

## Top legislature adopts key documents, ends session



NPC deputies cast their votes at the closing of their annual plenary session in the Great Hall of the People on Wednesday. [Liu Zhen / China News Service]

China's top legislature concluded its 11-day annual plenary session on Wednesday after adopting a number of key documents, paving the way for the country's development in the coming year.

Of the 2,838 deputies to the National People's Congress who attended the closing ceremony, the overwhelming majority voted in favor of these documents, including the Government Work Report, the work report of the NPC Standing Committee, the work reports of the top court and top procuratorate and the General Provisions of the Civil Law.

Other documents approved by the lawmakers included the 2017 national economic and social development plan and the 2017 central and local budgets.

The decision on the quota and election of deputies to the 13th NPC, and the methods for electing deputies to the 13th NPC from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, were also passed with high support.

During this year's legislative session, national lawmakers filed 514 motions: 492 on legislation, 16 on NPC supervision and six on other issues, according to the NPC.

In his closing remarks, Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, hailed the achievements made under the leadership of the Communist Party of China Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core since the 18th

National Congress of the CPC in 2012.

Zhang called for maintaining a high degree of consistency with the CPC Central Committee in thoughts, politics and actions, upholding the authority of the CPC Central Committee and its centralized and unified leadership, and faithfully implementing the Party's policies and the CPC Central Committee's decisions.

The people's congress system, a fundamental institutional arrangement that integrates the principles of upholding the Party's leadership, people as the master of the country, and the rule of law, demonstrates the characteristics and advantages of China's socialist democracy, according to an editorial published by Xinhua on Tuesday.

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## **Speech: "We need a more forceful and unified UN approach to human trafficking and modern slavery and forced labour"**

I'd like to begin by thanking all four of our excellent briefers. And by paying particular tribute to our civil society briefers Ilwad Elman for bringing home to us the devastating impact of trafficking and slavery in conflict. She gave voice to the 46 million men, women and children caught up in this tragedy across the world.

I'm glad that so many Ministers are here today to hear that testimony – and I'm grateful to them and to all Council members for their statements. The fullest response from each and every member of the United Nations is needed and I look forward to hearing the views of countries from outside the Security Council shortly.

Because, as we have heard so clearly, modern slavery is a global problem; one that extends far beyond the fifteen countries sat at this table. It exists in nearly all societies, including my own. It does not respect borders or jurisdictions. It does not recognise the dignity or worth of the human person. It just sees opportunities to exploit, lives to destroy.

If we could hear the millions who are being coerced and exploited today, their unwavering message to us would be that we have simply not done enough. That we have shut our eyes and dulled our senses to a crime we hoped had been consigned to history.

And that's why the United Kingdom called this open debate today. It's why my Prime Minister Theresa May first raised this issue at UNGA last year and

plans to do so again later this year. And it's why we are taking such strong action in our own country and across the world, so that together we can eradicate it.

We know the root causes. Poverty, conflict and instability lie at the heart of so many victims' suffering. When a state's authority is eroded, when its responsibility to its people is unfulfilled, organised criminal networks thrive, partnering with armed groups and terrorists to prey on the vulnerable, to prey on those who have already suffered far too much.

We know what follows. Sexual exploitation and sexual slavery. Forced labour and child labour. Human rights in tatters. Conflict exploited, conflict sustained.

This should be a familiar tale to this Council. We heard it ourselves in north-eastern Nigeria only last week. We saw it in the hands in the air when we asked the women there whether they'd lost a child to Boko Haram. We saw it in their tears as they spoke of abducted daughters, of mass rapes, of grandchildren being born only to be enslaved.

And in response, we need a more forceful and unified UN approach to human trafficking and modern slavery and forced labour. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report in November on exactly that. And we encourage him to focus on making existing structures work effectively, including the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons.

