

Speech: UK concerned about planned demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahma

Thank you Madam President, and thank you to Special Coordinator Mladenov for your briefing and for the work you are doing to improve the situation and bring the situation closer to peace and for all the hard work of your teams on the ground.

The United Kingdom is committed and remains committed to achieving a two-state solution, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

We continue to believe that the best way to achieve this is through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and for all parties to focus on steps that are conducive to peace.

As the French Ambassador said, some 25 years ago, we had the Oslo Accords. It is doubly concerning, therefore, to see the recent developments on the ground, on key aspects of Resolution 2334. The level of rhetoric of hatred and dehumanisation on all sides is repellent but it is also dangerous.

The UK remains deeply concerned about the Israeli authorities' planned demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar. Khan al-Ahmar is located in an area of strategic importance for the contiguity of a Palestinian state. Its demolition threatens a major blow to the prospects for a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital, by paving the way for settlement building in Area E1.

The UN has said that demolition could amount to forcible transfer in violation of international humanitarian law. The recent decision of the Israeli Supreme Court does not mandate demolition; demolition remains at the discretion of the Israeli Government.

We therefore call on the Israeli government once again not to go ahead with its plan to demolish the village, including the school, and displace the residents.

I share concerns about the situation of the UN Relief and Works Agency, which is facing severe financial pressure at a time of increased demand.

We support a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for Palestinian refugees, and until that point, we remain firmly committed to supporting UNWRA and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East.

We are concerned about the impact of the recent US decision on funding. We believe UNRWA is a lifeline for millions of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We have so far provided ourselves some \$67 million to UNRWA; \$59 million to its core services and \$7.8 million in humanitarian aid in Syria.

We hope this will help meet immediate needs and that programmes and services remain uninterrupted. We call on the international community and other donors to follow this and step up support to UNRWA to ensure its vital services are not interrupted.

At the same time, I would like to stress that for UNRWA to have a sustainable future, it needs to continue to promote realistic and technical cost-saving reforms. The United Kingdom will continue to work closely with UNRWA and donors on how best to ensure continuity of essential services to Palestinian refugees at this time.

Lastly, and as the French Ambassador said, there is an urgent need to address the awful and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The United Kingdom has recently announced a new \$49 million programme to support economic development in Gaza and the West Bank. We have released \$2.6 million to UNICEF, to help provide up to 1 million Gazans with access to clean water and sanitation, and have given \$2 million to the ICRC appeal to support emergency medical needs.

We are supportive of efforts to reduce the conflict in Gaza. It is in everyone's interest for peace and stability to prevail in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

And Special Coordinator, we fully support your efforts to improve the situation in Gaza and we urge the relevant parties to engage fully with your proposals.

We also would like to see progress on humanitarian and economic proposals at the meeting of the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee next week, and we call upon both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to deliver on their outstanding commitments.

We reiterate the need for Israel to reduce its movement and access restrictions on the people of Gaza, and for Hamas to commit to non-violence and fully end its attacks on Israel.

In order to see a long-term improvement in Gaza, momentum around Fatah-Hamas reconciliation needs to be maintained. The United Kingdom is supportive of Egyptian efforts to enable the Palestinian Authority to resume control of Gaza, and we encourage all parties to engage constructively.

The recent deaths on both sides of the conflict, including the deaths of three Palestinians in Gaza over the past week and the stabbing of an Israeli in a settlement on 16 September, reflect the need for progress to end the cycle of violence.

We strongly urge all relevant parties to respect international law, de-escalate tensions, exercise restraint and prevent incidents that could jeopardize the lives of Palestinians and Israelis.

Thank you, Madam President.

News story: CIVIL SERVICE LAUNCH PIONEERING ECONOMICS DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

The UK Civil Service has this week launched the UK's first degree-level apprenticeship in economics – creating new routes to careers in the Civil Service for young people who would prefer to study for a degree whilst working at the heart of government.

A range of central government departments and agencies including HM Treasury, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), Department for Business, Energy, Innovation and Science (BEIS), Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) will provide apprenticeship placements through the new programme – which will offer students a starting salary of about £22k in London and in excess of £20k nationally.

