

News story: Amanda Spielman statement on Public Accounts Committee report

I welcome the Public Accounts Committee's recognition of the vital role that Ofsted plays in our education system.

As with all of the public sector, we have had to do more with less. However, I remain confident that our inspections provide parents, schools and the government with the assurance they need about school standards and that we do so in a way that compares very favourably in terms of quality and value for money with school inspection regimes internationally.

However, as I said at the hearing, we have reached the limit in terms of being able to provide that level of assurance within our current funding envelope. That is why, with our ongoing framework review, we are looking at how to ensure that schools and parents get everything they need from our reports, and why many of the committee's recommendations are already long in train.

I understand that the committee is disappointed that I would not be drawn into giving my views on some wider issues in the sector. My role is to provide Parliament and the Secretary of State with an evidence-based appraisal of educational standards. It would be irresponsible of me to make comment on those areas where we do not have clear evidence of the impact on standards or young people's wellbeing.

Where we do have that evidence, be it about the dangers of illegal unregistered schools, the risks of radicalisation, the narrowing of the curriculum or the importance of early literacy, I have not hesitated to speak out and will continue to do so.

Press release: Government improves life chances across the country

People and communities across the country are set to benefit from up to £48 million from the Life Chances Fund, the Minister for Sport and Civil Society announced today.

The money will be distributed to 22 projects including those that boost young people's employability through work experience, help older people live enriched lives through tailored health plans, and support former drug and alcohol dependent people as they reintegrate into their communities.

Each project will be funded through a Social Impact Bond, meaning external investors will provide up-front funding for projects and get reimbursed by government when projects meet previously agreed targets.

The £48 million is in addition to money from local authorities and other funders who are planning to provide a combined £148.9 million to the successful projects.

Minister for Sport and Civil Society, Tracey Crouch, said:

We are committed to building a fairer society that works for everyone and social impact bonds are already having a transformational impact on people's lives.

This next round of funding will help make a difference to many more lives and I am looking forward to working alongside local councils to deliver projects and new services that help people reach their full potential.

Examples of the projects that will receive funding are:

Age Concern South Gloucestershire will receive £1,181,570 for its Personalised Integrated Care programme which brings together voluntary, health and social care services to provide personalised support to older people with multiple long term conditions.

Kirklees Council will receive £6,600,000 to support people with vulnerabilities into independent living by addressing and combating issues that affect their health and wellbeing, such as domestic violence or substance misuse.

Staffordshire County Council will receive £3,497,520 for its children's services, providing therapeutic services and support to looked after children across the West Midlands

The money is the third and final round of funding from the £80 million Life Chances Fund, which opened in July 2016, with the aim of tackling entrenched social issues to help people lead happy and productive lives.

The Big Lottery Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK, is delivering the Life Chances fund on behalf of the DCMS.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- A Social Impact Bond is an innovative funding model, where a socially-minded investor provides up-front funding to an organisation such as a charity or social enterprise to deliver a service. Once this service achieves results, government will make payments and the social investor will be reimbursed.
- The Life Chances Fund supports local councils and other commissioners to develop social impact bonds and is structured around six key themes:

drug and alcohol dependency, children's services, early years, young people, older people's services, and healthy lives.

- Full [list](#) (PDF, 87.3KB, 3 pages) of successful applicants
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Speech: Preventing Chemical Weapons Use in Syria

Thank you very much indeed Madam President and thank you to that High Representative for her briefing and for all the work that she is doing on this with her team, and also through her, can I thank the staff of OPCW in the Hague.

Like other speakers Madam President, we remain deeply concerned about the escalating military action by the Syrian authorities and Russia in northwest Syria. This puts millions of civilians at risk and the Security Council will discuss that tomorrow. But in that context, why we're here today: we are seriously concerned by the potential for further illegal use of chemical weapons in any Syrian regime offensive in Idlib. As other speakers have done, we reiterate that the use of chemical weapons is a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention and it constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

I was very interested in what the High Representative had to say about their review of the Syrian CW disclosure. I think she's right to say that some important steps have been made in pursuant of Security Council Resolutions implementation but also right to say that there are some very important outstanding issues. As of March 2018, the OPCW fact finding mission had confirmed 13 cases of likely chemical weapons use in Syria since it was established in 2014. And in terms of allegations, the fact finding mission have recorded at least 390 allegations. After more than four years of work by the declaration assessment team, the OPCW still is unable to verify that the Syrian declaration is accurate. And we've heard many times that there are "gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies" in Syria's account of its declaration under the CWC.