We also need to combine our efforts across the mandates entrusted in us. We in this Council have a responsibility, no a duty, to maintain international peace and security, to end the instability in which modern slavery thrives. And as UN members, we have frameworks for action; the 2030 Agenda commitment to end trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour, and the General Assembly's Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

But we also need to take responsibility as individual Member States. This means doing more to disrupt and disband serious organised criminal networks engaged in people trafficking. It means all of us ratifying the 1956 Convention and the ILO Forced Labour Convention Protocol. And it means taking real steps to strengthen our own national systems to identify, investigate and prosecute those committing these abhorrent crimes.

If we take these steps, at home and here in the UN, we will have begun to turn the page. But for us truly to consign this terrible tragedy to the history books, we will need sustained commitment that endures long after this session is over. Modern slavery must become a recurring theme for this Council, and one for other parts of the UN to return to – including at this year's UNGA – so that we can accelerate our efforts to end this abhorrent practice once and for all.

Thank you.

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## Press release: New grant for council homelessness services

The government is transforming the way councils fund homelessness services, giving them greater flexibility to prioritise homelessness prevention, Communities Minister Marcus Jones has confirmed.

The new 'flexible homelessness support grant' is a radical replacement of the tightly controlled funding currently given to source and manage temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and their families.

Under the existing 'temporary accommodation management fee', funding can only be used for expensive intervention when a household is already homeless, rather than on preventing this happening in the first place.

The new grant will empower councils with the freedom to support the full range of homelessness services. This could include employing a homelessness prevention or tenancy support officer to work closely with people who are at risk of losing their homes.

Communities Minister Marcus Jones said:

This government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society, which is why we're investing £550 million to 2020 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

We've brought in a raft of measures over the last few months, from funding homelessness projects in 225 local authorities to changing the law by backing Bob Blackman's Homelessness Reduction Bill to support for more people at risk of losing their homes.

We're now going further and giving councils greater flexibility, so they can move away from costly intervention when a household is already homeless, to preventing this happening in the first place.

Councils across England will receive £402 million over the next 2 years. No local authority will receive less annual funding under the grant than we estimate they would have received under the Department for Work and Pensions fee. First year allocations will also include an additional amount to authorities with high temporary accommodation commitments.

Compared to the old system, we estimate that London councils will receive around £20 million more next year and that other high pressure areas, including Leeds, Birmingham, Reading, Peterborough and Portsmouth, will also gain significant additional funding.

In recognition of the particular pressures which London councils face, we are also setting aside £25 million of the funding across the 2 years while we work with the Greater London Authority and London boroughs to look at how we might help councils collaborate in the procurement of accommodation for homeless families in London.

The new grant forms part of the wide range of measures the government is taking to prevent people from becoming homeless.

This includes:

- protecting and maintaining the funding for councils to provide homelessness prevention services at £315 million over the 4 years to 2019-20; £20 million to support innovative approaches in local areas to tackle and prevent homelessness
- a £20 million rough sleeping prevention fund to help individuals at risk or new to the streets get back on their feet
- a £10 million Social Impact Bond programme to help long-term rough sleepers
- £61 million for councils to implement the measures in the Homelessness Reduction Bill, which will change the law to provide vital support for more people at risk of losing their homes

The former Chancellor announced at Autumn Statement 2015 that the Department for Work and Pensions' temporary accommodation management fee would be replaced by a Department for Communities and Local Government grant from April 2017.

The new flexible homelessness support grant will come in from 1 April 2017. It is based on a completely new funding model so resources are directed to the areas with the greatest need and which allows councils to plan their homelessness services with certainty.

The funding allocated for the 2 years from 2017 to 2018 is £186 million and £191 million. A further £25 million has been set aside for London boroughs to work together to provide accommodation for homeless families in the capital.

See the [allocations for the new grant](#).

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# Speech: Working together to end modern slavery

I am delighted to be here today at the launch of RUSI's new report into the role financial institutions can play in tackling modern slavery.

Events like these are so important because however hard we might try – slavery is not something that the government can tackle alone.

We need all of you in this room to collaborate – bringing your tools, expertise and knowledge together to combat what the Prime Minister has rightly called 'the greatest human rights issue of our time'.

And I want to start today by telling you a story about a young woman – I'm going to call her J.

