

Successful peacekeeping transitions rely on sustainable political solutions

Madam President, thank you for convening today's debate. My thanks also go to our distinguished briefers – the Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Ms Adam.

I also want to thank you, Madam President, for leading us today in paying tribute to those killed or injured in the service of the UN. Our peacekeepers serve in some of the most challenging circumstances, supporting peace processes, protecting civilians, and securing the conditions for transitions to lasting peace. Many pay the ultimate sacrifice.

We must ensure all peacekeepers have the necessary training, equipment and support, including the right medical capabilities, to perform at their best. They should be assured that we have done our utmost to enable their efforts and are committed to building upon their achievements.

Madam President, last year the UK deployed peacekeepers to MINUSMA, delivering a capability that directly improves the reach, agility and responsiveness of the mission, particularly in protecting civilians.

Working alongside Bangladeshi, Swedish, Nigerian, Irish and German partners, among others, UK forces have engaged with Malian communities who had never before met UN peacekeepers, to understand their needs and concerns. They have gathered intelligence to support mission planning, improve overall mission performance and responsiveness to threats. UK peacekeepers working closely with mission planners have helped Malian government officials and civilian human rights colleagues in MINUSMA to increase their reach – a powerful example of the military supporting the broader UN system and promoting local governance.

Madam President, UK troops and their partners are fulfilling our expectations of peacekeepers: preventing violence, building host state capacities, and laying foundations for long-term peace and a sustainable mission transition.

However, no matter how effective our operations, long-term peace and successful transitions in Mali and elsewhere rely on finding sustainable political solutions. This requires our collective, coherent and consistent response, at all levels: multilateral, bilateral and regional. I welcome the Secretary-General's focus on this through the Action for Peacekeeping agenda and his A4P+ priorities.

For our peacekeepers' efforts to be worthwhile, we must continue reinforcing our support for such solutions long after peacekeeping missions draw down. In Sudan, the establishment of UNITAMS following the drawdown of UNAMID has enabled the continuation of international support to the Government of

Sudan's efforts to build lasting peace and security in Darfur.

Sustainable transitions require UN peacebuilding structures, peace and security architecture, and the development system to work together. I welcome the Secretary-General's directive to UN missions, country teams and HQ entities on early joint planning and financing, operational support and staffing. Sustaining peace relies on robust national ownership – host states building their own capacities, with the right international support, and making plans for transitioning responsibilities, with clear benchmarks for a desired end state, not an end date.

As we've heard today the voices of women, youth and civil society are essential if transitions are to be sustainable. In Mali, UK bilateral funding is helping to increase the participation of women in the peace process, and helps strengthen civilian coordination in order to facilitate humanitarian access. More broadly, the UK is a strong supporter of the Peacebuilding Fund, having contributed more \$300,000 million since its inception. The combination of peacekeeping efforts, and wider support from the international community, are key to creating the conditions for a sustained peace.

Madam President, effective transitions require all actors, across and beyond the UN system, to plan together to consolidate peace and to follow through in support of political solutions. In doing so, we can safeguard the legacy of all our peacekeepers and ensure their sacrifices are not in vain.

Thank you, Madam President.

[Priti Patel launches new fund to help tackle child sexual abuse online](#)

The fund brings together global experts to show how tech companies can implement end-to-end encryption without opening the door to greater levels of child sexual abuse.

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Home Secretary Priti Patel will today (8 September) tell social media companies that they must take our children's safety as seriously as they do their bottom line at a meeting of the G7 interior ministers.

She will also call on G7 partners to back the UK approach in holding the internet technology giants to account if harmful content continues to be posted across their platforms and if they neglect public safety when designing their products.

Her call to action comes as she launches a new fund aimed at tackling child sexual abuse online.

Innovators and tech experts will be given government funding to show the internet technology giants how they can better design their products and not increase the risk of their platform's being a safe haven for child sexual abusers.

The UK's new Safety Tech Challenge Fund will award five organisations from across the world up to £85,000 each to develop innovative technologies to keep children safe when using end-to-end encrypted messaging services.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The UK is a world leader in tackling child sexual abuse online, and it is vital that the G7 and technology companies alike step up to protect children and victims from sick perpetrators and crack down on this abhorrent crime.

The technology giants have a responsibility to protect their users online, and must take our children's safety and security as seriously as they do their bottom line when designing new products.

