

Speech: Supporting UNOCA's efforts to ensure peace in Central Africa

Thank you Mr President and may I also thank our briefers today – Ambassador Fall for your report and also for your team's work in this challenging region. And also Ambassador Allam-Mi, thank you for your comments, and also welcome to the Security Council. It's good to see you today sir because regional organizations like yours are essential and we are pleased you've been able to demonstrate today the cooperation between the regional group and UNOCA.

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains concerned by the security and political situation in Central Africa. Many of those concerns are reflected in the Secretary-General's report, including the threats from terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and other groups in the Lake Chad Basin, and the Lord's Resistance Army in Central African Republic and DRC. And we note with horror the use of women and girls as suicide bombers by Boko Haram.

As we've discussed many times before in this Council, both military and non-military action is required to address these threats. We must understand their root causes and the political, economic and humanitarian needs of the population. And it is essential that we take a coherent, "whole of UN" approach to tackle both existing problems and prevent further deterioration in this region.

This year, 10 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the Lake Chad Basin. The United Kingdom has committed £300 million to tackling the crisis over the next five years. And we call upon other international donors to help make up funding shortfalls for humanitarian operations across the region.

Mr President, we are also concerned by the situation in Cameroon and the number of casualties that have resulted amongst both civilians and Cameroon's security forces. Citizens have the right of peaceful protest. It is the government's responsibility to protect demonstrators while also protecting the safety and security of all citizens. We call for all parties to reject violence, pursue dialogue and urgently take action to reduce tensions. Failure to do so will only cause the already concerning situation to deteriorate further. In this regard, we welcome President Biya's New Year's announcement to pursue dialogue, decentralisation and restraint. And we strongly encourage the government to take further steps to give effect to this announcement. We commend UNOCA's support as part of broader international efforts to find a lasting solution to the current crisis, and we would encourage intensification of these efforts and ask that we are kept regularly informed on progress.

Mr President, we recognise UNOCA's efforts elsewhere in the region, including the mobilisation of support for the African Peace Initiative in the Central African Republic with regional partners and we encourage this to continue.

UNOCA also has a crucial role supporting states in the subregion to hold timely, transparent and inclusive elections and supporting ECCAS's efforts to lay the groundwork for structural prevention of election-related violence.

We are concerned by the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and we appreciate UNOCA's reporting on this matter. Further, more detailed reporting on the problem and the work being done to combat it should be carried out, given the heightened and significant threat to international shipping and regional prosperity.

In addition to regional governments, regional organisations – including the African Union, ECCAS, CMAC, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission – are essential to address the challenges to peace and security, promote democratic governance and enhance regional cooperation. Inter-regional cooperation, particularly on issues like the Sahel, are also crucial, and we welcome the announcement that ECCAS and ECOWAS will hold a joint summit in July. We encourage UNOCA and UNOWAS to continue to support this inter-regional approach.

Mr President, UNOCA has demonstrated that it can be a valuable partner for regional governments and organisations. In order to make the best use of the resources available, UNOCA should focus on building the capacity of regional entities to deliver crisis prevention work, such as preventative diplomacy, early warning mechanisms and mediation, and support UN agencies in priority thematic areas including gender.

Mr President, the United Kingdom appreciates UNOCA's efforts in the region and we encourage UNOCA to improve its communication of this good work. This will ensure those outside the UN system can better understand UNOCA's ongoing work and support it whenever possible.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: World's Fastest 3D Microphone Array Simulation Software

Based on technology originally developed for the UK Home Office, A3S gives developers the ability to dramatically reduce audio array simulation times, improve the fidelity of results, and increase performance using fewer components. Significantly decreasing simulation times during product development from eight hours to 30 seconds* (a reduction of 99.9 per cent), A3S calculates in near real-time the physical configuration of the audio array in order to achieve optimum performance.

For the first time manufacturers will be able to fully exploit the potential of audio arrays, and deliver microphone/speaker-based products which:

- Require fewer audio components and reduce device size – tests of an off-the-shelf product reduced the number of microphones by two-thirds, while improving audio performance.
- Minimise development costs – less product development time can be spent simulating and prototyping arrays. It also allows the modelling of more frequencies, resulting in a product with greater confidence in its performance, and potentially removing the need for costly redesigns.
- Are smarter – products can be optimised to cope with changing environments, as near real-time characterisation allows beamforming to be conducted on-the-fly to dynamically focus microphones and cancel out noise.
- Are less power hungry – less processing power required by fewer microphones.

