

# Speech: “If we embrace action. If we quell the conflicts. If we realise the peaceful societies envisaged in SDG 16...we could save 1.2 million lives”

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you to our briefer, High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu.

Last year, 560,000 people died at the hands of small arms and light weapons.

That’s more than one death every minute, of every day, for an entire year. That is the tragic reality that the Secretary-General’s report brings to life.

Illicit small arms are tools of daily destruction. There’s never a shortage. They’re easy to acquire. And they have an unparalleled impact on lives and communities.

Saferworld estimate that the majority of direct conflict deaths in the developing world are the result of the use of small arms.

Mr. President, the hundreds of thousands of deaths are just the tip of the iceberg. Illicit small arms add fuel to the fire of armed conflicts around the world. They facilitate the most heinous human rights violations and abuses. They are the preferred instruments of war for those who carry out mass killings and rape. They equip terrorists and violent extremists. And where you find transnational criminals dealing in human lives, illicit drugs or illegal wildlife products, there is little doubt you will also find small arms.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in South Sudan. It is no longer just soldiers who carry weapons. Small arms have become the norm. When they become violent, local level disputes are not resolved with homemade traditional weapons, but with guns. Even children herding cattle must carry arms to protect themselves and their livelihood. In this culture of weapons, local disputes now escalate faster and increasingly result in large-scale casualties. For a country torn apart by a national level conflict, this is a price that South Sudanese communities cannot afford to pay. Armed fighting widens rifts between groups and entrenches issues, and community conflict resolution is also far less effective when councils are faced with heavily armed groups.

And the problem doesn’t stop at the border of conflict zones. Transfers of weapons and trained fighters spread the threat to neighbouring countries. We have seen this in Somalia, and elsewhere. If we are to make any progress in tackling this challenge, we need to work collectively to strengthen arms

controls, destroy excessive stockpiles and tackle the drivers of instability and conflict, which fuel the demand for illicit weapons.

It is for these reasons that we were proud to adopt Resolution 2220 in 2015 and continue the Council's focus on this important issue.

Mr. President, outside of the Council, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is one of our most powerful tools in the ongoing fight to stop irresponsible arms transfers. The Treaty's vision of a globally well-regulated, legal trade in arms is one that the United Kingdom fully supports. Universalisation, especially getting the right states around the table, must remain a priority. Greater participation will increase the Treaty's influence, strength and reputation. We encourage all States which have not yet done so to make ratification or accession a national priority.

And universalisation must go hand in hand with implementation. That means doing all we can to stop diversion, tackle corruption, dismantle trafficking networks and strengthen information sharing.

Mr. President, since the UN Programme of Action was adopted in 2001, we have seen more and more States take action to improve stockpile management. This is a recognition of the impact on their communities, of weapons diverted from national stockpiles to criminal activity or the devastating consequences of explosions of ammunition depots.

As we look ahead to the Third Review Conference on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument next year, it is important that we continue to encourage states to prioritise resources for stockpile security and surplus destruction.

The UK is proud to have provided technical and financial support both bilaterally and through regional and multilateral organisations such as the African Union, the OSCE and the Commonwealth. Through this, we are helping countries to strengthen arms control frameworks, implement better stockpile management procedures and tackle the drivers of terrorism, crime, poverty and exclusion, which fuel the demand for illicit weapons.

Mr. President, I'd like to conclude with a forward look to 2030. A report recently published by Small Arms Survey shows us what the world could look like if we all implement violence reduction initiatives.

If we embrace action. If we quell the conflicts. If we realise the peaceful societies envisaged in SDG 16. If we do all of this, we could save 1.2 million lives. That Mr. President is an outcome which would be fitting of the body charged with upholding international peace and security.

Thank you.

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# Speech: “I once again reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible”

Thank you Mr President,

The United Kingdom voted in favour of the draft resolution before us today because it is in line with previous UN Security Council resolutions – including 242, 476, 478 and 2334 – and with our established position on the status of Jerusalem.

That position is clear and long-standing: the status of Jerusalem should be determined through a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. In line with those same resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

As we have previously said, we disagree with the US decision unilaterally to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel before a final status agreement and to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. As recent events in the region have shown, these decisions are unhelpful to the prospects for peace in the region, an aim that all of us in this Council remain committed to. The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

Importantly, the resolution that has just been voted on stressed that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be resolved through negotiations; affirmed that decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect; demanded that all states comply with Security Council resolutions regarding Jerusalem; and called for the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East without delay.

Our position since the Security Council met on the 8 December has not changed. We recognise that Jerusalem holds huge significance and holiness for Jews, Muslims and Christians. We reiterate the fundamental necessity of maintaining the status quo at the Holy Sites, in particular the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif. We continue to value Jordan’s important role as custodian of the Holy Sites, and remain fully supportive of their efforts to maintain calm.

