

[News story: Sainsbury's / Asda merger referred for in-depth investigation](#)

In August, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [opened its initial \(Phase 1\) investigation](#) into the merger and announced the companies had requested a 'fast-track' referral to Phase 2.

The CMA has now confirmed, through its Phase 1 investigation, that the deal raises sufficient concerns to be referred for a more in-depth review. The companies are 2 of the largest grocery retailers in the UK and their stores overlap in hundreds of local areas, where shoppers could face higher prices or a worse quality of service.

These concerns will be considered further in the Phase 2 investigation, along with other issues raised so far with the CMA – including those relating to fuel, general merchandise (such as clothing) and increased 'buyer power' over suppliers.

The Phase 2 investigation is a more in-depth review, led by an inquiry group chosen from the CMA's independent panel members. This will be chaired by [Stuart McIntosh](#), with the other members being [Roland Green](#), [John Thanassoulis](#), [Richard Feasey](#) and [Claire Whyley](#). The group will gather evidence – in particular through multiple customer surveys and engagement with other retailers, suppliers and industry bodies – to inform its detailed analysis.

An issues statement, setting out in detail the issues that the inquiry group expects to investigate, will be published in the coming weeks. Members of the public and other interested groups will be invited to give their views on this.

The CMA's full referral decision and expected timelines for its Phase 2 investigation will be published shortly on the [case page](#).

[Speech: Peace Agreement in South Sudan is the first step on a long journey](#)

Thank you very much indeed to General Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom to whom we say farewell and yet look forward to seeing you very soon of course; EGAD Special Envoy Ismael Waes who I know has been working on this dossier for so long and so tirelessly; and also by thanking Ms. Grace John for the valuable human perspective that you have offered this Council.

Mr President the peace agreement signed last week gives hope to all of us, none more so than to the 12 million people of South Sudan. And we welcome very much the commitment that the region has shown on this important issue of peace and security and we have been consistent in this Council in supporting EGAD and the work it has done.

And while the peace agreement signed is a significant achievement, it is the first step on a long journey. We must continue to strive for progress. The people of South Sudan will continue to suffer if peace is not achieved and sustained. That conflict has already killed thousands and forced a third of the population to flee their homes – 2.5 million of whom to neighbouring countries. Half the population is food insecure. Of the 7 million people who need humanitarian assistance, over half are children. And these children, following the years of conflict displacement and economic collapse, are less likely to receive an education than any other children in the world.

South Sudan's leaders have seemed at times indifferent to the suffering of their people, and this is not Mr. President the result of a natural disaster or an unavoidable situation. It is manmade and so must be the solution. Starting with political stability – the peace agreement must create the conditions for a lasting end to the violence. Now as I said the region has played a vital role in bringing parties to the conflict together and I commend the much needed commitment and energy that they have invested, including states around this table.

And now is the time to build on that momentum. A peace agreement on its own will not deliver and sustain peace for South Sudan. We need to see continued engagement by all parties and ensure that words are turned into meaningful and sustainable actions.

Mr President, those of us who have been saying these things have picked up some irritation and frustration at those sorts of comments. It's been said we're not being positive enough or that we are undermining a peace process. I believe that no one will be more positive than those of us around this table if the process really means an end to the violence and a determination to put the needs of the people first. And similarly, those of us around this table have a special responsibility to bring the experience and lessons that we have from other conflicts, other peace processes and indeed from our experience of the South Sudan conflict and peace process to bear. It doesn't serve the parties to the peace agreement or the people of South Sudan if we do not use our experience and our knowledge from other peacebuilding situations, so it is vital that we adapt and use those lessons. In countries such as Libya, we've seen how political agreements can unravel and enable a relapse into violence. From our experience in Colombia, we've seen that ongoing commitment from the parties is the key factor for successful implementation of peace agreements.

We've also seen the implementation needs support from the region and sustained determined engagement from this Council. We need to draw from all of these experiences when we consider the situation in South Sudan as well as understanding why previous peace processes have not worked in that country, and therefore focus all of our efforts on successful implementation.

We must ensure this agreement does not repeat past mistakes. The continued violence even following the most recent ceasefire agreement is extremely concerning. 19 violations were reported by the Secretary-General between June and September. The increase in humanitarian access incidents and violence against humanitarian workers are gravely concerning. 13 humanitarian workers have been killed in South Sudan this year alone. Further to this, we are deeply concerned that UNMISS peacekeepers have been repeatedly denied access to the key areas to allow them to perform their mandated responsibilities. This is unacceptable and it must end. The region and the international community must closely monitor violations and ensure those responsible are held to account. I very much support Ms. John in calling for the establishment of the hybrid court.

As the international community we must not stand by and allow individuals to undermine peace. The targeted sanctions being imposed in July are an important tool. Now just as important now this agreement has been signed. They can be used to maintain pressure on all the parties to keep the promises that they have made. The arms embargo signalled that the international community will not tolerate attempts to impose military solutions. I urge the region and the wider international community to continue to support these measures.

The United Kingdom remains committed to peace in South Sudan, but in order to be convinced of the party's commitment, we need to see significant change in approach by the parties to the conflict. They must silence their guns, allow humanitarian workers to deliver lifesaving assistance, and release political prisoners. They must show a genuine commitment to effective and accountable implementation of the peace agreement and must demonstrate that they are willing to work for the benefit of all South Sudanese, including through checks on executive majority power and the transparent use of resources.

Mr President, today the peace process stands at a crossroads. To overcome the challenges ahead, we need unity amongst the international community. We urge the region to continue to drive forward constructive progress, especially on security arrangements in step with the UN and international community. Above all, we urge the leaders of South Sudan to put aside personal interests to work together for a better future for their people. Thank you Mr President.

Speech: Peace Agreement in South Sudan is the first step on a long journey

Thank you very much indeed to General Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom to whom we say farewell and yet look forward to seeing you very soon of course; EGAD Special Envoy Ismael Waes who I know has been working on this dossier for so long and so tirelessly; and also by thanking Ms. Grace John

for the valuable human perspective that you have offered this Council.

Mr President the peace agreement signed last week gives hope to all of us, none more so than to the 12 million people of South Sudan. And we welcome very much the commitment that the region has shown on this important issue of peace and security and we have been consistent in this Council in supporting EGAD and the work it has done.

And while the peace agreement signed is a significant achievement, it is the first step on a long journey. We must continue to strive for progress. The people of South Sudan will continue to suffer if peace is not achieved and sustained. That conflict has already killed thousands and forced a third of the population to flee their homes – 2.5 million of whom to neighbouring countries. Half the population is food insecure. Of the 7 million people who need humanitarian assistance, over half are children. And these children, following the years of conflict displacement and economic collapse, are less likely to receive an education than any other children in the world.

South Sudan's leaders have seemed at times indifferent to the suffering of their people, and this is not Mr. President the result of a natural disaster or an unavoidable situation. It is manmade and so must be the solution. Starting with political stability – the peace agreement must create the conditions for a lasting end to the violence. Now as I said the region has played a vital role in bringing parties to the conflict together and I commend the much needed commitment and energy that they have invested, including states around this table.

And now is the time to build on that momentum. A peace agreement on its own will not deliver and sustain peace for South Sudan. We need to see continued engagement by all parties and ensure that words are turned into meaningful and sustainable actions.

Mr President, those of us who have been saying these things have picked up some irritation and frustration at those sorts of comments. It's been said we're not being positive enough or that we are undermining a peace process. I believe that no one will be more positive than those of us around this table if the process really means an end to the violence and a determination to put the needs of the people first. And similarly, those of us around this table have a special responsibility to bring the experience and lessons that we have from other conflicts, other peace processes and indeed from our experience of the South Sudan conflict and peace process to bear. It doesn't serve the parties to the peace agreement or the people of South Sudan if we do not use our experience and our knowledge from other peacebuilding situations, so it is vital that we adapt and use those lessons. In countries such as Libya, we've seen how political agreements can unravel and enable a relapse into violence. From our experience in Colombia, we've seen that ongoing commitment from the parties is the key factor for successful implementation of peace agreements.

We've also seen the implementation needs support from the region and sustained determined engagement from this Council. We need to draw from all of these experiences when we consider the situation in South Sudan as well as

understanding why previous peace processes have not worked in that country, and therefore focus all of our efforts on successful implementation.

We must ensure this agreement does not repeat past mistakes. The continued violence even following the most recent ceasefire agreement is extremely concerning. 19 violations were reported by the Secretary-General between June and September. The increase in humanitarian access incidents and violence against humanitarian workers are gravely concerning. 13 humanitarian workers have been killed in South Sudan this year alone. Further to this, we are deeply concerned that UNMISS peacekeepers have been repeatedly denied access to the key areas to allow them to perform their mandated responsibilities. This is unacceptable and it must end. The region and the international community must closely monitor violations and ensure those responsible are held to account. I very much support Ms. John in calling for the establishment of the hybrid court.

As the international community we must not stand by and allow individuals to undermine peace. The targeted sanctions being imposed in July are an important tool. Now just as important now this agreement has been signed. They can be used to maintain pressure on all the parties to keep the promises that they have made. The arms embargo signalled that the international community will not tolerate attempts to impose military solutions. I urge the region and the wider international community to continue to support these measures.

The United Kingdom remains committed to peace in South Sudan, but in order to be convinced of the party's commitment, we need to see significant change in approach by the parties to the conflict. They must silence their guns, allow humanitarian workers to deliver lifesaving assistance, and release political prisoners. They must show a genuine commitment to effective and accountable implementation of the peace agreement and must demonstrate that they are willing to work for the benefit of all South Sudanese, including through checks on executive majority power and the transparent use of resources.