These are substantive points. I think the Council doesn't really understand why it's so difficult to resolve this issue. If a Member state of the United Nations were acting in good faith under the Chemical Weapons Convention, these issues would be capable of being resolved. But we still, Madam President, find ourselves confronting them in this chamber, session after session. And I would like to state that the last report noted that the list of issues has even increased rather than decreased, and I would like to know why. And I hope that the Syrian representative will be able to give us an explanation of that today.

Turning to the risk of the use of chemical weapons over Idlib and taking

account of what the Russian representative said: Agatha Christie is a fiction writer. What's fact, Madam President, is that the Syrian Authorities have been found to have used chemical weapons against their own people. So what we hear from the Russian Ambassador is an inversion of the facts; an inversion of the concern for protection of civilians that this Council has mandated; an inversion of what the rules based international order, of multilateralism is all about; and fundamentally, an inversion of what governments are supposed to do, which is their first duty – is to protect their people and to keep their people safe.

And I just find it unconscionable, Madam President, that after all these years, in the hundredth anniversary year of the end of the First World War, that any government can even think of using chemical weapons against its own people or indeed against anyone else – whether they're a small city in Britain or they are a country like Syria.

And I reject everything the Russian Ambassador said about P3 aggression. What France, the United Kingdom and the United States are aiming to do is to uphold the rules-based international order. People who worry about action by our three governments should take every possible step to ensure that chemical weapons are not used and then there will be no problem at all. But we have demonstrated, Madam President, that we will respond swiftly and appropriately to any further use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and which has already had such devastating humanitarian consequences for the Syrian population.

Once again, I join others in urging Russia to use its influence to ensure that chemical weapons are not used against civilians in Syria. Either Russia calls for restraint or Russia will be deemed complicit in their use when these weapons are used.

And I just want to conclude if I may by saying I couldn't agree more with the representative from Equatorial Guinea about the primacy of the political process and I hope that those efforts can be redoubled over the coming weeks.

Thank you Madam President.

Speech: Ensuring mission transition in Haiti is a success

Thank you Mr President and thank you to Assistant-Secretary-General Bintou Keita both for your briefing but also for the for the handout on benchmarks. It is particularly useful. In this Council, we talk a lot about benchmarks when it comes to Peacekeeping missions but we don't always analyse performance against those benchmarks as clearly as you've done here so thank you very much for that.

Like other speakers today, we continue to appreciate the support that MINUJUSTH has offered to the government of Haiti in its efforts to strengthen the rule of law and further develop the Haitian national police. We also welcome the progress that the mission has made as it works towards its two year exit strategy. And in particular we welcome the joint transition planning with the government, the UN country team and external partners.

Mr. President, I endorse all the points that have already been made today by France and by the Netherlands when it comes to strengthening the police, improving justice, increasing respect for human rights. I'd also echo the points made by Bolivia just now about the importance of tackling sexual violence in Haiti and including sexual exploitation and abuse.

Let me just make three additional points.

First, it's very clear that the political and security situation in Haiti remains extremely fragile as evidenced by the events recently in July and the UN report points to an increase in gang-related violence and raises human rights concerns linked to the police. So we would encourage the Secretary-General, the SRSR and MINUJUSTH to monitor closely such risks to security and stability over the coming 12 months in close cooperation with the Haitian government to avoid backsliding into conflict. In particular the report makes mention of a governance or stability pact and we would strongly encourage the Haitian government to advance this sector based dialogue that report has spoken about to support the identification of clarity steps to agree the pact as an urgent priority.

Second, regarding the benchmarks and the military transition, as I've said we welcome the detailed assessment of progress in the report but we do share the concerns that progress against the benchmarks has been uneven. I was particularly struck by the detail on the benchmark about the number of police officers per thousand citizens. When these Security Council visited last June, I remember there was a particular focus on increasing the number of police officers and at that point there was some optimism that the number would go on increasing. So given the centrality of that particular indicator, it is very concerning that over a year on since the Council's visit the performance on that indicator has actually got worse.

We now have just over 12 months before MINUJUSTH is expected to leave Haiti so that leaves little time to make sure this transition is a success. And as we have said before, Haitian ownership and delivery of these critical reforms is essential if transition is to be successful. So we believe it's vital that all parties and in particular, the Haitian authorities intensify their efforts to ensure that these benchmarks are met.

Third and finally, we urge the Secretary-General to be realistic and clear about the division of responsibilities across the UN system and to support the UN to fill the gaps identified in capacity and capabilities of the UN country team which will be key to a successful transition. On issues such as the development of draft legislation which will clearly require a longer term support beyond MINUJUSTH 's mandate, we wonder if it may be worth considering whether it makes sense already to transition this work to the UN country

team.

We note that the forthcoming UN strategic assessment mission due in February will be critical to facilitating timely planning and implementation of the transition and we look forward to the report of that assessment mission. Thank you.

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