

# Speech: The Potential for the First Free and Fair Elections in DRC History

Thank you Mr President. I would like to thank both of our briefers, SRSZ Zerroughi and Ms Mbela for their briefings. I'd particularly like to thank Ms Mbela for her brave work as a human rights activist in DRC and for making such clear recommendations to the Council, to her government and to the Electoral Commission and I hope to touch on some of those recommendations later.

Mr President as both of our briefers and many of my colleagues today have made clear, the DRC is at a crucial point in her history. The elections scheduled for 23 December could lead to the country's first ever peaceful democratic transfer of power. This would be a huge achievement for the 85 million Congolese people who have faced such devastating conflicts over their history.

These elections are about more than simply democratic rights. Successful elections have the ability to enhance the political security and humanitarian stability in the DRC and the region which will in turn enable future security, growth, trade and prosperity.

A stable, prosperous DRC is vital not only for the Congolese people but also for the region and the world. As we have seen over many years, insecurity in the DRC not only has a negative impact on millions of Congolese, but has devastated the wider region. Therefore it's completely right that we as a Council hold regular discussions, follow the situation closely, and ensure follow-up to the Security Council visit just over a month ago, and in particular to take stock of progress against many of the commitments that we received from the government and other political leaders in the DRC.

Mr President, I do think it's important to register the positive developments that have happened in recent months. We welcome the positive steps taken by the government towards elections, including on voter registration and the publication of the final list of candidates for the elections. We also welcome President Kabila's repeated commitment that he does not intend to stand for a third term as per the Constitution of the DRC. But as Ambassador Haley reminded us earlier today, democracy isn't just about a single event; it's about a process. So we call on all political actors in the DRC to create the conditions for free and fair and credible elections, in particular, by implementing the confidence building measures of the 31 December Agreement, ensuring that civil and political rights are upheld. This includes fully respecting the political space and allowing political parties to gather peacefully.

We welcome President Kabila's commitment to this Security Council during our visit that his government would allow peaceful protests by the opposition. We are therefore deeply concerned by the reports of further arrests and detentions of protesters and the continued detention of political prisoners.

We call on President Kabila and his government to live up to their commitments to allow peaceful protest by the opposition and to release all political prisoners.

Political parties and their leadership must also do their part and encourage their supporters to engage in the democratic process peacefully. Any violence will diminish the credibility of elections in the eyes of the Congolese people and the international community.

We also call on the key political actors, including the opposition, to engage constructively with the electoral process, including on the vexed question of voting machines and the voter register. The efforts of the Electoral Commission are crucial to deliver a credible election. And we join Ms Mbela in calling on the electoral commission to engage with key stakeholders, to address concerns and restore confidence in the electoral process.

One way of restoring confidence in the electoral process and the elections, and in particular in the voting machines, would be through the implementation of the recommendations of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. We were encouraged that during the Council's visit to Kinshasa, the Electoral Commission said that they were determined to implement the recommendations by the Westminster Foundation. We would encourage the Electoral Commission to continue to implement those recommendations as soon as possible to increase confidence in the voting machines.

Mr President, we commend the logistical support that MINUSCO has provided so far for the upcoming elections and welcome that they stand ready to give further support if needed on request from the government of the DRC. We call on the electoral commission to engage with MINUSCO as soon as possible on any logistical assistance that may be required.

The United Kingdom stands ready to support the political process both in the region, where we've provided funding on voter education, civil society engagement, and women's participation and domestic observation, and here at the United Nations.

Mr President, in conclusion it's not the politicians that stand to win or lose the most in these elections. It is the people of the DRC. The people who have seen devastating levels of conflict and resulting humanitarian suffering since independence. So we call on all leaders to put aside their personal ambition and to do what is right for their people: participate in and support potentially the first of many credible elections in the DRC.

Thank you.

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# Speech: Effective Governance in Iraq

Thank you Mr President. First, let me join others in thanking SRSK Kubis both for his report and for all the work he has done over the last three years and nine months as SRSK in Iraq. We are grateful for your leadership of UNAMI and also for the significant contribution you have made to Iraq during this pivotal period in its history. We look forward to welcoming your successor Jeanine Hennis-Plaaschaert in December and to working with her to build on all the progress that you have made.

Mr President, like the Netherlands, today I would like to touch on three issues: government formation, accountability, and the question of missing Kuwaiti persons and property.

First, the United Kingdom joins other Council members in congratulating Iraq on the conclusion of the 2018 electoral process. Our congratulations go especially to President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Abdul Medhi, and Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi and to the Kurdistan Democratic Party following the Kurdistan region parliamentary elections. We welcome the formation of the cabinet that is well underway and encourage the appointment of the remaining cabinet members in an inclusive manner within constitutional timelines. However, like Poland and the Netherlands and others, we do share the disappointment in a lack of female members in those appointed to the cabinet to date and we would encourage the Iraqi government in its efforts to address this issue and promote the participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making in Iraq.

Once the government has been fully formed the United Kingdom looks forward to working with it to support it as it tackles the challenges that Iraq faces, that the SRSK has outlined for us today. These include: promoting effective governance; security sector reform and economic reform; social protection from vulnerable groups, including internally displaced people; and improvement in the business environment. Recent events that the SRSK has highlighted, particularly in southern Iraq, demonstrate the importance of providing basic services, including water and electricity for all Iraqis.