Mr President, today the peace process stands at a crossroads. To overcome the challenges ahead, we need unity amongst the international community. We urge the region to continue to drive forward constructive progress, especially on security arrangements in step with the UN and international community. Above all, we urge the leaders of South Sudan to put aside personal interests to work together for a better future for their people. Thank you Mr President.

Press release: PM to address the National Housing Federation Summit

Housing associations have a central role to play in building the homes we need and challenging the attitudes that hold us back, Theresa May will say in

central London today, as she announces new long-term funding for affordable housing.

As part of the Government's commitment to transform housebuilding, the Prime Minister will announce £2 billion in new funding to give housing associations the long-term certainty they need to deliver tens of thousands of new affordable and social homes.

As the first Prime Minister to address the National Housing Federation Summit, she will pledge this morning to work in partnership with the associations to get more people on the housing ladder and make sure those who can't afford their own place also have somewhere they're proud to call home.

Setting out the steps government has already taken to respond to the asks of the sector – including providing long-term certainty on rents and agreeing not to extend the local housing allowance cap to the social sector – Theresa May is expected to announce new long-term funding for housing associations. She will say:

You said that if you were going to take a serious role in not just managing but building the homes this country needs, you had to have the stability provided by long-term funding deals. Well, eight housing associations have already been given such deals, worth almost £600 million and paving the way for almost 15,000 new affordable homes.

And today, I can announce that new longer-term partnerships will be opened up to the most ambitious housing associations through a ground-breaking £2 billion initiative. Under the scheme, associations will be able to apply for funding stretching as far ahead as 2028/29 – the first time any government has offered housing associations such long-term certainty.

Doing so will give you the stability you need to get tens of thousands of affordable and social homes built where they are needed most, and make it easier for you to leverage the private finance you need to build many more.

In return, the Prime Minister will call on housing associations to use their unique combination of qualities – from their close ties with local communities to their expertise as property managers and their ability to ride out the business cycle and carry on building – “to achieve things neither private developers nor local authorities are capable of doing”. She is expected to say:

Today, I'm asking housing associations to use the tools we have given you. Not just to build more homes, though of course more homes are needed. But to take the lead in transforming the very way in which we think about and deliver housing in this country.

Rather than simply acquiring a proportion of the properties commercial developers build, I want to see housing associations taking on and leading major developments themselves. Because creating the kind of large-scale, high-quality developments this country needs requires a special kind of leadership – leadership you are uniquely well-placed to provide.

...Given the right tools and the right support, you can act as the strategic, long-term investors in the kind of high-quality places this country needs. To put it simply, you get homes built. And I want to work with you to transform the way we do so.

The Prime Minister will also urge housing associations to use their “unique status, rich history and social mission” to change the way tenants and society as a whole view social housing. She will say:

For many people, a certain stigma still clings to social housing. Some residents feel marginalised and overlooked, and are ashamed to share the fact that their home belongs to a housing association or local authority.

And on the outside, many people in society – including too many politicians – continue to look down on social housing and, by extension, the people who call it their home.

...We should never see social housing as something that need simply be “good enough”, nor think that the people who live in it should be grateful for their safety net and expect no better.

Whether it is owned and managed by local authorities, TMOs or housing associations, I want to see social housing that is so good people are proud to call it their home... Our friends and neighbours who live in social housing are not second-rate citizens.

The Prime Minister has made it her personal mission to get more people onto the housing ladder. The government has committed over £40 billion to get more homes built – creating the infrastructure to unlock sites where they’re needed most and removing unnecessary barriers to homebuilding, while making it harder for developers to dodge their obligations on affordable homes.

[Press release: Minister for Europe](#)

visits Macedonia to kick off visit to Western Balkans



The UK's Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, has travelled to Macedonia at the start of a two-day visit to the Western Balkans, underlining the UK's commitment to playing an active and supportive role in the Western Balkans.

In Skopje, Sir Alan reaffirmed the UK's commitment to the region by holding meetings with Prime Minister Zaev and Foreign Minister Dimitrov to discuss the importance of a Name Agreement for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic path. As part of his visit, the Minister also visited Matka Canyon to launch UK assistance to Macedonia's energy strategy.

The Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

The United Kingdom remains strongly committed to progress, peace, and prosperity in the Western Balkans.

This is an auspicious time for our friends in Macedonia. We have long worked with Macedonia to help them implement reforms that would strengthen the country and move towards it meeting its strategic objective to become part of the Euro-Atlantic family.

The historic agreement Macedonia concluded with Greece on the long-running Name Issue is an important step towards that objective.

The implementation of the Prespa Agreement would help the country finalise its Euro-Atlantic path and the UK stands ready to support Macedonia in achieving this.

Published 18 September 2018