

Press release: UK and France host High-Level Event on the Rohingya Crisis

The Foreign Secretary co-hosted a meeting with the French foreign minister in New York today to discuss the Rohingya crisis and called for urgent actions to be taken by the international community.

1 – On Monday 24 September UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian co-hosted a High-Level Event on the Rohingya Crisis. Ministers from Burma/Myanmar and Bangladesh were joined by high level attendees from Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey and the US. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, Special Envoy Christine Schraner Burgener and UN Development Programme Administrator Achim Steiner also participated.

2 – The Co-Chairs agreed that the plight of the Rohingya was one of the largest refugee crises in recent history and one of the most pressing human rights and humanitarian crises facing the international community today. They noted with deep concern the conclusions of the report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission, which allege the Burmese military's responsibility for serious human rights violations, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity and which conclude that there is sufficient information to warrant the investigation and prosecution of senior officials in the Burmese army so that a competent court can determine their liability for genocide in relation to the situation in Rakhine state.. They noted also the Fact-Finding Mission's conclusion that the perpetrators of crimes must be held to account. Since August 2017 these have led to the displacement of over 723,000 Rohingya who are now residing in Bangladesh.

3 – The Co-Chairs noted that over the past year the Burmese government had taken some steps to address the crisis, including the signing of the MoU between Burma/Myanmar and UNDP and UNHCR and the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry (CoI).

4 – The Co-Chairs acknowledged the ruling of the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber that the Court may exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh as well as over the alleged crime against humanity. They noted the decision of ICC Prosecutor, Mrs Fatou Bensouda, to open a Preliminary Examination concerning the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Burma/Myanmar to Bangladesh. They recalled their support to the efforts of the Human Rights Council to implement the conclusions of the Fact-Finding mission and to push for accountability, including through an independent Mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Burma/Myanmar.

5 – The Co-chairs called for the immediate release of the two Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Ooo as well as for the respect for their fundamental rights. In any country, journalists must be free to carry out their jobs without fear or intimidation.

6 – The Co-Chairs renewed their support to the Special Envoy of the Secretary General on Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, and called on the Burmese government to pursue its cooperation with her.

7 – However, the Co-Chairs regretted that conditions in Rakhine State were not yet conducive for the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable repatriation of refugees to Rakhine and that there remained a need for ongoing international action to push for more and faster progress in three main areas. These include:

- The Burma – UNDP – UNHCR MoU: full implementation and effective access for UNHCR and UNDP is needed as a necessary next step in any return process, as well as further confidence-building measures such as allowing the Rohingya freedom of movement. Immediate, safe and unhindered access must be granted to UN agencies and their partners, as well as other domestic and international non-governmental organisations, to provide humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State.
- A credible accountability and remedy process: Given the severity of the findings of the UN Fact-Finding Mission, ongoing international efforts are needed to pursue accountability alongside the work of the domestic CoI, which has yet to produce any tangible results. Furthermore, more information is required from the CoI regarding its Terms of Reference and how it will operate with impartiality and independence and in cooperation with international bodies including the UN.
- Concrete implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations: The Co-Chairs affirmed these recommendations as the best path to a stable Rakhine and Burma/Myanmar, with improved conditions and equal rights for all and emphasised that these recommendations need to be implemented comprehensively, including those related to ending discriminations, protecting human rights and creating a pathway to citizenship for the Rohingya. The Co-Chairs also reaffirmed the willingness of the international community to support Burma in fully implementing all recommendations.

8 – The Co-Chairs thanked the government and people of Bangladesh for hosting more than a million refugees. They encouraged the international community to continue and intensify support for the refugees and Bangladeshi host communities, including through increasing financial support to the UN Joint Response Plan.

Further information

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[Press release: Gove calls for 30 per cent of world's oceans to be protected by 2030](#)

- UK calls for third of world's oceans to be safeguarded by 2030
- Current global targets for protected areas to treble under ambitious plans
- Marine protection top of agenda at UN General Assembly in New York

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has today called for a third of the world's oceans to be protected by 2030.

Globally, less than 10 per cent of the world's seas are currently designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – one of the most important ways to protect precious sea life and habitats from damaging activity.