J was a bright girl who came to the UK to study from Asia. She met a woman from her own community at a local temple who encouraged her to come to the cafe she owned to speak to customers to practice her English.

At first it went well. J spent time at the cafe and her English improved.

But slowly the cafe owner began to demand more and more and became abusive towards J.

She found herself totally trapped and forced to work for 14 hours a day, with limited toilet breaks, no heating and no food or drink at all during working hours.

Life became intolerable. She lost contact with friends and was kicked out of college because she wasn't turning up anymore because she was always manning the cafe.

She was too scared to go to the police because her captor threatened her and her family and her health deteriorated.

But in 2014, supported by a British Transport Police officer, J escaped and was referred to the Salvation Army who placed her in a safe house which helped her to rebuild her life.

And when I met J in the summer, it was clear that although she had been controlled, degraded and mistreated, a much better future was now in sight for her.

J's story is a reminder to all of us that slavery is not consigned to history. It is happening here and it is happening now.

200 years ago Britain abolished the slave trade and the British Navy set out to eradicate slavery overseas. And yet there are currently 10-13,000 people enslaved in Britain and an estimated 45.8 million victims of modern slavery

worldwide.

But as Home Secretary I am determined to do all I can to protect and support victims of this horrible crime and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In 2015 the government introduced the world-leading Modern Slavery Act. We gave law enforcement agencies new powers to tackle modern slavery, we introduced maximum life sentences for perpetrators and we enhanced the protections available for victims.

Introducing the act sent a clear message that the UK will not tolerate this terrible crime.

We also introduced the ground-breaking transparency in supply chain provision, requiring large businesses to set out the steps they have taken in the last 12 months to ensure there is no modern slavery in their business or in their supply chains. Since these statements became compulsory, thousands of businesses have published them. Other countries now look to our work in this area as the gold standard.

But just because we have legislation in place does not mean that the problem is solved. That's why the Prime Minister personally chairs the first ever modern slavery taskforce with every relevant department attending, to keep a grip on the issue and drive forward our operational response. This is a priority for her as it is for the government.

And we are seeing the results of our efforts. More victims of modern slavery are being rescued and supported and more perpetrators are being brought to justice. There were 113 convictions in 2015 and we expect more convictions under the Modern Slavery Act this year.

At the end of January, 2 brothers who trafficked 18 people from Poland to the UK and conned and threatened them were jailed for 6 years after being prosecuted for offences under the Modern Slavery Act.

They had forced the vulnerable men to work at the Sports Direct warehouse in Shirebrook in Derbyshire and they had controlled their bank accounts and kept most of their wages.

These men had hoped for a new life in Britain but the reality was squalid living conditions and near total control by their captors.

These men came from Poland but were trafficked to Britain, a reminder that modern slavery spans countries and borders and we need to have an international and not just a national approach.

And I am proud that we are leading work to develop a global response to slavery and that this is one of our top foreign priorities.

We need to make sure that we are working collaboratively with law enforcement agencies around the world to stop gangs that operate across borders and across jurisdictions.

And we have committed to investing £33.5 million of overseas aid funding to tackle the root causes of modern slavery.

We will focus on those high-risk countries where we know victims are regularly trafficked to the UK. And as I announced in October, £11 million of this money is for our dedicated Modern Slavery Innovation Fund used to support, trial and test new innovative ways of tackling modern slavery overseas.

And today I am very pleased to announce that we will be spending £6 million from this £11 million fund on 10 new projects. These projects will support victims directly, tackle slavery in supply chains and help to share skills and expertise with overseas partners.

Working with NGOs, academics and international organisations, the projects will test a range of activities to build up evidence of what works in addressing modern slavery.

So let me tell you about some of these projects.

We will be investing over £1 million in UN University, the research and academic arm of the UN. Funding will allow them to gather together modern slavery data from around the world and encourage its use by researchers and policy makers.

UN University will accelerate and coordinate the global exchange of data and research on modern slavery and will therefore improve the work done to tackle modern slavery right across the globe.

We will also be giving funding of over £140,000 to St Mary's University to support research into the role of organised criminals in modern slavery. Looking at a number of countries and known trafficking routes, they will provide valuable insights into the networks that transport vulnerable people from overseas into the UK to be exploited.

