

[Press release: Mark Field visits Vientiane for UK-Laos political dialogue](#)

Foreign & Commonwealth Minister of State Mark Field is visiting Laos today (24 August) at the conclusion of a six-country tour of Southeast Asia.

While in Vientiane, Mr Field will hold bilateral discussions with Minister of Foreign Affairs Saleumxay Khommasith, Minister of Education and Sports Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun, and Minister of Industry and Commerce Khemmani Pholsena.

He will also lead the UK delegation for the second biannual UK-Laos political dialogue, and meet a range of non-governmental organisations working on good governance, civil society, unexploded ordnance and wildlife management.

Commenting on his visit, the Minister said:

I'm delighted to visit Laos and to hold face-to-face discussions about the business and investment environment between our two countries.

I look forward to leading the UK delegation for our political dialogue, as it offers an important forum in which we can identify new areas of bilateral cooperation and build on existing areas of strength.

Minister Field's tour of Southeast Asia included visiting the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia to discuss bilateral relations and the UK's post-Brexit relationship with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and its members.

Further information

[Press release: New projects announced to protect cultural heritage overseas](#)

- £30 million Cultural Protection Fund supports conservation of international cultural heritage sites threatened by conflict
- University of Glasgow project will preserve archaeological heritage in a region suppressed by Saddam Hussein's forces

A project to preserve unique archaeological sites in Iraqi Kurdistan dating back up to 10,000 years is to receive investment from the UK Government's £30 million Cultural Protection Fund, Heritage Minister Michael Ellis announced today.

This is one of nine major overseas projects that will benefit from the Cultural Protection Fund which exists to safeguard heritage of international importance threatened by conflict in countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

The Garmian region was part of the front line during the Iran-Iraq War, suffered damage under Saddam Hussein's repression of the Kurds in the 1990s and is only kilometres away from ISIS' 2014 front line. The recent conflicts have led to the damage and destruction of sites containing key information and artefacts from ancient Mesopotamia's civilisations.

The University of Glasgow is constructing a team to document and monitor the damage in Garmian using satellite and aerial imaging, before recommending how the site can be best preserved. The team, which has received more than £300,000 from the Cultural Protection Fund, will also train local archaeologists and work with school teachers in the area to highlight cultural heritage in their classrooms.

Michael Ellis, UK Minister for Heritage, said:

These sites tell the story of human history and show how our early ancestors first farmed and cultivated food. Their protection is therefore not only important to Kurdistan, but to all of humankind.

This project is just one example of how our Cultural Protection Fund is providing essential support to countries where internationally important heritage has been damaged or threatened by war, conflict and terrorism.

Tragically we have seen some of the world's greatest cultural treasures destroyed in recent years. It is important, and right, that we share our expertise and support communities around the world to help preserve art, culture and heritage of global significance.

Stephen Stenning, Head, Arts and Society at British Council, said:

Important cultural heritage – from archives of music to ancient archaeological sites – is at risk of significant degradation or simply being lost forever.

British Council's work managing the Cultural Protection Fund provides vital support to organisations on the ground working to protect and preserve heritage. This latest round of funding for innovative and ambitious projects, extends valuable and ongoing conservation work, training, and education. By employing local people, developing skills and building capacity, this work also benefits the local economy.

Since its launch, The Cultural Protection Fund has supported work on 41 projects to restore and protect heritage sites in each of the 12 countries it operates in.

Notes to editors:

The Cultural Protection Fund, established by the UK Government and the British Council in 2016, is designed to safeguard heritage threatened by conflict in countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

The University of Glasgow team is led by archaeologist Dr Claudia Glatz. She said:

Our project is unique in Iraq and the Middle East in its approach to cultural heritage protection. We combine research-led archaeological practice as part of the ongoing survey and excavations of the Sirwan Regional Project with knowledge-exchange, capacity building in both practical skills and the social and political implications of interpretation and cultural narrative, and the creation of inclusive museum and community-driven educational resources.

The nine projects have been supported in this round of the Cultural Protection Fund are:

1. Action for Hope Music Schools for Refugees, Lebanon – £290,073 Led by Action for Hope (ASBL), this project aims to enhance the recognition of traditional Syrian music within a population of 20,000 refugee and host communities in Lebanon and Jordan.
2. Archaeological practice and heritage protection in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – £301,178 Led by University of Glasgow, this project will document and monitor site damage to the archaeological heritage of Garmian in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, as well as increasing the capacity of local heritage professionals through skills workshops and field training, and engaging local communities with their cultural heritage.
3. Community Museums of Western Sudan: Omdurman, El Obeid, Nyala, Sudan – £997,000 Led by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), this project will restore three museums after decades of conflict and provide for the educational and cultural needs of their communities, visitors and

tourists.

4. An Ark for Iraq: Emergency response programme for the endangered watercraft heritage of Iraq – £99,246 Led by Safina Projects CIC, this year long project expands Safina Projects' ongoing work to revitalise and document the endangered watercraft heritage of traditional boats in central and southern Iraq.
5. Planning the future of Amedi: building community capacity & management frameworks for the protection of the historic town, Iraq – £100,000 Led by World Monuments Fund Britain Ltd, this project aims to enhance and document built heritage in the historic town of Amedi in Iraq.
6. Assessing the condition of the Afghan national art collection, Afghanistan – £50,000 Led by the Foundation of Culture & Civil Society, this project will carry out a preliminary needs assessments and restoration work on 150 paintings within the Afghan National Collection, which were destroyed by the Taliban. Building the capacity to protect Palestinian land and heritage through museology, Occupied Palestinian Territories – £94,650
7. Led by The Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability at Bethlehem University, this project will document Palestinian ethnographic heritage, paying particular attention to agricultural practices along the cultural route of 'Abraham's path' in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
8. "The Life Jacket": The Revitalisation and Development of Rural Jerusalem, Occupied Palestinian Territories – £1,018,470 Led by RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation, which will work with local communities and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to restore the historic centres of Al Jib, Qalandiya, Jaba' and Kafr 'Aqab
9. Preserving the Living Memory of the Pastoral Routes and Heritage of the Bedouin in Lebanon – £100,000 Led by The Institute for Heritage and Sustainable Human Development, this project will aim to collect, archive and share the skills and traditions of the Bekkaa Valleys Bedouins in the Lebanon. The Bedouin are a group of nomadic peoples who have traditionally inhabited areas of the Levant, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Press release: UK calls on the international community to prioritise long-term support for the Rohingya people on the anniversary of the crisis

UK calls on the international community to prioritise long-term support for

the Rohingya people on the anniversary of the crisis

One year on from the devastating man-made crisis which saw the mass exodus of 700,000 persecuted Rohingya men, women and children fleeing Burma to Bangladesh, the UK is calling on the international community to provide long-term support to keep the Rohingya people safe in the years to come, both in Bangladesh and in Burma.

This time last year the watching world looked on at the scale and speed of this forced movement of people which triggered one of the largest international aid responses in 2017. The UK has been at the forefront of that response and has contributed £129 million to support the displaced Rohingya since 25 August 2017.

The Government and people of Bangladesh have also shown enormous generosity in opening their borders and providing a safe haven for those fleeing violence.

Now the focus is on making sure that the Rohingya people have access to further support while they are living in the camps. UK aid will provide immediate access to learning opportunities in a safe environment for Rohingya children and also local children living in communities near to the camps, as well as providing skills training to improve the livelihoods for Rohingya men and women, better equipping them for the future.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

“The roots of this crisis go back decades, but 12 months ago we saw an unprecedented campaign of terror by the Burmese military, resulting in 700,000 people fleeing across the border into Bangladesh.

