Washington), Jeremy Greenstock (UKMis New York), Michael Jay (Paris) and Richard Abel and Tom McKane (Cabinet Office).

Yours truly


Chris Austin
Private Secretary

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