

Speech: British High Commissioner's speech at the launch of the African Science Academy

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be with you today to mark the official launch of the African Science Academy in Ghana.

Every single person here has, in some way, contributed to the success of this moment. I think you will agree with me when I say that the young women of the African Science Academy (ASA) are simply brilliant. They are intelligent, articulate, and passionate about the development of their continent. I cannot wait to see what they go on to achieve; and how they inspire other young women to achieve similar things through their example.

I first heard about plans to create the African Science Academy when I met Dr. Tom Ilube in 2015. Tom was visiting as part of a delegation with the Lord Mayor of London. I was struck by his vision and determination to launch Africa's first STEM school for girls. I was equally impressed to learn how quickly his ambitious idea became a reality. Last year, Tom was named the most influential black British person, largely due to his work in education and philanthropy. This exceptional school exists because of his imagination and impressive resolve.

You can feel that something special is happening here. To the pioneering 24 girls of ASA, you must be so very proud of yourselves. All of you took a leap of faith when you decided to join a brand-new school, particularly those who moved countries to do so, perhaps leaving home for the first time. From your academic excellence to your outstanding confidence, you are all role-models. Role models for your siblings, your peers, and for the millions of young girls across the continent who fight for their right for a quality education. ASA students – you are also the future. You have shown yourself to be ambassadors for girls studying science. You are the future engineers, computer scientists, professors and astronauts of this exciting continent. And you are part of the future in reducing machoism, misogyny, discrimination and prejudice against women – that is, by men against women.

To develop, African leaders need to prioritise and invest in a strong educational infrastructure. Africa has the youngest population in the world, with over 200 million people aged between 15 to 24. We need our young people to be equipped with skills relevant to the technological era. It is the youth who will develop the solutions to the development issues of our countries. From climate change to agriculture; from software development to finding life-changing cures – a knowledge of technology and the sciences is crucial.

Next week, the United Nations will celebrate the International Day of Women and Girls in Science to promote female inclusion and participation in the sciences. Internationally, there is a strong gender imbalance in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Girls and women

continue to face unique and significant barriers in accessing STEM education, such as gendered discrimination and lack of encouragement. ASA aims to bridge this gap in Africa by providing gifted girls with access to new opportunities and an excellent pre-university education. ASA is leading the way in its efforts to prepare girls to compete and achieve in a male-dominated world. And that is the key – no country, no society can ever hope to develop fully or to realise all its potential if it systemically discriminates against half of its population.

Indeed, we know that women and girls typically make up just over half of most national populations, including here on the African continent. Improving the lives of girls and women is also a key priority for the UK government. In 2016, the UK Department for International Development launched a new initiative: Leave No Girl Behind, to deliver quality education to disadvantaged girls. We believe that access to a good education, in a safe environment, significantly improves the life chances of girls.

Through DFID, right here in Ghana, we have a Complementary Basic Education programme designed to help children who have dropped out of, or who never enrolled in, primary school to have a second chance at gaining those vital literacy and numeracy skills. So far, that programme has enabled over 150,000 children, half of them girls, to have a second chance at education; and well over 90% of those have both completed that programme and transferred back into mainstream education.

A second DFID Ghana programme is called Girls' Participatory Approaches to Student Access or G-PASS which addresses the household economic challenge, particularly in Ghana's poorest northern regions, of putting girls through secondary school, by providing an incentive and scholarship package for vulnerable girls in the 75 most deprived districts of Ghana, while helping Colleges of Education to improve the quality of teaching they receive. So far, over 87,000 girls have received such scholarship packages, with over 70,000 of them completing Junior High School and over 16,000 Senior High School, representing a significant cadre of educated girls and young women in this country's most disadvantaged areas.

We are proud of that work, and proud, too, to see private initiatives like ASA bear fruit. We are happy to be a supporter of ASA and the brilliant work that is happening here. Proud that Ghana is the country where this wonderful project is located. And proud that ASA students are completing the gold-standard Cambridge International A-Levels, representing the potential of British qualifications to stretch the minds of Africa's best and brightest.

ASA was built by an incredible team, and so much hard work has gone into making it a success. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage companies and individuals to support the development of ASA, whether financially or through in-kind support. We all want to see ASA grow from strength to strength. With your help, ASA can build a large 21st century campus and offer scholarships to hundreds of bright girls who might benefit from this opportunity. Such feats do not happen by magic. It requires the power of people and the collaboration of partners invested in girls' education and Africa at large.

I would also encourage ASA to share its experience with other schools and educational organisations. You are doing things differently and nurturing a new generation of empowered young women. Share your stories with others. Inspire other schools to encourage girls to pursue subjects like physics and computing. Amplify the voices of your students, who will be the change-makers of tomorrow. We want to hear their voice.

Thank you again for inviting me as guest of honour to this special occasion. Congratulations to the Founder, Dr Tom Ilube; Headteacher, Ms Efua Adabie; the staff and students at ASA; and all of ASA's committed supporters. In a few years, ASA will have a strong alumni network of hundreds of young women who will be leaders in their fields of expertise. Good luck to you all on this ambitious and worthy endeavour.

[News story: Surveillance Camera Commissioner contract extended](#)

From:

First published:

6 February 2017

Part of:

The Home Office has extended Tony Porter's contract for a further 3 years.

Mr Porter, who previously held roles in business and law enforcement, including as Temporary Assistant Chief Constable at Greater Manchester Police and Vice President Head of Physical Security Intelligence at Barclays Bank, took up the role as [Surveillance Camera Commissioner](#) in March 2014.