“There is no doubt that this is a protracted crisis and the British public have enabled hundreds of thousands of lives to be saved through their taxes, and through huge sums raised in voluntary donations. I want to thank all who have stepped up and donated or worked to bring hope to so many.

“It is clear what the international community must now do, and what Burma must do. These people need their lives back and their rights guaranteed.

“On this anniversary of such barbarism we should recommit ourselves to ensuring that Burma cooperates with the asks of the international community and that nations work to meet to needs of these vulnerable people.”

To date UK aid has provided life-saving food, water, shelter and medication to almost a million Rohingya who now live within the camps in Bangladesh.

Our support:

- Helps traumatised children be reunited with their parents;
- Provides counselling for sexual violence survivors and makes sure the most vulnerable in the camps are protected from people traffickers;

- Has helped build sturdy, protected shelters during the rainy season. The monsoon and cyclone season is expected to last until November and UK aid will ensure that 10,000 upgraded shelter kits, 90,000 tarpaulins and ropes, 100,000 blankets and 100,000 floor mats are accessible and can be immediately provided to those in need.

The UK will continue to help all vulnerable communities remaining in Rakhine State, including 600,000 Rohingya. Our humanitarian work and support to education, nutrition, livelihoods and health are designed to address inequalities between different groups and promote progress on the recommendations put forward by the Kofi Annan led Rakhine Advisory Commission.

We continue to press for the conditions to be put in place for the Rohingya to be able to return voluntarily, safely and with dignity to their homes. Such conditions do not yet exist and any returns process will take considerable time.

UK aid, the crisis in twelve months:

August: Reports of violence and cross border movements triggered our preparations for a rising number of arrivals in Bangladesh.

September: The UK stepped up its existing assistance in the camps and provided £30 million in extra funding which helped to provide food, water and shelter for the new influx of people. In Burma, following the events of the 25 August 2017, DFID funded the distribution of clean water and food and the provision of healthcare services to affected communities.

October: The Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) launched its appeal. DFID announced it would match donations pound for pound up to £5million. In the same month we also pledged a further £12 million of humanitarian assistance at the landmark UN pledging conference.

November: International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt visited the Cox's Bazar camps where she witnessed first-hand how UK aid was having an impact on the ground. She also announced an additional £12 million in support for additional food and to increase access to psychosocial support and counselling for victims of sexual and gender based violence.

December: Following the outbreak of diphtheria in the camps, the UK aid funded Emergency Medical Team (EMT), made up of the UK's top medical professionals, was deployed in the days after Christmas to help stem the spread of this deadly disease.

January: The BBC ran a full day of live radio and TV coverage from Cox's Bazar and announced the UK was playing a significant role in halting the spread of diphtheria within the camps by vaccinating 350,000 children between the ages of six months and 15 years.

February: After six weeks in the camps the EMT returned home having triaged more than 3,000 people and treated almost 500 people for diphtheria. Had it not been for British help, many people could have died. An important part of

their legacy was training local Bangladeshi medical professionals in disease prevention.

March: The International Development Committee visited the camps and witnessed how UK aid was saving lives.

April: The Evening Standard reported on the number of babies that were due to be born in the midst of the monsoon and cyclone season. In an interview with the paper the International Development Secretary highlighted how more than 16,000 births were imminent and set out how UK aid was helping to train midwives.

May: Ahead of the looming monsoon and cyclone season the UK announced continued support to the Rohingya people. The additional £70 million support package is destined to provide immediate support in the form of shelter, food and medication, and longer-term support in the form of livelihood opportunities.

June: UK support helped with the important process of shelter preparations before the looming rains began. New shelters were built and existing shelters strengthened.

July: A flurry of activity in this month saw the final repairs to roads and pathways in the camps. UK support provided to undertake this task will ensure that vital food, medicine and water can get through into the camps if there is significant flooding. July also saw a meeting between the International Development Secretary and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Cate Blanchett, where they discussed how UK aid is saving lives and what more needs to be done to ensure that the Rohingya people are cared for.