This new fund will bring together global experts to show the technology companies how they can responsibly implement end-to-end encryption without putting our children's safety at greater risk.

Minister for Digital and Culture Caroline Dinenage said:

We are bringing in world-leading laws to make the internet safer for everyone in the UK, especially children. But we also want to see tech firms innovating to make their platforms safer too.

Through this fund, we are supporting them to create practical solutions to the challenges around end-to-end encryption which balance privacy with the pressing need to end safe spaces for child abuse online.

Companies awarded Tech Challenge funding will develop innovative solutions to show the silicon valley giants how they could continue to detect images or videos showing sexual abuse of children while ensuring end-to-end encryption is not compromised.

The fund, which will run for five months from November 2021, is part of the

government's wider effort to tackle harmful behaviours taking place on social media and other online platforms.

The announcement comes as the Home Secretary meets with her G7 counterparts over the next two days, with tackling child sexual exploitation, and internet safety and security, dominating the agenda on day one.

Interior ministers will look at how the G7 can work together to keep their citizens safe online and the bring the sick perpetrators of child sexual abuse and exploitation to justice.

John Clark, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)
President & CEO:

The NCMEC applauds the launch of the UK's Safety Tech Challenge Fund. Last year we received more than 21 million reports relating to child sexual exploitation, and the numbers of reports this year are likely to be even higher.

The Safety Tech Challenge will be crucial to enabling the tech industry, academic experts, non-profits, and government agencies to collaborate together on global solutions to keep children safer online without compromising consumer privacy.

Time is of the essence to develop safety measures that can operate in encrypted environments to protect children, whose images are being circulated online.

Julie Inman Grant, Australian e-safety Commissioner:

As a global community we must strive to take every step we can to combat the scourge of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, wherever it is found.

Encryption is a many-layered, complex issue that requires detailed consideration and thoughtful review in order to minimise the potential for harm and ensure that a suitable balance is struck between security, privacy and safety.

There are promising technological breakthroughs that can surface illegal content in E2EE environments without sacrificing user privacy, and we must harness the possibilities that they offer in a unified and integrated way.

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the UK's safety tech challenge investment fund and working in collaboration with our partners to ensure that effective solutions are able to be implemented and adopted globally.

Technologies developed will be evaluated by independent academic experts to measure effectiveness and privacy safeguards.

Applications for funding will open to applicants globally from 8 September 2021, and close on 6 October 2021.

For more information on the fund, please visit:
www.safetytechnetwork.org.uk/innovation-challenges

[Scientists reveal huge new areas of threatened fog-generated ecosystems in Peru and Chile](#)

- New scientific paper uses 20 years of satellite imagery and cloud computing technology to see through fog and cloud layers, mapping this desert ecosystems in Latin America in detail for first time
- Data will help government authorities to manage and protect the fog oasis as biodiversity and ecosystems resources vulnerable to threats from climate change and development

In a new paper, published today in the International Journal of Applied Earth Observations and Geoinformation, scientists used over twenty years of satellite imagery, supported by two decades of fieldwork verification on the ground, to reveal the true extent of the desert fog oasis ecosystem running along the coast of Peru and Chile.

Their results show that fog oases are much more extensive than previously believed, rich in endemic plants found nowhere else. These findings highlight how ecosystem loss is greatly exacerbated by a lack of distribution knowledge and the interrelated lack of protection.

Peru and Chile's fog oasis ecosystems, known as the 'Lomas' or 'fog oasis' locally, appear like 'islands' of vegetation along the 3000km hyper-arid desert coast of the two countries. Entirely dependent on sea-generated fog for their moisture, this ecosystem is packed with unique and useful native plants which provide a wealth of vital ecosystem services.

Until recently however, they had been poorly recorded and recognised by satellite data, due to their ephemeral nature and almost blanket fog cover when they are most productive. Outside the larger urban areas such as Peru's capital Lima, this has prevented their discovery and conservation, whilst a lack of long-term funding for research has inhibited protection.

To address this, a team of scientists from the UK, Peru and Chile, used hundreds of MODIS satellite images to penetrate two decades of fog seasons,

and like an X-Ray, reveal hidden layers pulsing with life across the desert landscape.