He was originally appointed for a 3 year term ending on 10 March 2017. The Home Secretary and Permanent Secretary have now extended Mr Porter's term from 3 to 6 years with his contract now expiring on 10 March 2020.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

The role of the Surveillance Camera Commissioner in providing oversight and compliance with the surveillance code of practice is a vital one in our modern society.

Tony has done an excellent job over the last three years and I am pleased to be able to extend his contract to allow him to continue his important work through to 2020.

Mr Porter said:

I'm delighted to have my commission extended for a further 3 years. With the help of my advisory council and many others I've been able to raise standards across surveillance camera users and protect individuals' right to privacy through tools such as self-assessment and third party certification. There's still much important work to do though and I'll be launching my national surveillance camera strategy for England and Wales later in the year setting out my vision up until 2020.

The commissioner is responsible for:

- encouraging compliance with the surveillance camera code of practice
- providing advice on the effective, appropriate, proportionate and transparent use of surveillance camera systems
- providing advice on operational and technical standards
- reviewing how the code of practice is working and advising the government where any changes may be necessary

Mr Porter joined Greater Manchester Police in 1982 and went on to hold numerous senior policing roles including command of the North West Counter Terrorism Unit and Temporary Assistant Chief Constable at Greater Manchester Police.

He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 2008 for distinguished service to policing.

[News story: Foreign Secretary at EU Foreign Affairs Council](#)

From:

First published:

6 February 2017

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson spoke to media ahead of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

We will be doing a bit on Libya this morning. Talking about the

needs to unify the east and the west of the country, build on the Libya political agreement, seeing what we can do there to be more creative. Whilst of course, at the same time, addressing the refugee crisis, the migration crisis. As you know at Valletta, the Malta Summit, Britain pledged another £30 million to help tackle that crisis. Proving once again, as I never tire of telling you, that we may be leaving the EU but we are not leaving Europe. We remain absolutely committed to that joint endeavour.

We'll be talking about Ukraine as well, talking about the recent upsurge in violence. Everybody is very concerned about that. The causes, as you know, aren't quite clear. There's a bit of murkiness about who initiated that. But the UK will be insisting there is no case for relaxation of the sanctions and every case for keeping up the pressure on Russia.

I'm sure there'll be discussions on Syria, the Middle East Peace Process and much else besides.

Further information

[News story: European referral of veterinary medicines containing zinc oxide: Call for evidence](#)

From:

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The EMA Veterinary Committee has concluded that the benefit:risk balance for veterinary medicines containing zinc oxide is negative and that this class of products should be withdrawn.

[Previous news story regarding the European referral outcome](#)

The deadline for submission of responses is: 11:59pm 21 February

The EMA's Committee for Veterinary Medicinal Products (CVMP) concluded in December 2016 that veterinary medicines containing zinc oxide, used to prevent post weaning diarrhoea in piglets, should be withdrawn from the

market. This recommendation was based on a conclusion that the risk these products were considered to present to the environment has not been outweighed by the demonstrated benefits.

The CVMP have now been requested to re-examine this conclusion; their final position is expected in March.

The CVMP provide scientific advice to the EU Commission on the benefits and risks relating to authorised veterinary medicines. It is for the EU Commission to decide what action to take as a result.

EU Member States have now been invited by the EU Commission to provide written comments by, 13 March 2017, regarding a proposed transitional period before the withdrawal of these products is implemented.

The comments from the Member States should propose a duration for this transitional period, supported by concrete evidence. The EU Commission has also requested information on measures that have already been taken at a national level to reduce the use of zinc oxide and the use of antibiotics in pig production, for example through changes to animal husbandry practices or use of alternatives, including vaccines.

Your views

The VMD therefore invites any interested parties to submit relevant evidence via our [proforma](#) (MS Word Document, 17.2KB) to postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Submissions should:

- be concise
- be written in English
- be limited to 2000 words, excluding references; submissions must reference the source of any data provided (provide weblinks to any data that are already in the public domain)
- be specific to proposals for the duration of a transitional period
- be supported by evidence related to:
 - the impact of product withdrawal on pig health and welfare and/or pig productivity
 - husbandry and/or production system changes that will be necessary to mitigate this impact, and the economic cost of these changes
 - effective alternatives to zinc oxide, either currently available or in development

[News story: MMO calls for feedback on](#)

marine planning

A [questionnaire](#) on the first outputs of marine planning in the north east, north west, south east and south west has been launched.

The questionnaire, which is open until Friday 31 March 2017, asks for feedback on the recently published Issues Database, supporting evidence, proposed draft policies to date as well as a new [interactive format](#).

It's the first opportunity for stakeholders to see how marine planning is progressing in north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas, marking an important milestone in the marine planning process.

The questionnaire is part of an eight week programme of activity, which also includes a [series of workshops](#).

The questionnaire and workshops are an opportunity to see how the issues and evidence gathered last year are being taken forward, and how proposed draft policies for the areas are being developed.

A new [proposed format](#) for marine plans is also introduced, which takes a shorter, more digital, interactive approach, linking directly to our Marine Information System (MIS).

Steve Brooker, Chief Planning Officer said:

"We encourage everyone who uses the marine area to complete this short questionnaire.

"Marine plans will shape how we all – from developers to local residents – interact with the marine area over the next 20 years, and so it's important that everyone has the opportunity to take part in their development.

"The questionnaire and workshops mark the end of the first year of marine planning in the north east, north west, south east and south west, and we welcome feedback on how our work is progressing."

To take part in the questionnaire visit [our consultation website](#).

To sign up for a marine planning workshop, visit one of our Eventbrite pages: