

Statement to Parliament: PM Commons statement on June European Council: 2 July 2018

Introduction

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a Statement on last week's European Council.

The focus of this Council was on migration – and there were also important conclusions on security and defence.

The UK made a substantive contribution to both. And our continued co-operation after we have left the EU will be in everyone's interests, helping to ensure the long-term prosperity and security of the whole continent.

Migration

Mr Speaker, the consequences of mass uncontrolled immigration are one of the most serious challenges confronting Europe today.

The problem is felt especially acutely by countries on the Mediterranean and the Aegean that are often where migrants first arrive.

But this is a shared challenge, which affects us all.

More than anything the situation is a tragedy for the migrants themselves – thousands of whom have now lost their lives.

And at the core of all our efforts must be trying to prevent others from doing so.

The UK has long argued for a comprehensive, whole-of-route approach to tackling migration, and the Council agreed actions in each of the three areas that we have championed.

First, there will be more work upstream to reduce the number of people who undertake such perilous journeys in the first place.

This includes providing more opportunities in the countries where economic migrants are coming from. And helping ensure that refugees claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

To support this, the UK will continue to invest for the long term in education, jobs and services – both in countries of origin and transit.

We are also committed to the second tranche of the EU's Facility for Refugees in Turkey, provided we can agree an appropriate mechanism for managing the

funds.

And we made a further commitment at this Council of 15 million euros to support the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

Both are delivering on the UK's call for more support for countries of transit and origin on the main routes into Europe – which is vital if we are to achieve the solutions we need to mass uncontrolled migration.

Alongside our economic development and humanitarian support, we have also been stepping up our communications effort upstream, so that more potential migrants understand the grave dangers of the journeys they might undertake – and the criminal people smugglers who are waiting to exploit them.

Second, there will be more work to distinguish between genuine refugees and illegal economic migrants.

This includes exploring the concept of regional disembarkation platforms. It was agreed at the Council that these could be established on a voluntary basis. Key to their success would be operating in full respect of international law and without creating a pull factor for further migration.

There is clearly much more work to be done with the support of UNHCR and the IOM to establish whether such proposals are practically and legally viable.

But we do need to be prepared to look again at new solutions given the gravity and intractability of this challenge.

Third, there will be further efforts to strengthen borders to help prevent illegal migration.

Last week I agreed with Prime Minister Tsipras of Greece that we would work towards a new action plan of UK support for Greek and European efforts, including a further Border Force patrol vessel to work with the Greek Coast Guard.

The UK now has law enforcement officers in 17 EU and African countries as part of our Organised Immigration Crime Task Force.

UK and French officers are also working together to build links between counter-trafficking agencies in Nigeria and Niger to strengthen this key border on the Central route.

And I am keen that we should replicate this model with other states.

Mr Speaker this is a challenge that faces the whole of our continent.

And as I said at the Council, we will continue playing our full part in working together with the EU to meet it – both now and after we have left.

For that is in our national interest – and in the interests of Europe as a whole.

##Security and defence

The same is true for security and defence – which is why at this Council I made the case for a new security partnership between the UK and the EU after we have left.

We have seen over recent weeks and months that Russia and other hostile state and non-state actors are trying to sow disunity, destabilise our democracies and test our resolve.

So we must work together to adapt our current defences to the new normal and take responsibility for protecting international norms and institutions.

In this context, I thanked our European partners for their solidarity in the wake of the appalling nerve agent attack in Salisbury.

The unprecedented co-ordinated expulsion of undeclared Russian intelligence officers demonstrated our unity in response to this kind of disregard for global norms and rules, which poses a threat to us all.

And at the March Council we agreed to do more to strengthen our resilience against such threats.

Since then the UK has led work with our European partners to propose a package of measures to step up our strategic communications against online disinformation, strengthen our capabilities against cybersecurity threats and further reduce the threat from hostile intelligence activities.

This Council agreed measures in all of these areas, including an Action Plan by December which must go even further in co-ordinating our response to the challenge of disinformation.

This effort to adapt our defences to protecting international norms should also enable us to respond robustly to events beyond Europe when they threaten our security interests.

So this Council welcomed the agreement reached by my Rt Hon Friend the Foreign Secretary in the Hague last week, enabling the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons use.

And the Council reinforced this by agreeing with President Macron and myself in calling for the adoption of a new EU sanctions regime to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

The Council also agreed to roll over current sanctions on Russia in light of its failure to fully implement the Minsk Agreements in Ukraine.

In the context of online threats from the full range of state and non-state actors, President Macron and I joined together in pushing for further action to tackle illegal content, especially terrorist content, online.

Finally on security, Mr Speaker, we looked ahead to the NATO Summit next

week, which will be an important moment to demonstrate Western unity.

The NATO Secretary General joined this discussion at the Council where we agreed that Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security while complementing and reinforcing the activities of NATO.

Far too few of our allies are currently meeting the commitment to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence.

And at this Council, I urged them to do so, in order that, together, we can meet the full range of targets that challenge our interests.

Mr Speaker, for our own part, we have the biggest defence budget in Europe and the biggest in NATO, after the United States.