This plant productivity mapping, combined with on-the-ground surveys, meant scientists could build up a picture of where the fog oases occur and how they are affected by climate and landscape. The technology and repeated fieldwork allowed the researchers to discover and map over four times more fog oases than previously recorded, with a productive area of over 17,000 km² (10 times the size of London), revealing extensive little-known plant and animal habitats, many with few or no scientific records.

Justin Moat, scientist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and lead author of the paper says:

Clearly fog-driven ecosystems are truly amazing, globally very rare, and must be conserved at all costs. What many don't realise is that over 58% of Peru's population live alongside (or within) this unique ecosystem, so they are vital for water, clean air, culture and human wellbeing.

The ecosystem also houses many endemic species including wild tomatoes, medicinal plants, and animals such as populations of Andean Condor, foxes, lizards and wild llama (guanaco).

However, these endemic-rich fog oases, means the ecosystem is intrinsically linked to coastal climatic factors and ocean currents which makes them extremely sensitive to natural and human induced climate change.

Oliver Whaley, a scientist at RBG Kew who has worked in Peru for 25 years, says:

As many fog oases are not mapped and at times only flourish for a single season every few years, they are subject to a host of threats including urbanisation, mining, invasive plants, overgrazing and off road vehicles. We see this both on the ground and from satellites, even after many years Dakar rally tracks are still visible in this fragile ecosystem.

The global community must support Peru and Chile governments and local researchers to protect fog-oases now, before it is too late, and millions of years of evolutionary history and natural capital is lost – incredibly only 4% of fog oases are protected.

Peter Clements, Deputy Head of Mission and General Consulate, Lima Peru, says:

These are indeed remarkable findings. This study brings out the importance of Lomas for water, biodiversity and environmental

balance. This is a great example of scientific collaboration between the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, one of the UK's leading organisations on biodiversity and conservation, and Peruvian researchers.

The study represents a first step towards protecting this vital ecosystem. The British Embassy in Lima will continue supporting Peru's efforts towards mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including the initiative to create its first national botanic garden.

What now? The fight to protect the fog islands teeming with biodiversity

In the paper, the scientists aimed to summarise all knowledge of biodiversity, threats and protection of this unique ecosystem, so that when combined with a detailed map it can provide new data to help protect the fog oases and increase understanding of how they function.

The researchers are working to establish a protected continental coastal network to allow fog oases to be permanently protected, monitored and restored. It is hoped this ecological biome network can be used to gauge ENSO and climate change, using ecosystem and species fluctuation indicators it may be possible to predict precipitation and maritime climate intensity, for example.

This new data-driven mapping of fog oases will help researchers work with Peruvian and Chilean government agencies, to better locate permanent and ephemeral habitats using online maps. Presently with the leverage of a grant from The National Geographic Society, the team is working with the Peruvian government to establish protected areas and a concession for conservation. Already using the combination of drone mapping, historical satellite analysis, and detailed groundwork of the team, has helped provide delimitation for Reserva Nacional San Fernando critical plant habitats. The area is already seeing a slight recovery of a highly endangered Guanaco population, providing reasons for hope.

Alfonso Orellana-Garcia, scientist and ecosystem management specialist at Peru's National University of San Marcos and co-author of the paper says:

We hope this new data will help Peruvian and Chilean government officials give the Lomas a special and effective protected status, something myself and our partners in Chile and the UK have been fighting for in wide inclusive community collaboration for over two decades.

Likewise, this research is very important to help provide data to support technical and scientific efforts with environmental authorities (GORE ICA) and institutions in environmental, forestry and wildlife including MINAM, SERFOR, SERNANP, INIA; among other

entities, who make critical decisions to protect our biodiversity and ecosystems locally and nationally.

Carolina Tovar, a Peruvian ecologist working at RBG Kew and author of the paper says:

Working with our Peruvian colleagues we are very close to having a very fragile and most unique fog oases protected after years of work, providing the evidence of its value to nature and people. As we lead up to the critical COP26 discussions this year, highlighting the importance of preserving and understanding the biodiversity around us couldn't be more crucial.

Nature is a valuable and often underappreciated resource; we know that plants and fungi offer many solutions to the challenges we face. Saving areas such as the fog oasis of Peru and Chile, full of untapped and unknown species and ecosystem resources, would be one step in the right direction.