Gerry Scott, Commercialisation Manager at Ploughshare Innovations, said:

A common development approach is to deploy multiple microphones and speakers in a product to achieve an acceptable level of performance. However, without full optimisation, they will still under-perform. The developers of A3S have proven that simulations can be conducted 1,000 times faster than current approaches, allowing developers to create high performing products with more confidence. Reducing the number of components also means that high-end audio products can be created with a smaller form factor and at less overall cost, giving manufacturers potentially significant cost savings. A high-end audio experience will become more widely available to us all.

Examples of what applications could use A3S to improve audio product performance include voice recognition, smartphones, automotive, immersive audio and gaming/home cinema.

- In tests, the simulation time of a 16 microphone array was reduced from eight hours to 30 seconds. In addition, A3S simulated hundreds of frequencies – significantly more than the eight frequencies managed by the conventional method.

About Ploughshare Innovations (www.ploughshareinnovations.com)

Ploughshare Innovations is the technology transfer organisation for the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD). It turns 'swords into ploughshares' by enabling businesses to gain access to defence and security technology developed by leading government laboratories. Ploughshare ensures Government technology is put to good use and benefits the UK, society as a whole, and humanity by applying innovative technology to improve people's lives. Since its creation in 2005, the company has licensed 120 technologies and attracted £140 million of investment.

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News story: HM Land Registry to launch new Local Land Charges service

The first local authority's local land charges (LLC) data to be available will be Warwick District Council's.

After this date, anyone requiring LLC searches for property or land in the local authority area of Warwick District Council will be able to get them directly from HM Land Registry.

HM Land Registry is working in partnership with up to 26 local authorities in England over 2018 and 2019 to migrate their LLC data to a central, digital register as part of a phased migration approach. Once the data is migrated, anyone will be able to get instant online search results via GOV.UK and the other HM Land Registry business customer channels; portal and Business Gateway.

The official LLC search provided by HM Land Registry will:

- cost £15 for each search – providing a reduction to the current national average price
- provide guaranteed search results
- provide the full spatial extent of every charge on the search result so the exact area affected by the charge is visible
- provide consistent, clear and accurate search results
- allow instant online search result with 24/7 access to the data – reducing delays in receiving searches
- allow unlimited repeat searches for six months to check for any new charges before completing a transaction
- provide a search history dashboard, giving access to previous searches at any time
- provide secure, tamperproof results

For an overview of the new service, watch our video:

[Creating a national Local Land Charges Register](#)

HM Land Registry will be keeping customers informed when each local authority's LLC records are migrated to the new digital register.

For more information, read about our [Local Land Charges programme](#).

News story: North Yorkshire PCC to take on responsibility for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for North Yorkshire Julia Mulligan's proposal to take on responsibility for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has today been approved by the Home Secretary.

The PCC is set to join Roger Hirst of Essex, who became the country's first police, fire and crime commissioner in October 2017, alongside other PCCs who have had their proposals to take on responsibility for their local fire and rescue services approved. These include Stephen Mold, PCC for Northamptonshire, John Campion, PCC for West Mercia, Matthew Ellis, PCC for Staffordshire, and Jason Ablewhite, PCC for Cambridgeshire.

Through the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the government has introduced a range of measures to drive greater collaboration between emergency services, enabling services to share best practice and become more efficient and effective. This includes enabling PCCs to take on governance of fire and rescue services where a local case is made.

Before submitting her proposal, PCC Julia Mulligan was required to undertake local consultation, considering the views of the public and relevant local stakeholders. As the relevant local authorities in the area did not support the transfer of governance, the Home Secretary commissioned an independent assessment of the PCC's proposal in November 2017.

The Home Secretary carefully considered the contents of the proposals, consultation materials, the views and representations made by statutory consultees and the PCC responses to them, together with the conclusions of the independent assessment.

The Home Secretary was satisfied the proposals demonstrated that a transfer of governance would be in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, without having an adverse effect upon public safety. In the interests of transparency, and in line with the provisions of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the [independent assessment](#) has today been published.