We are investing more than £179 billion on new equipment. That means, among other items, new aircraft carriers and submarines for the Navy, new cutting edge F35B aircraft for the RAF and new Ajax armoured vehicles for the Army.

We are leading throughout NATO – whether that is deployed forces in the Mediterranean, air policing in Eastern Europe or our troops providing an enhanced forward presence in Estonia.

And we are operating with our allies to defend our interests all over the world.

In April, RAF aircraft took action to degrade the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons capability and deter their future use.

Over 1000 personnel are deployed in the fight against Daesh – and we are the second largest contributor to the coalition air campaign in Iraq and Syria.

In Africa, UK troops have built and now operate a hospital in South Sudan supporting the UN mission there; they are training security forces in Nigeria, and our Chinook helicopters are deploying to Mali in support of the French this week.

Two Royal Navy vessels are deployed in Asia in support of sanctions enforcement on North Korea, working closely with the US, Japan and others – with another to follow, the first Royal Navy deployments to the Pacific since 2013.

Our submarines are silently patrolling the seas giving us a nuclear deterrent every minute of every hour, as they have done for 50 years.

Our Modernising Defence Programme will ensure that our capabilities remain as potent in countering the threats of tomorrow as they are in keeping us safe today.

We are the leading military power in Europe with the capabilities to protect our people, defend our interests, and project our values, supporting the global rules based system.

And the government that I lead will ensure that is exactly how we remain.

Brexit

Turning to Brexit, Mr Speaker, I updated my fellow leaders on the negotiations – and the 27 other Member States welcomed the further progress that had been made on the Withdrawal Agreement.

With the exception of the Protocol relating to Northern Ireland, we now have agreement or are close to doing so.

There remain some real differences between us and the European Commission on Northern Ireland. So Mr Speaker, on the Protocol on Northern Ireland, I want to be very clear. We have put forward proposals, and will produce further proposals, so that if a temporary backstop is needed there will be no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

We are absolutely committed to the avoidance of such a border. And we are equally committed to the avoidance of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland is an integral part of our country and we will never accept the imposition of a border within our United Kingdom.

We all agreed that we must now urgently intensify and accelerate the pace of negotiations on our future relationship.

I warned EU leaders that I do not think this Parliament will approve the Withdrawal Agreement in the autumn unless we have clarity about our future relationship alongside it.

I will hold a meeting of the Cabinet at Chequers on Friday and we will publish our White Paper on the future partnership with the EU next week.

The EU and its Member States will want to consider our proposals seriously. We both need to show flexibility to build the deep relationship after we have left that is in the interests of both our peoples.

Our White Paper will set out detailed proposals for a sustainable and close future relationship between the UK and the EU – a partnership that means that the UK will leave the Single Market and Customs Union, but a partnership which supports our shared prosperity and security.

It will mark an important step in delivering the decision of the British people. And I commend this Statement to the House.

Press release: 'Champions of our democracy' announced at the National Democracy Week Awards

Today (Monday 2 July), winners of the first ever National Democracy Week Awards were announced at the People's History Museum in Manchester.

The awards ceremony has been held to mark the 90th anniversary of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act, which gave women equal voting rights and kicks off celebrations for National Democracy Week.

The awards recognise the exceptional work of individuals and organisations that work tirelessly to increase democratic engagement in the UK.

Six winners were awarded titles for the following categories:

Michael Bryan, Dan Lawes [Youth Politics](#) and Rachael Farrington [Voting Counts](#) jointly receive the Young Advocate of the Year:

- This award is for a young person or group of young people aged between 11 and 25 years old who have taken a leadership role in promoting democratic engagement among their peers.
- Michael won for his work with Plan-International on the Learn Without Fear digital campaign, and his efforts to increase voter registration amongst students, in which he organised workshops at over 130 colleges, influencing thousands-of- students to register.
- Dan won for his role in founding Youth Politics in July 2017. Youth Politics equips young people with the skills needed to successfully implement social change by offering free training in debating, public speaking, campaigning, economics, politics journalism and policy-making, and aims to increase voter registration. The movement has reached over 14,000 people in Greater Manchester, with 470 young people attending a conference this year, which featured Mayor of Manchester Andy Burnham and journalist Michael Crick.
- Rachael designed and built the Voting Counts website, which outlines why voting is so important. Information on the site was produced without bias, allowing users to make their own informed decisions without being influenced by others. The website saw over 30,000 visitors on the day of the 2017 General Election alone, and continues to inform users about democracy.

Harris Bokhari OBE, Patchwork Foundation – Diversity Champion of the Year:

- This award is for an individual or organisation that has increased diversity in our democratic process and electoral systems, supporting others to have their say.
- Harris founded the Patchwork Foundation, which has helped over 40,000 people from diverse communities engage in the democratic process through town-hall events and masterclasses with senior political figures and voting campaigns.

My Life My Say – Changemaker of the Year:

- This award is for an individual or organisation that has put a new idea forward to increase access to democracy, convinced others of the merit of their idea and affected a real change that benefits the greater good.
- My Life My Say's democracy cafes have given the opportunity for young people across the country to participate in political discussion. The cafes equip young people with skills and experience, so they can give back to their own communities.