Mr President, we must now all look forward. We share President Trump’s desire to bring an end to this conflict and welcome his commitment to a two-state solution negotiated between the parties. This includes his clear acknowledgement that the final status of Jerusalem, including the sovereign

boundaries within the city, must be subject to negotiations between the parties.

Our commitment to, and position on, an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement has also not changed. It should be based on the lines as they stood on June 4, 1967 with equal land swaps to reflect the national, security, and religious interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Jerusalem should be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, and its status must be determined through a final status agreement. A just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees is needed that is demographically compatible with the principle of two states for two peoples. This position is consistent with the resolution before us. We now strongly encourage the US Administration to bring forward detailed proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

We call on all parties to act with restraint, reject violence, and work together to ensure calm and stability. This will give the peace process the best chance of success. We remain fully supportive of progress towards a lasting peace and will do everything we can to achieve it.

Mr President, any peace effort needs to take account of the people, not just the land and the Holy Sites. For too long Israelis have lived in fear of rockets and terror; this wreaks havoc in people's daily lives and renders peace hard to achieve. As do attempts by some to deny the ancient and legitimate connection of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to Jerusalem.

For Palestinians living outside East Jerusalem including the Old City, many are effectively cut off from it. Those that can enter have to wait in long lines to pass through checkpoints. Within East Jerusalem there live more than 320,000 Palestinians. The vast majority are permanent residents, but their permits can be revoked at any point. If they apply for Israeli citizenship, and most do not, a high proportion of applications are rejected.

The lives of Jews and Palestinians – and both groups for whom Jerusalem is uniquely holy – must not be forgotten in any peace effort.

I once again reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible.

These should be supported by the international community and realise the vision of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 whose seventieth anniversary we marked last month: a safe and secure Israel, the homeland for the Jewish People, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, the homeland for the Palestinian people.

Thank you.

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## **Press release: PM call with President Erdogan of Turkey: 18 December 2017**

This evening the Prime Minister spoke with President Erdogan of Turkey. The leaders reflected on the significant strengthening of ties between our two countries since the Prime Minister's visit to Turkey earlier this year. They also acknowledged Turkish Prime Minister Yildirim's recent positive visit to the UK.

They noted the deepening of defence industry co-operation between the UK and Turkey, including through the joint TFX fighter venture.

The Prime Minister and the President discussed the US decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Prime Minister reiterated that the UK disagreed with the decision and believed it to be unhelpful in terms of prospects for peace in the region. She added that the status of Jerusalem should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and that Jerusalem should ultimately form a shared capital between the Israeli and Palestinian states.

The Prime Minister noted the importance of continuing to work with the United States to encourage them to bring forward proposals that will reenergise the peace process.

The Prime Minister and President Erdogan expressed their continuing commitment to a two-state solution.

They looked forward to meeting again in person at the earliest opportunity.

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## **Press release: Government commits to increase diversity of all public appointments by 2022**

The [Diversity Action Plan](#) includes a commitment that by 2022, half of all public appointees should be female and 14% should be from ethnic minorities, bringing representation on public boards in line with the wider population.

The 10-point Diversity Action Plan sets out how the government will deliver these commitments by continuing with existing measures which are working well, and introducing new activities to support further progress. The new activities outlined in the plan include establishing a mentoring programme and developing an Inclusive Boards Charter which will set standards for

inclusivity for chairs and their boards.

Considerable progress has already been made in increasing gender diversity among new public appointees. In 2016 to 17, the proportion of new public appointments going to women rose to 49% from 34% in 2013 to 14, and 96% of all shortlists in 2016 to 17 were made up of both male and female candidates.

The launch of the plan marks the first time that the government has published data on the status of diversity across all public appointments. Of the 5,500 public appointees currently in post, 43% are female and 10% are from ethnic minorities.

Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore said:

I am heartened by the increase in women being appointed to public boards but there's more we need to do across all aspects of diversity. Today we published a Diversity Action Plan which sets out how we will make public appointments even more open and accessible to all.

We need diverse ideas and perspectives at the helm of our public bodies, so it is vital that public appointees truly reflect the society they serve.

Peter Riddell CBE, Commissioner for Public Appointments said:

I welcome the ambitious targets set out in the Diversity Action Plan as an important sign of the government's commitment to delivering greater diversity.

The activities outlined in the plan are key to encouraging more diverse fields of applicants to apply for positions on public boards. Success will require a sustained will on the part of Ministers, departments and public bodies.

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## **Statement to Parliament: Grenfell Tower and building safety**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the on-going response to June's tragic fire at Grenfell Tower and our wider review of building safety.

It is now 6 months since the disaster.