The apprenticeship standard on which the programme is based was developed by a group of economist employers that included HM Treasury, the Bank of England as well as a range of consultancies and third sector organisations. The programme will be delivered in partnership with the University of Kent and will be open to candidates with GCSE maths at grade B (6) or above and 96 UCAS points – equivalent to CCC at A-level, MMM for a BTEC Diploma, DD for a BTEC Certificate.

Joint head of the Government Economics Service and Chief Economic Adviser at HM Treasury, Clare Lombardelli said:

“We are delighted to launch this new programme, which we hope will create new opportunities for talented young people from all parts of the communities we serve to consider economist careers in Government.”

Sam Beckett, joint head of the GES and Director General in BEIS said:

“This is an exciting new initiative for the economics profession. I am looking forward to working with the new apprentices who will join us next year – and hope to see other employers launching similar programmes in the months to come.”

Professor Karen Cox, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Kent said:

“We are proud to have been selected to deliver the programme working with colleagues across the Government Economics Service. At Kent we have a long history of delivering undergraduate degree courses in economics to a very high standard.

We are looking forward to working with GES to deliver an apprenticeship

programme which provides participants with on and off the job training and support that will prepare them for long and successful economist careers.”

For further information about the Government Economics Service Degree Apprenticeship Programme, email us at economic.apprenticeship@hmtreasury.gov.uk or visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-economics-service-degree-apprenticeship-programme>

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[Speech: National Housing Federation Summit](#)

Thanks to Baroness Warwick for that kind introduction.

It’s a great pleasure to be here – albeit on a site that I understand once housed one of Britain’s so-called ugliest buildings.

Some of you may remember – and even mourn – the County Hall Island Block apartments that stood empty here for 20 years before a 6-year old boy got his wish to set the bulldozers in motion.

Now we may all have our different views on architecture and design.

But I think we can agree that you know you’ve succeeded when you’re not constructing buildings that 6-year-olds want to demolish!

It’s also genuinely a great privilege to be speaking before we hear from David [Orr] for the final time in his role as the National Housing Federation’s (NHF) Chief Executive.

Though, I understand, it’s not just his speeches which are much much-anticipated.

I hear his performances at NHF karaoke nights, too, are also quite a draw.

And while I can’t promise to match David’s musical talents, I’ll do my best as the warm-up act!

Before I go on, I want to firstly applaud the tremendous leadership and public service David has shown through a long and distinguished career.

I also want to welcome your successor, Kate Henderson, and say how much I'm looking forward to working with Kate.

I know you'll be putting your own stamp on the role, but what a great legacy to build on.

David, you have transformed the housing association sector and inspired and challenged us all to raise our game for people living in social housing and, indeed, all parts of our community, including the most vulnerable.

I think that's the thing I have been most struck by, David's passion, leadership, and humanity too – it comes from the heart and we have all been strengthened by it.

And I'm especially grateful for your contribution to the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel which helped develop the [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) we published recently – an issue that I know matters greatly to us both.

This Strategy – and, indeed, all our work on housing – is driven by the belief that everyone must have the security, dignity and opportunities they need to build a better life.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, this mission is absolutely central to this government's priorities – and very much in keeping with your founding ideals as a sector.

And, working with you, we're delivering on it.

Housing associations played a big role in helping us deliver 217,000 homes in 2016 to 2017 – the highest level in all but one of the last 30 years. And I'm hugely grateful for all of your efforts.

But we know you can and want to do more.

Which is why we've listened to what you've told us – about wanting more certainty and stability to be able to protect and boost supply – and have responded.

We've put billions into affordable housing, including homes for social rent, and given housing associations a leading role in delivering this through long term funding deals.

We've given you more certainty over your rental income.

We've retained the funding for supported accommodation within Housing Benefit.

We've enabled councils to borrow more to build more.

We're supporting Homes England to take a more strategic, assertive approach –

putting more certainty into the system – and reforming planning to get Britain building.

We're also taking action on other issues that you've raised such as doing more to capture increases in land value for the public good through:

But I know there is more to do.

And as the Prime Minister said yesterday, we'll be responding shortly to a consultation on developer contributions that includes proposals to help councils capture land values more effectively.

So the sector has never been better placed to really step up and help deliver the homes our country needs.

But this isn't just about getting the numbers up.

It's also about changing the false attitudes towards social housing.

Challenging the mistakes and flawed perceptions about people living in social housing.

About improving the experience of tenants – and rebalancing their relationship with landlords through stronger regulation.

And following the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower, ensuring, above all, that homes are decent, safe and well-maintained.

Which is what the [social housing green paper](#) published last month aims to do.

My thanks to David and housing associations for their enthusiasm and support for the extensive engagement that we carried out with residents that helped inform this work.

Yes, the Paper reminded us of the challenges that people living in social housing face.

Stigma.

The need for landlords to be more transparent and accountable.

Concerns about how complaints are handled.

[Political content removed]

To quote one resident we spoke to: "I feel privileged and lucky to be a housing association tenant. Having an affordable secure and quality home means everything and has helped me into employment. And the security has also helped my children be happy and successful."

As the Prime Minister said, we need to do more to reinforce that pride in social housing.

That sense that it can be both a safety net and a springboard to a better

life

Something we treasure in the way we do our NHS.

That's why we're investing in the sector and giving you the longer-term certainty that will help you build more, faster – both now and into the future.

In July, I announced 8 longer-term strategic partnerships between housing associations and Homes England worth around £590 million which will yield about 14,000 new affordable homes, including for social rent.

And which will see us championing modern methods of construction and more small and medium sized builders playing their part in a more diverse market.

And I want to thank both the NHF and Homes England – under David and Nick Walkley's leadership respectively – for their valuable work on making this happen.

The Prime Minister's announcement, yesterday, of the £2 billion initiative – enabling the most ambitious housing associations to apply for funding over the next decade – takes this to the next level.

This bold, new scheme is the first time any government has offered you this kind of long-term funding certainty and stability.

As such, it promises to be a game-changer – not just because it will help you get tens of thousands of new affordable and social homes built and provide a strong impetus for you to go further.

But because the certainty and stability that underpins it signals a new approach to the way we invest in and deliver housing in this country.

An approach that is a real vote of confidence in housing associations and places you firmly in the driving seat – to be industry leaders in building more and better, in driving innovation and setting higher standards for the way social housing is managed and the people who live in it are supported.

With your – as Diana put it yesterday – special combination of a “core social purpose” and “good business sense” you are uniquely well placed to pick up this baton.

So I urge you to make the most of this opportunity to help us deliver a new generation of social housing and help secure the high quality homes that people who can't afford to buy or rent privately deserve.

These have to be homes that meet their needs.

And having listened to residents, we've decided, for example, not to implement the provisions in the Housing and Planning Act to make fixed term tenancies mandatory for local authorities at this time.

We understand that lifetime tenancies are, for some people, for some

communities, essential for providing the security and stability they need to make a place truly feel like home.

That's why it's right that all social landlords should have the freedom to offer them.

Now, it's also right and fair that social housing can be a springboard to home ownership.

And I want to commend the vital work by David and the NHF with this government on the Voluntary Right to Buy agreement.

This has already helped hundreds of housing association tenants to buy their homes and thousands more are set to benefit from the latest, large-scale Midlands pilot that launched last month.

We will be monitoring this closely; in particular in relation to replacing homes that are sold.

This groundbreaking partnership between government and the sector is an important step towards extending the dream of home ownership.

With that in mind, we have to challenge what I believe to be false choices.

In particular that you can either boost the supply of rented properties or support home ownership – that you can't do both.

This doesn't have to be the case.

Whilst championing better standards for renters, we should not apologise for backing the aspiration around home ownership.

Two thirds of social housing residents would like to be home owners.

These people – who run our businesses, keep our public services going, contribute to society in countless ways – are just as hard-working, ambitious and keen to improve their communities as anyone else.

We should recognise that ambition and provide that opportunity to which they aspire.

The [social housing green paper](#) sets out how we can do this, whilst also ensuring that councils can replace homes sold.

There's nothing contradictory about this – about building more affordable homes and helping people meet the aim of home ownership.

I believe to say otherwise, is a false choice.

We have to do both.

And nor is there anything contradictory about promoting ownership and tackling stigma – another all too common false choice.

To do otherwise would be to ignore the ambition of the vast majority of social housing tenants.

All I want is to help each person living in social housing to make the right choice for themselves – not have it made for them.

And the same goes for another false choice that pits building more homes against building better homes.