The People's History Museum – Collaboration of the Year:

- This award is for individuals and/or organisations that have come together to reach a shared goal. Last year, the Museum delivered the Never Going Underground programme, working collaboratively with communities in telling their stories of the fight for LGBT+ Rights. Artists and activists, and LGBT+ organisations were invited to exhibit their own work to the public; bringing new ideas and histories into the museum. The museum engages with over 100,000 people each year, encouraging community engagement with the democratic process.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith said:

The first ever National Democracy Awards are the ideal opportunity to celebrate the champions of our democracy across the country who have displayed pioneering efforts to increase democratic engagement.

The winners of all four awards, and those who were shortlisted, should be proud of what they've achieved to improve understanding of our democracy for thousands of young people.

Ends

Notes to editors

The criteria to be shortlisted for each of the awards can be found here:

- [Make your nomination for the Democracy Awards 2018](#)
- The Prime Minister answered a question at Prime Minister's Question Time on 6 June about National Democracy Week. [Read the full transcript here](#)
- National Democracy Week is running for the first time this week. Events will take place on a national and local level to encourage members of the public to get involved with our democracy, in particular those from under-registered groups, including young people, BAME groups, British ex-pats, and people with disabilities. [Events can be found here](#)
- The week will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 when the first British women over 30 (who met a property qualification) won the right to vote and the 90th anniversary of the Equal Franchise Act 1928 which granted equal voting rights to men and women. The week is being delivered in collaboration with the National Democracy Week Council members, the Cabinet Office and partners across the country. [Council members can be found here](#)
- Follow us on social media at #talkdemocracy [You can find out more about National Democracy Week on the website](#)

For further information on National Democracy Week, contact the Cabinet Office Press Office on 0207 276 0436. It takes about 5 minutes to register to vote online. To find out more visit [Register to vote](#)

[Press release: BEIS Secretary of State appoints new chair to the Committee for Radioactive Waste Management](#)

Sir Nigel has been appointed from 2 July 2018 for a term of 4 years.

The appointment has been approved by the devolved administrations.

The ministers and Secretary of State expressed their thanks to the previous Chair, Laurence Williams, and interim chair, Campbell Gemmell for their services.

Sir Nigel Thrift

Until last year, Sir Nigel was the Executive Director of Schwarzman Scholars. He is one of the world's leading human geographers and previously served as Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Warwick and as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Oxford.

Information on CoRWM

CoRWM provides independent scrutiny and advice to UK government and devolved administration ministers on the long-term management of radioactive waste, including storage and disposal. The committee's primary task is to provide independent scrutiny on the UK government's and Radioactive Waste Management Ltd's (RWM's) high profile programme to deliver geological disposal, together with interim storage, for higher activity wastes.

CoRWM is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by BEIS.

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[News story: Paramedics to be given body cameras to protect them from abuse](#)

Paramedics will be given body cameras as part of a new wellbeing pledge ahead of the NHS's 70th birthday.

NHS employers will also introduce fast-access systems to speed up access to free mental health support and physiotherapy for their staff.

The measures are part of the 10-year plan that the NHS will agree over the next 6 months as part of the [planned £20.5 billion increase to NHS funding by 2023](#). The measures aim to:

- reduce cases of physical and verbal abuse against the most at risk NHS workers
- help staff manage their own health and return to work faster after illness, allowing more patients to be treated

In an initial pilot, 465 ambulances and their paramedics will be equipped with body cameras, with potential for a full rollout to all paramedics, and other priority areas.

The NHS is the UK's largest employer with over 1.5 million staff, caring for a million patients every 24 hours. It is recognised as one of the most respected institutions in the UK, yet over 15% of NHS staff have experienced physical violence from patients, or their families, during the past year.

In the past year, 354 prosecutions have been brought against individuals who have subjected ambulance staff to violence – but estimates suggest this is a fraction of the total incidents.

Health and Social Care secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Nobody should feel unsafe at work – abuse against healthcare workers goes against everything the NHS stands for. Whilst the buck must stop with abusers, we want to do everything we can to prevent physical and verbal abuse. Issuing paramedics with body cameras will help protect them and increase prosecutions.

The NHS is consistently rated as the thing that makes us most proud to be British, but it's not the institution or buildings that the public are so passionate about, it's the people on the frontline that care for them in their hour of need. Demand for NHS services has been soaring in recent years as our population has aged and increased, staff have been under huge pressure and have never worked harder.

In these challenging circumstances, they need to know that the NHS is striving to be the best employer it can be – particularly when supporting the mental health of staff.

Ruth May, Executive Director of Nursing, NHS Improvement said:

The NHS's greatest asset is its people: frontline staff and managers who often work in highly stressful and challenging circumstances so that people get the safe and high quality care they deserve.

In order to secure the future of the NHS and what it stands for, we must strive to be the very best employer. This means looking after our staff and supporting their health and wellbeing. This will also enable them to deliver the best care possible, both now and in future.