Full list of institutions involved in this research

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK; Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Museo de Historia, Natural and Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas, Lima, Peru; Huarango Nature, Lima, Peru; Biota Gestión y Consultorías Ambientales Ltda, Chile; Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK; Centro del Desierto de Atacama, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile; Universidad Continental, Cusco, Peru; Proyecto para la conservación, gestión y rehabilitación de los ecosistemas frágiles de lomas en Lima (EbA Lomas) SERNANP – PNUD, Lima Peru; Rainforest Concern, Bath, UK; Fundación Chilco, Santiago, Chile.

About the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a world-famous scientific organisation, internationally respected for its outstanding collections as well as its scientific expertise in plant and fungal diversity, conservation and sustainable development in the UK and around the world. Kew Gardens is a major international and a top London visitor attraction. Kew Gardens' 132 hectares of landscaped gardens, and Wakehurst, Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex, attract over 2.5 million visits every year. Kew Gardens was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2003 and celebrated its 260th anniversary in 2019. Wakehurst is home to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild plant seed bank in the world, as well as over 500 acres of designed landscapes, wild woodlands, ornamental gardens and a nature reserve. The Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre is Kew's third research centre and only overseas office. RBG Kew receives approximately one third of its funding from Government through the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and research councils. Further funding needed to support RBG Kew's vital work comes from donors, membership and commercial activity including

ticket sales.

[Health Secretary opinion piece in the Daily Telegraph](#)

This past year has been the most difficult in living memory for our country – and we have faced those difficulties together. The British people have made unprecedented sacrifices to our freedoms and our way of life to keep each other safe.

Whilst staff in the NHS and across social care have moved mountains to help those who needed care. They have treated over half a million patients with COVID-19, administered over 90 million life-saving vaccines, and cared for the elderly and most vulnerable in our society.

Despite these efforts, it was inevitable that this global pandemic would take its toll on a system that was already in need of reform. We now have a backlog of 5.5 million people waiting for treatment – and if we were to continue with business as usual this could rise in the coming years to as high as 13 million. Before the pandemic, we treated nine in 10 people within 24 weeks. That has now risen to 45 weeks.

The pressures of the pandemic have also been stark in social care, adding to the burdens of an unfair system in crisis. Around one in seven people end up paying over £100,000 for care, and often the heaviest burden falls on those least able to bear it. Meanwhile, staff in social care have worked tirelessly, even when we know they could have benefitted from better support and training.

No responsible government – especially a Conservative one – can bury its head in the sand and pass these problems onto the next one.

The Health and Care Levy announced yesterday will be a direct investment into the NHS and social care. But I appreciate it does not sit easily with everyone. No government would ever wish to go back on a promise it has made to the people – and I've always believed in making sure the tax burden is as low as possible.

Yet no government since the Second World War has faced unprecedented challenges of such magnitude. Last week I met health ministers from the world's biggest economies at the G20: we are all having to deal with the consequences of this global pandemic. I am determined we face up to them.

We want the NHS to be a world-class service, and we need to put social care on the strongest possible foundation for the future. But we have to do that in a responsible way. That means spreading the burden across the broadest

shoulders, and not simply borrowing in the short-term to pay for the long-term. That is what our levy does: it shares the burden across employers, employees and pensioners alike. The highest-earning 14 per cent in the country will pay over half the levy.

Together, we are making a critical investment in our country's future. This will be the biggest catch-up plan in NHS history – delivering nine million more checks, scans, and treatments. We all know someone who has been waiting too long for such procedures.

We are going to ensure the vital work of routine operations, meaning things like hip replacements and cataract surgery do not stop. We are also investing in the next generation of scanners and screening equipment, so we are even quicker at finding and treating diseases like cancer.

The levy is also a vital first step for the reform of our broken care system. No one will have to pay more than £86,000 in care costs over their lifetime. That cap will apply to everyone – it will not matter what condition you have, where you live, how old you are or how much you earn.

We are also casting out the safety net further by expanding means-tested support, so many more people can benefit from having the costs of their care covered. In addition, care staff will now benefit from half a billion pounds of funding to deliver new qualifications, better career routes and much-needed mental health and wellbeing support.

Through these historic investments we are meeting the scale of the challenges we face together, just as we have done throughout this pandemic. In making these difficult decisions we are stepping up as a country to end the cruel care lottery and tackle the backlog. As a result, millions more people now have a better chance to live happy, healthy and dignified lives.