Mr President, women have a vital role to play in all of the areas that I've just mentioned, as well as in national reconciliation efforts. We note the encouraging progress in this regard. In particular we welcome the introduction of the Inter-Agency Gender-Based Violence Standard Operating Procedures in Southern Iraq which will provide essential support services for survivors of gender-based violence, and the United Kingdom encourages the incoming government to ensure the full implementation of Iraq's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Mr President, several speakers this morning have spoken about the importance of accountability in Iraq. The scale of the challenges facing the new Iraqi government are clear. For example, the recent discovery of over 200 mass grave sites demonstrates the importance of achieving justice for the victims of Da'esh crimes in Iraq. These graves must be protected to ensure that the

evidence can be properly collected and stored. The United Kingdom welcomes the continued strong support from both the government of Iraq and UNAMI for the important work of the UN investigative team for Da'esh accountability. I would also like to extend my own congratulations to Nadia Murad for her well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize. Efforts must continue to locate those still missing following their brutal kidnapping by Da'esh.

Mr President, thirdly and finally, the United Kingdom would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on Security Council Resolution 2107 on the issue of missing Kuwaiti persons and property. The UK welcomes UNAMI's ongoing support on this important file. We hope that the new government of Iraq will make progress on locating and identifying missing Kuwaiti persons and property. In this regard, the United Kingdom welcomes the visit by the Iraqi president to Kuwait on 12 November 2018 and in particular the transfer that took place of one instalment of retrieved Kuwaiti property. It's very important that this chapter of Iraq and Kuwait's history can be closed and relations between these two neighbours further strengthened.

Thank you.

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## **News story: Britain's top armed forces-friendly employers honoured**

51 businesses were last night honoured for their commitment to the military, including employing former service personnel, their families and reservists.

The MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme 'Gold Awards' awards were handed out by the Defence Secretary and HRH Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, to businesses and organisations who have shown outstanding support for the military community and the Armed Forces Covenant.

Employers won awards for initiatives such as employing veterans, supporting individuals transitioning out of the armed forces into a new career, and providing flexibility for reservists.

The 51 winners have been recognised for their long-term commitment to the armed forces, with organisations from the public and private sector achieving the top grade. Each has signed the Armed Forces Covenant, and where possible, engages with the MOD's Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to promote the recruitment of service leavers, as well as honouring individual pledges of support.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Those who have served our country so courageously deserve the full

support of organisations across the public and private sector.

The breadth and diversity of this year's Gold Award winners shows how business support for the armed forces continues to flourish. I offer my gratitude and congratulations to all the winners.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

When people leave the armed forces, they do so with unique skills and experiences that can benefit businesses and organisations across the country.

These awards show just how valued and in demand these skills are. I encourage more businesses to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant and show their support for our brave service leavers.

This week the Government will launch its first UK wide Veterans Strategy which brings together aspirations and commitments from across government for championing the needs of the ex-service community.

The Government has a wide range of schemes in place to support service personnel and veterans. From encouraging employers to recognise the value the military community to business through the Armed Forces Covenant to committing £22million of funding for mental health over the next decade for service personnel and £10million for veterans.

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**[News story: Improvement plan proposed](#)**

# for Northamptonshire children's services

The Government has proposed to appoint a commissioner to oversee improvements at Northamptonshire children's social care services, following concerns raised by existing commissioners and Ofsted about how the council supports vulnerable children and families.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government James Brokenshire have written to the leader of Northamptonshire County Council in a move designed to take swift and early action to improve its children's services.

They have today confirmed they are 'minded to' appoint Malcolm Newsam CBE as a children's services commissioner, following Ofsted's findings that the quality of services have deteriorated.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

We must make sure that vulnerable children and families are kept safe and instead of waiting for failure, we can prevent it by acting quickly to intervene where concerns have been raised about the quality of care.

Appointing a commissioner for Northamptonshire's children's services will help stabilise and improve the support for the children and families who need our protection.

Secretary of State for Communities Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Keeping vulnerable children safe is one of the most important duties local authorities carry out. Ofsted's report highlights serious concerns about the current performance of children's services in Northamptonshire and this cannot continue.

We are taking action today by recommending a children's commissioner joins the existing commissioner team at the Council. This will help to stabilise and improve the service so each and every child receives the protection they deserve.

The proposal to appoint a commissioner for children's services is part of the Government's children's social care strategy to spot early warning signs and take action quickly to support councils to make the necessary improvements where there a risk of failure.

Malcolm Newsam CBE is an experienced director of children's services and has

worked with many underperforming councils to oversee improvements with successful results. He was awarded a CBE in 2017 for services to children's social care.

Two commissioners, Tony McArdle and Brian Roberts, were appointed in May to oversee council services in Northamptonshire, following the discovery of serious failings and financial problems. The appointment of a children's commissioner would build on their initial work and provide additional support and expertise to tackle Ofsted's concerns, working with Lincolnshire County Council, which is providing peer support to the council as one of the Department for Education's Partners in Practice.

Through the work of this team, local government services in Northamptonshire could undergo a reorganisation and the new commissioner would look at how children's services could be delivered in the future. Findings will be reported back to the MHCLG and DfE Secretaries of State next year.

Since May 2010, 44 local authorities have been lifted out of intervention and have not returned – including Doncaster and Rotherham which were both rated 'Good' by Ofsted this year.

Northamptonshire County Council will now have the opportunity to make any representations to the Government on the appointment of a commissioner before a final decision, expected later this month.