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[Press release: UK calls on the international community to prioritise long-term support for the Rohingya people on the anniversary of the](#)

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[Speech: Statement by the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, at UN Security Council briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I'd like to open the session by thanking Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Coninx for their briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the threat posed by the Daesh to international peace and security. I'd also like to welcome Dr. Joana Cook. Thank you for sharing the key findings of your report on Daesh women and minors which shows the value of inviting civil society and researchers to inform our discussions.

In the summer of 2014 Daesh swept down the Tigris and Euphrates valleys capturing thousands of square miles of Iraq and Syria and imposing its pitiless rule on millions of people in an area that was once the cradle of civilization. Over the next three years, attacks that were directed, inspired or enabled by Daesh would claim more than 30,000 lives including 181 attacks outside Iraq and Syria.

The world responded by forming a global coalition to defeat this threat and military action by many countries including my own has driven Daesh from almost all of its domain and liberated millions from its oppression.

But the point I wish to emphasise today is that this has not been vanquished and the root causes of its emergence have yet to be resolved. Britain shares the assessment of the Secretary-General's report that Daesh is responding to the loss of territory by evolving into a covert terrorist network that branches as far apart as Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen.

Daesh takes advantage of ungoverned space and weak states. Its terrorists do not necessarily require a central direction and they've demonstrated their ability to strike in Europe and Southeast Asia. The Secretary-General's report estimates that as many as 20,000 Daesh fighters remain in Syria and Iraq, including the citizens of many countries. About 900 people with links to the United Kingdom have travelled to join the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. About 40% returned to the UK in the early days of Daesh's so-called Caliphate and some 20% are believed dead. The rest are still in Iraq, Syria or elsewhere.

Our response to this enduring threat should fall into two parts. First we must press on with military operations against Daesh. British forces continue to play their part as members of the global coalition and UK leads in a vital area of strategic communications against Daesh. This year the British government has committed another 20 million pounds to counter-terrorism projects in countries we assessed to be most at risk from returning foreign fighters.

Second, we should renew our focus on prevention. By addressing the root causes of the emergence of Daesh. This means doing more to support peace and

reconciliation in Iraq and a lasting political settlement in Syria. It also means responding to specific humanitarian problems. For example, up to 20% of foreign fighters globally are women and girls. Almost 10% of the 40,000 individuals who travelled to join Daesh were minors. Many of whom have witnessed or experienced horrific violence and been exposed to radicalization. Some will be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. We need to act to prevent these minors from becoming the next generation of terrorists. The UN has a vital role in the struggle against Daesh consistent with the responsibility of this Council to address threats to international peace and security. This Council made air travel more secure by passing Resolution 2309 – the first ever Resolution on aviation security. And it addressed the threat from foreign fighters in Resolutions 2178 and 2396. Earlier in 2005, this Council passed Resolution 1624 condemning incitement and repudiating all attempts to justify or glorify acts of terrorism.

The Council should be willing to consider further action in order to counter the use of the internet by terrorists for propaganda and fundraising. Prevention is a key pillar of the UK's approach to counter terrorism. Our aim is to identify anyone at risk of radicalization and seek to reintegrate them into society. Agencies and local governments from health education social services and the police routinely meet to identify individuals at risk and refer them to programs run by specialists in de-radicalisation. This approach focused on prevention rather than prosecution after a crime has been committed has turned more than more 500 people away from terrorism in the UK.

Over the years we've learned lessons and refined our Prevent program. We stand ready to share our experiences with countries that face similar problems. Societies that are confident about their beliefs and values and hold governments to account are societies that are resistant to the virus of terrorism. The key to success is partnership between many nations. We mustn't lose sight of the importance of those partnerships even as Daesh loses its grip on Syria and Iraq. I look forward to our discussion today on how we can act together to prevent and counter the evolving threat from Daesh. Thank you.