Last week a number of events were held to mark this sad milestone, including the national memorial service at St Paul's.

I had the privilege of attending the extremely moving service, alongside the Prime Minister... ..the Minister for Grenfell Victims... .. and of course the Rt Hon Gentleman opposite, among others. The scale and the impact of this disaster is unprecedented in recent times, and I couldn't hope to cover all aspects of the response in one statement.

So today I want to concentrate on areas where I have new information to share.

However I am very happy to take questions on any aspect of the tragedy and the response to it.

I'll start with an issue that I know is particularly important to Members, Hon Members, and to me.

And that's finding new places to live for those who lost their homes.

Responsibility for rehousing lies with the local authority, the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

However, I have been closely involved with the process to ensure everyone is rehoused as quickly as possible...

... and my department has been providing the council with support to help bring that about.

The council has been tasked with finding places to live for 207 households from Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk.

To date, 144 households – almost 70% – have accepted an offer of temporary or permanent accommodation.

According to the latest figures from the council, 102 of these households have now moved in.

For those who remain in other accommodation, the council has offered the opportunity to move into private rented accommodation while a permanent home is found.

Some have taken up this offer, others have made clear that they do not want to move twice – something that I completely understand.

The council was undoubtedly slow off the mark in starting the rehousing process.

But, with its own change of leadership, the help of the Independent Recovery Taskforce, and pressure and support from DCLG, consistent progress is now being made.

But I am far from complacent.

I've always been very clear that we should move at the pace of the families involved...

... and that nobody should be rushed or pushed into making a decision about where to live.

But to have so many families...

...including some children...

...still living in hotels and other emergency accommodation 6 months after the tragedy is simply not good enough.

The situation is undoubtedly complicated.

But I have been very clear with the council that I expect them to do whatever is necessary to help people into suitable homes as swiftly as possible.

I'm confident that the council is capable of doing that.

But, along with the task force, I will continue to monitor the situation and work with the council to ensure that it happens.

The issue of rehousing has an added poignancy with Christmas just around the corner.

Whatever your faith, this a time for family and friends, and that makes it a difficult time for anyone who has suffered loss or trauma.

Nothing anyone can do will make this a normal Christmas for the bereaved and the survivors.

But we are doing all we can to offer extra support over the coming weeks.

A range of activities and events are being staged for local children, particularly those still living in hotels.

Social spaces have been booked in 4 of the hotels where families are staying, so there is room for people to spend time together.

And NHS outreach workers are visiting residents in the local area to offer specialist mental health support.

This builds on the excellent work the NHS has already done on mental wellbeing.

Specialists have screened almost a thousand adults for signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

426 are currently in treatment for PTSD, while a further 62 have completed their treatment.

110 children have also received or are receiving specialist help.



The dedicated NHS Grenfell helpline remains available, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Local organisations are also providing health and wellbeing support on the ground, including culturally sensitive support that reflects the diverse make-up of the borough.

And [last month's Budget](#) made available a further £28 million to pay for mental health and emotional support...

... a community space for those affected...

... and investment in the Lancaster West estate over the next 3 years.

Of course, it's not only government that has been providing funds.

In the aftermath of the tragedy the British people responded with incredible generosity, donating more than £26 million to various charities.

The majority of that money, more than three-quarters of it has already been paid out to survivors and to the next of kin of those who died.

Of the remaining £6 million, around £2 million is being held back for people who are entitled to payments but have not yet claimed it...

...and for those whose applications are still being processed.

Payments for those who haven't yet claimed will be looked after by the charities until the individuals are ready to engage.

The remaining £4 million will go towards providing long-term support and community projects.

As people are rehoused and take the time to grieve, the distributing charities will work with them...

... identifying their changing needs and ensuring money goes where it can best meet the needs of the community.

The House can rest assured that every penny that was donated will be spent on the people it was intended for.

The generosity of the British public demands no less.

Another issue where the views and wishes of the local community must be paramount is the future of Grenfell Tower itself.

The tower is currently being wrapped in white sheeting, a process that will be completed early next year.

This isn't being done, as some have claimed, to make people forget about what happened.

It is being done because many members of the community – people that have

been directly affected by the fire – have said that covering the tower will help them to begin the healing process.

I acknowledge the current anxieties about the long term future of the site from those who have been most affected.

And I can categorically state that no decision has been taken about the long-term future of the site on which the Tower sits.

Those decisions will not be led by myself, the government, this House, or the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

It is the bereaved, the survivors and the wider community that will lead and be at the heart of the decision-making process.

My colleague the Minister for Grenfell Victims is working directly with them to agree a set of written principles that will guide the way forward for the future of this site.

When decisions are taken we want them to have the broadest possible support from those that have been affected...