Now, the UK is backing ambitious calls to treble internationally-agreed targets for protected areas, meaning 30 per cent of the world's seas would be safeguarded as MPAs by 2030.

This will build on the UK's global leadership in protecting the marine environment – with over 200,000 square miles of Britain's coastline already protected and recent proposals for 41 new Marine Conservation Zones marking the most significant expansion of the 'Blue Belt' to date.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Protection of our oceans is a global challenge which requires global action. The UK has already safeguarded vast swathes of precious marine habitats, but we must go further.

Only by working together can we protect our shared home and ensure our marine life continues to be a source of awe and wonder for future generations.

The UK's ambitious calls also coincide with the United Nations General

Assembly, where countries have gathered in New York to discuss protection for our oceans.

While there, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey will call on other nations to push for the global target of 30 per cent of oceans designated as MPAs by 2030.

Speaking from New York, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

It is only by working with our counterparts internationally that we can truly bring about global change.

I am delighted to be in New York this week to look at how we can build on the progress made on marine protection and protect the world's oceans for future generations.

Currently, global targets for marine protected areas are set by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, with parties agreeing to protect 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020.

The UK will join almost 200 other countries in November in Egypt to begin negotiations on a new global target, and while here will push to treble the current figure to 30 per cent by 2030.

This approach would see a third of the world's oceans protected. As is the case now, MPAs will consist of a range of management measures.

Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan said:

The UK and our Overseas Territories are working together to establish a Blue Belt of marine protection for over four million square kilometres of British waters by 2020, protecting and sustainably managing our oceans for future generations.

It is imperative that we act now to save our ocean from unsustainable activities and protect its unique ecosystems which we still know so little about. This 30 percent global target to improve ocean management and protection is both ambitious and achievable and we encourage our international partners to take action now.

Back home, 36 per cent of England's waters are already safeguarded as MPAs – with the government's recent proposals for 41 new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) representing the most significant expansion of the Blue Belt yet.

The proposed new MCZs span more than 12,000 square kilometres, protecting species such as the short snouted seahorse, stalked jellyfish and peacock's tail seaweed.

Across its overseas territories as a whole, the UK has pledged to safeguard

over four million square kilometres of ocean by 2020. The Government will also publish an international ocean strategy before the end of the year setting out further action to conserve and sustainably use the ocean.

This commitment to marine protection forms a key part of the 25 Year Environment Plan, an ambitious roadmap for a greener future.

The government has introduced one of the world's strongest bans on microbeads to protect our oceans and 13 billion fewer bags have been distributed thanks to the Government's 5p plastic bag charge.

In a further drive to clean up our seas, the Government has also set out ambitious plans to end the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds and introduce a deposit return scheme, subject to consultation later this year.

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[News story: White Helmets resettlement](#)

Under the well-established practices of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), the Home Office is working closely with UNHCR, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to resettle the families.

The Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

White Helmets volunteers saved the lives of thousands of innocent civilians during the Syrian conflict and suffered terrible losses in the process.

I am therefore proud that the UK is resettling these brave individuals and their families and giving them the opportunity to rebuild their lives here.

The Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The actions of the White Helmets demonstrate true modern day heroism. They are rightly respected for their courageous, life-

saving work and have previously been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. We welcome the first White Helmets to be resettled in the UK.

These brave volunteers have rushed to pull people from the rubble when bombs have rained down on Syria and I'm proud that the UK has led the way in their evacuation and resettlement.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The White Helmets who have risked their lives to rescue thousands of Syrian civilians are facing persecution from the Assad regime. We should be so proud of Britain's role supporting their life-saving work and now providing them and their families with sanctuary and helping them rebuild their lives.

We are also exploring how we can learn from their valuable experience and expertise protecting civilians in need.

The White Helmets are a civil defence organisation that has saved over 115,000 lives and protected the Syrian people who are bearing the brunt of the conflict.

The UK has already resettled over 12,800 of the most vulnerable refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict, with the government on track to meet its commitment of resettling 20,000 by 2020.

Over £2.71 billion has been committed by the UK government since 2012 to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable people in Syria and of refugees in the region making it one of the largest donors. This is the largest ever response from the UK to a single humanitarian crisis.

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