My Dear [Name],

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 July to the Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and the United Nations and myself about Tigray.

I was appalled by the reports of human rights abuses and violations committed by all parties to the conflict in Tigray, I hope that the peace agreement, signed in November 2022, will help resolve the conflict, open space for accountability and reconciliation which will in turn enable more sustainable development.

I am very conscious of the humanitarian crisis that the people of Tigray currently face. Drought and conflict have left Ethiopia with the world’s largest humanitarian caseload in 2023, with the UN estimating that 28.6 million people are in need of assistance. I can reassure you that the UK is a committed to providing humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia and continues to do so, including to Tigray. In financial year 22/23, the UK spent £156 million to provide life-saving aid for people across East Africa, including Ethiopia. Since 2019, the UK has allocated more than £400 million in humanitarian support to Ethiopia. This includes critical food aid, safe drinking water, medical care, sanitation and nutritional supplies. Our support has reached civilians across Ethiopia affected by the crises, including Tigray.

Eritrean forces remaining in Tigray present an obstacle to the overall objective of peace and stability within the region. Whilst we welcome the partial withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray in line with the peace agreement, this is not enough. Our officials and ministers have and continue to call for their full withdrawal during meetings with Ethiopian and Eritrean counterparts.
The UK continues to support the International Commission of Human Rights Experts for Ethiopia (ICHREEE) to provide an independent mechanism of accountability for human rights abuses and violations in Ethiopia. We continue to work with likeminded countries through the UN to generate international oversight and support capacity of Ethiopia’s domestic Human Rights mechanisms.

Our Human Rights and Peacebuilding programme (HARP) is providing £4.5 million support to, among other things, build the investigative capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and improve the availability and accessibility of services for survivors of gender-based violence. It is the responsibility of all parties to continue to prioritise the protection of civilians, respect human rights and uphold International Humanitarian Law. The UK welcomes the proposals on transitional justice brought forward by the Ethiopian Government and encourages the establishment of an inclusive, transparent and victim-centred process.

Finally, I would like to note that it is the long-standing policy of the UK Government that determination of genocide should be made by a competent international court. This approach is fully consistent with our obligations under the Genocide Convention and Rome Statute and provides a clear, impartial, and independent measure for the determination of whether genocide has occurred. Whether or not a declaration of genocide is declared, we will continue to do our utmost to end violations of international human rights law and, where appropriate, international humanitarian law; prevent the escalation of such violations; and alleviate the suffering of those affected.

Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP
Minister for Development and Africa