We're determined to deliver 300,000 homes on average a year by the middle of the next decade, but not at any price.

These are not just a roof over our heads. They are the foundations on which our lives and communities are built.

As the philosopher Sir Roger Scruton put it: "We are needy creatures and our greatest need is for home...All our attempts to make our surroundings look right – through decorating, arranging, creating – are attempts to extend a welcome to ourselves and to those whom we love."

So good design and style matter – arguably more, not less, for people living in social housing and combatting the stigma that surrounds it.

It's not our job in government to dictate what this looks like, but we all know how it feels.

Good design produces places that people have helped shape and are proud to call home.

It protects and strengthens the beauty of our natural environment.

It adds to the value of existing settlements for years to come, making it more likely that new development will be welcomed rather than resisted.

Therefore, building better will, in fact, help us build more – something that our social housing green paper recognises and how that must apply to social and affordable homes as it does to any other types of housing.

So it's time we rejected these false choices.

Accept we can and should extend home ownership as well as deliver more quality affordable rented homes.

Accept that there is nothing incompatible or contradictory about these goals which, after all, have the same end: more people having decent, secure, comforting places they call home.

Accept that they are goals which are within our grasp.

The truth is that the best communities; the most interesting and successful communities, where most people want to live, tend to be mixed and diverse.

Places where people from all backgrounds, living in all types of housing, can come together, bound by a strong sense of belonging and identity.

Yes, we are facing a huge challenge.

But I know that there's no sector better placed than you to meet it.

As the Prime Minister said, you have blazed a trail for many high quality and, yes, beautiful homes that have stood the test of time and served the public good.

That make a mockery of arguments that high density and affordability have to equal low quality and a lack of character.

This is the difference that I know we all want to see as we look forward.

As David said in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire, we have an "obligation...to make this a moment of change".

It's clear that, to do this, to make this difference, to meet that obligation, we need all parts of the sector to pull together.

We've responded to your calls for more support.

And I'm looking forward to seeing housing associations; with your unique and impressive track record, seizing this unprecedented opportunity and leading the charge.

To deliver the homes we need and the brighter future our people deserve.

Press release: UK aid to protect critically endangered wildlife and create thousands of sustainable jobs

- UK aid to protect endangered Sumatran tiger, with only around 30 left in one critical habitat
- Partnership work in Indonesia will help create 16,000 sustainable jobs
- UK aid has a unique role to play in tackling the underlying causes of the illegal wildlife trade, while protecting the livelihoods of local communities.

UK aid will protect critically endangered wildlife in Indonesia and Liberia by creating sustainable jobs for people who work near these animal's habitats, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt announced today ahead of next month's Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference.

On a visit to the ZSL, London Zoo – which is leading the global Sumatran

Tiger breeding programme – Ms Mordaunt committed to tackle the underlying causes of the Illegal Wildlife Trade and to protect species including the critically endangered Sumatran Tiger, Asian Elephant, Orangutan and West African Chimpanzee.

UK aid, through the Partnerships For Forests programme, is helping to create sustainable jobs and livelihoods for local communities in Africa and Southeast Asia. This provides communities with an alternative to clearing forest or hunting wildlife to make a living, and ensures that vital forest habitat for wildlife is protected. This is essential for the long-term survival of key wildlife species like the chimpanzee and the tiger.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

“The Illegal Wildlife Trade and the destruction of forests and natural habitats are having a catastrophic impact on both iconic wildlife and the world’s poorest people.

“Nobody wants to see extraordinary species become extinct, or the communities living near their habitats struggle for jobs and livelihoods, which is why UK aid has a unique role to play in tackling the underlying causes driving these problems, namely poverty and rapid, unmanaged deforestation.

“It’s only by working together with local communities that we will preserve endangered wildlife like the Sumatran Tiger, and protect them for future generations.”

Chief Executive at WWF Tanya Steele said:

“We don’t have to choose between helping people and saving our wildlife.

“Projects like this show UK aid can be used to help the world’s poorest people and save some of our most threatened species, like the Sumatran tiger and Sumatran elephant.

“Next month, world leaders are meeting in London to find ways to stop the illegal wildlife trade. That will only succeed if local communities are part of the solution not the problem.”