...particularly those who lost loved ones...

...not just following the views of those with the loudest voices.

The principles we're drawing up will help us to make sure that happens.

And the principles will include a firm commitment from the Council that if the bereaved, the survivors and the wider community do not want the site to be redeveloped for housing...

... then the site will not be redeveloped for housing.

As well as dealing with the aftermath of the tragedy, we're determined to do everything possible to prevent such a disaster happening again.

And a crucial element of that is the Public Inquiry, which recently held its first procedural hearings under the chairmanship of Sir Martin Moore-Bick.

I know that some members of the community are concerned about the inquiry's remit, its structure and its personnel.

Some have called for Sir Martin to be supported by an extended panel that reflects the diverse population of the Tower.

The decision on that rests with the Prime Minister.

She has given a commitment to consider the composition of the panel once Sir Martin has determined what further expertise is needed...

... and she is now giving active consideration to the issue.

Meanwhile, Sir Martin has said he is actively considering plans for a

consultative panel of local people who could talk to and receive information from the inquiry.

Such a panel has been established successfully by the Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse as a way of closely involving victims and survivors in the work of that Inquiry.

Sir Martin has said that any decision on the establishment of such a panel for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry will be taken in consultation with tower residents and the bereaved families.

Whatever happens next, I can assure the House that legal representatives of core participants will have access to all relevant documents.

They will be able to offer opening and closing statements at certain hearings.

And they will be able to suggest lines of questioning for witnesses.

The needs of the community have been at the heart of the inquiry since it was first announced, and that will not be changing.

And Mr Speaker, learning lessons for the future will be a crucial part of Sir Martin Moore-Bick's inquiry.

But it's not the only piece of work looking at how building safety can be improved.

Earlier this year, the Home Secretary and I asked Dame Judith Hackitt to carry out an Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety.

The current system is complex and confusing, a situation that has developed over many years and under successive governments.

Today Dame Judith has published her [interim findings](#), which show there is a need for significant reform.

And I can confirm that the government has accepted all of Dame Judith's recommendations.

We agree with her call for a change in culture and a more effective system that will encourage people to do the right thing and hold to account those who try to cut corners.

Everyone who is part of the system – including government – has an important role to play in delivering this change in culture and mind set.

We fully support this direction of travel that has been signalled in Dame Judith's report.

Achieving culture change will, inevitably, take time.

But while Dame Judith explores these issues further, she has also identified a number of areas where we can also make a start today.

These include work on restructuring guidance and tightening restrictions on the use of desktop studies.

On desktop studies, we will revise the Approved Documents on Fire Safety and commission work to produce a new British Standard on when and how such assessments can be used.

On guidance, we will work quickly with industry experts to complete work on clarifying the Approved Documents on Fire Safety.

More widely, we will consider how the entire suite of guidance on compliance with Building Regulations can be restructured and reordered to make it more user-friendly.

We will work with experts across the sector to explore how this can be done.

Dame Judith recommends that consultation with fire and rescue services be carried out early in the design process and then acted on...

...and that fire safety information on a building should be handed over at the right moment.

We will write to building control bodies to highlight these recommendations.

The government will play its part in making the system work better and fixing the problems.

And I urge the construction industry, the building control bodies, the fire and rescue services, landlords and others to play their parts too.

In January Dame Judith will host a summit on building regulation and fire safety.

It will form the springboard for the next phase of her review, and I encourage leaders from across the sector to take part and help design a better system.

While Dame Judith continues her vital work, we are continuing to support wider work to make buildings safer.

In the past 6 months we have overseen a comprehensive set of fire safety tests on cladding components and systems.

Fire and Rescue Services have visited and checked fire safety in every residential tower that has been identified as having cladding likely to constitute a fire hazard...

... or which they consider a priority for other reasons.

Across the country, we've seen swift action taken to improve fire safety systems and to put in place interim measures where risks are identified.

We have provided detailed advice to local authorities, the housing associations and to private landlords on how to ensure their buildings are

safe.

DCLG's Expert Panel has issued advice to building owners about carrying out the necessary work to address the fire risks of certain cladding systems.

There is undoubtedly room for improvement in the way the Building Regulations system works and is managed in the future.

However, Dame Judith makes clear that her report should not be interpreted as meaning that buildings constructed under the existing system are unsafe.

The system needs to be made stronger for the future, but the action taken since June is helping building owners make safer homes today.

Mr Speaker, 6 months ago 71 people lost their lives and hundreds more lost their friends, their loved ones, homes and their possessions.

Six months on, progress is being made.

The situation is moving in the right direction.

But there is still a long, long way to go.

And as long as that's the case, I will not stop working with and fighting for people who have suffered more than any of us could bear.

They must not be forgotten. They will not be forgotten.