

DIGEST OF INFORMATION

REF 0271-08 - Documents held by CTD

1. Extract from Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development, Sub-Committee on Extremism 09/12/2008

FCO have delivered a large uplift in PREVENT interventions, with over £40m for new projects across all the PREVENT objectives already agreed, including £8m in Pakistan. In addition to their programming activities overseas, FCO and DFID have also run successful consultation and outreach programmes to UK Muslim communities. These have challenged simplistic interpretations of foreign policy through a more balanced explanation of the UK's international work.

2. Extract from update on International Prevent – 15 September 2008

This challenge is equally important in our domestic engagement work, where we are very much at the forefront of efforts across Government. Eighteen FCO Directors – and a number of HOMs – have volunteered to take part in foreign policy engagement events which we aim to target at the widest possible range of domestic Muslim opinion.

The Foreign Secretary's successful outreach events in Tower Hamlets and Birmingham have demonstrated the appetite for vigorous debate on foreign policy, which we will maintain at ministerial and official level, not least in the lead-up to and during the week of the Leadership Conference next March. We are developing with RICU a core foreign policy script for use across government and we are working with DFID to join up with their own, nascent but increasing outreach effort.

3. Update on Foreign Policy Outreach to British Muslim Communities – December 2008

The Foreign Secretary may be interested in receiving an update on work being carried out by the PREVENT – Counter Ideology Team on engagement with British Muslim communities on foreign policy. We have had an active outreach programme in place since March 2008, with the Foreign Secretary and senior officials taking part in range of events throughout the year. The events have provided us with opportunities to engage at grass roots level and dispel some of the myths and misconceptions that exist around our policies – myths that are often exploited by violent extremists in their attempts to radicalise others. The programme thus far has been a great success.

Our outreach programme has been divided into two strands.

Ministerial Outreach

The Foreign Secretary has taken part in three 'question time' style discussions - in Tower Hamlets in May, Birmingham in July alongside visiting Pakistani foreign Minister Qureshi and Bradford in November where as part of the visit the Foreign Secretary addressed a congregation of some 2500 worshippers at the Madni Jamia mosque following Friday prayers – a first for a Cabinet Minister.

The Foreign Secretary also hosted a dinner for young Muslim professionals at 1 Carlton Gardens in May where he discussed a range of foreign policy issues with guests.

Former FCO Minister Meg Munn hosted a dinner for Muslim women in June where discussion focussed on the role of British Muslim women in countering extremism and exploring some of the ways in which the FCO could assist women that wanted to speak out against violent extremism.

In October Mr Rammell gave a speech on the UK's multicultural diversity at the Global Peace and Unity Event an annual two-day conference held in London and organized by the Islam Channel. It is the largest Muslim conference of its kind in Europe regularly drawing in over 15,000 over the two days.

In December Mr Rammell travelled to Birmingham and visited the Muath Trust a community centre which is primarily aimed at British Yemenis living in Birmingham. The centre provides a range of programmes for young people and women- ranging from educational training, youth clubs to religious classes.

Outreach by senior officials

We have twenty senior officials signed up to our outreach programme, with events taking place across the UK aimed at explaining our policies to young Muslims. Thirteen regional events in towns and cities such as Manchester, Bradford, Burnley, Dudley and Blackburn have been conducted since March. We have been well received by the audiences and criticism and questioning, especially on foreign policy has been trenchant but never hostile. The overall attitudes have been constructive and people have made clear their appreciation for our willingness to engage, especially on the harder issues.

A number of these senior officials have also given briefings at the FCO to key Muslim organisations and opinion formers on issues such as Iraq, MEPP, Sudan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Nine briefings have been conducted since March and we have received excellent feedback from attendees.

Next Steps

We have a number of events planned for the coming months along similar lines to the above and will liaise closely with other parts of the FCO, CLG and local Government Offices in delivering them. We will also work closely with the Stakeholder Outreach Team on their 'Bringing Foreign Policy Home' work, particularly with the events that the Foreign Secretary will be attending in Manchester on 21 November and Scotland later.

Looking forward to 2009 we envisage our outreach programme will be particularly active over leadership week in March. We are currently exploring a joint event in Birmingham with UKDel NATO, SAG and Afghan Group and a Somali focussed event in Tower Hamlets with HMA Addis Ababa and HMA Nairobi. We are in contact with HoMs from our priority countries and are seeking their assistance in helping us deliver a number of regional events during their time back in the UK.

Mr Rammell has also signed up to taking part in number of outreach events – a roundtable with key British Muslim organisation, a meeting with the newly formed Young Muslims Advisory Group as well as discussions with a number of University Islamic Societies.