Dominic Jermy, Director General of ZSL, London Zoo said:

“As an international conservation charity, ZSL welcomes DFID’s increased focus on protecting critically endangered wildlife, tackling the illegal wildlife trade and supporting marginalised communities.

“ZSL’s own work in Indonesia with flagship species such as the tiger and its habitat enable us to address critical threats such as forest loss, mitigating forest fires and IWT.

“ZSL works closely with local communities; we help to empower them in managing their natural resources; and we ensure they have a voice in decision making to support their economic resilience.”

The Department for International Development (DFID), is part of a ground-breaking public-private partnership to protect chimpanzee habitats in Liberia and tiger habitats in Indonesia, through investments to develop sustainable rubber and cocoa. The project will help to create an estimated 16,000 fair wage jobs and in turn improve the livelihoods of 50,000 people. These jobs bring benefits to entire households and their dependants arising through the investment in the area.

The range of support demonstrates, ahead of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in October, DFID's unique place in addressing the underlying causes of Illegal Wildlife Trade and the UK's role as a world leader in supporting global biodiversity.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Indonesia's Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape is home to some of the world's most endangered species, the Sumatran Tiger (only 30-40 remain in the landscape), the Orangutan and the Asian Elephant. DFID's support will:

- Help 28 public and private organisations work together to protect the landscape, including local government, national conservation authorities, private companies, NGOs and indigenous community leaders to secure critical remaining wildlife areas, preventing the loss of remaining habitat and curbing the risk of poaching.
- Help to develop 'green' (environmentally sustainable) rubber, other products like wild forest honey, and establish a wildlife corridor within the conservation landscape.

In Liberia's Gola Forest:

- To counter the mounting threat of deforestation and boost forest and biodiversity conservation, DFID's Partnerships for Forests is supporting the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and local conservation partners in Liberia to develop a market for forest-friendly Gola cocoa.
- RSPB and partners are already supporting smallholders around protected forest in Sierra Leone to market forest-friendly cocoa, the first shipment of which was sold to international markets in 2017. This will protect wildlife habitats for threatened bird species and critically endangered West African chimpanzee and the endangered pygmy hippopotamus.

In addition to these projects, DFID's total support to this programme is helping to prevent the destruction of over one million hectares of forests and wildlife habitats in Africa and Southeast Asia by 2020.

- Low-level poachers are usually young, poor villagers who poach to earn money. A poacher might receive £35 for a live chimpanzee which would sell for £14,000. When wildlife is slaughtered for quick cash and trees are illegally logged, ecosystems break down – and the poorest people are hit hardest.
- DFID's wider work, which in many cases will have knock on benefits in addressing the underlying conditions driving the illegal wildlife trade or

destruction of wildlife habitats, could constitute as much as £583mn of support from 2011 to 2022. This is an approximate combination of DFID's support for job creation, tackling deforestation, tackling illicit financial flows and other areas in IWT priority countries. This announcement relates to three projects DFID is funding through Partnerships for Forests. Two projects in Indonesia and one in the Gola Forest. In total these projects represent a £2.1mn allocation. DFID's total support to the Partnerships for Forest programme is £56.5mn.

1. A public-private partnership to develop a green rubber plantation and establish a wildlife corridor. The plantation is being developed by PT Royal Lestari Utama, a joint venture backed by tire manufacturer Michelin, working closely with WWF Indonesia. This will contribute to the protection of the 400,000 hectare landscape. The initiative has secured green commercial finance of US\$95 million.
2. A coalition of 28 public and private organisations work together to protect the landscape, including local government, national conservation authorities, private companies, NGOs and indigenous community leaders. This will help to meet the most immediate conservation needs in the landscape, including community engagement and the development of long-term economic security for habitat and wildlife protection activities – supporting communities to be the first line of defence for the environment they live in. .
3. Creating incentives for the protection of the Gola rainforest through the production of 'rainforest-friendly' cocoa as an alternative to other, unsustainable agriculture and logging practices, working with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and local businesses.

The UK (DFID, FCO, Defra) is hosting an international conference on IWT to inspire global commitment to eliminate the illegal wildlife trade. The conference will bring together global leaders, governments, the private sector, NGOs, academics and others. Bringing the global community back to London this year re-affirms our combined commitment to tackling the trade at the highest levels.

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