And we will work with GoodWeave, an NGO transforming the South Asian rug sector with its work to end illegal child labour in manufacturing. GoodWeave has done excellent work with exporters and importers to ensure their supply chains are free from child labour. Our funding will allow them to expand this work to other sectors in India which are known to be at high risk from modern slavery.

We want to make sure that the impact of this work is carefully assessed and we will commission a full review to examine the results.

But as the RUSI paper published today sets out, human trafficking and other forms of slavery continue to exist because they are profitable business models which are seen as relatively low risk by criminal groups. The International Labour Organisation estimates that the trade in human beings generates an enormous \$150 billion of profit a year for instance.

So if it's the money that's the incentive, then it's the money that we need to follow to really get to grips with the scourge of modern day slavery.



Indeed, following the money trail is a highly effective technique to attack organised crime.

And law enforcement agencies and the financial sector both hold information which is of great value to one another. By sharing this, law enforcement agencies can get vital intelligence to pursue the traffickers; and the banks can better understand the 'red flags' they need to look out for which could identify modern slavery, and better protect themselves.

In 2015 we launched the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce which is the mechanism that allows for this information sharing and I am very glad that so many of you here today are involved with this.

This is an example of public-private sector collaboration at its very best and we've already seen some great results.

In the last 18 months, the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce has provided tactical intelligence to law enforcement agencies on 21 human trafficking and modern slavery cases; work that has already supported a number of arrests and prosecutions.

The Criminal Finances Bill will make this taskforce even more effective, giving new protections to enable bank-to-bank information sharing as well as new powers for law enforcement to investigate the money laundering linked to modern slavery and to confiscate the proceeds of crime.

And I hope that banks will continue to support the strengthened partnership working that the taskforce has helped build and the more targeted intelligence that it is generating.

But as the RUSI paper explains, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for financial institutions in disrupting human trafficking and modern slavery.

All businesses and all banks need to ask themselves – what does modern slavery mean for us? What are we doing to prevent it?

In the audience we have representatives from the financial sector, the NCA and wider law enforcement and I want to see you all working together to combat modern slavery.

And I want to see you sharing best practice. Financial institutions are often global and those of you based in the UK can play an important role promoting best practice and encouraging partner institutions to take a similar path to your own in overseas branches.

And I want to see you all implementing due diligence – ask the questions – who are my customers? What are they up to?

And if you're a business which buys goods and services, are you taking ambitious steps to ensure your own supply chains are slavery free and are you producing detailed and thorough transparency in supply chains statements?

If you're an investor – are you asking to see the transparency in supply

chains statements of businesses before you invest in them? Are you considering that modern slavery is a potential business risk and calling for the businesses which you invest in to do more to address that risk?

And if you're a lender, what due diligence are you undertaking to ensure that your money will not be used to support projects involving modern slavery?

By doing all of this, you will not only manage your own company's financial, legal and reputational risks more effectively, you will also be significantly contributing to our collective efforts to end modern slavery in the UK and globally.

Tackling modern slavery is not and will not be easy, but we have a moral imperative to do all that we can.

Two centuries ago, it was a team effort to get slavery on English soil banned. Parliamentarians, women, slave revolt leaders and Quakers all played their part. And in 2017, tackling modern slavery still needs to be a group endeavour.

The more of us involved in the fight to stop the traffickers and the slave drivers, the more winnable the battle becomes.

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## [News story: Better value for money and fairer profits](#)

This represents a 16% reduction in the rate applied to single source contracts and will ensure better value for money for taxpayers and give a fair return to industry. All savings will be reinvested into the defence budget, including delivering the equipment our Armed Forces need to keep the UK safe.

The unique nature of much of the MOD's work means the department often has to award contracts without competition, either because there is one specialised supplier or because the procurement must not risk national security. This lower profit rate will ensure the UK taxpayer gets the very best deal, regardless of the way contracts are delivered. The MOD is making sure big business does its part to support an efficient and economical defence budget.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

Taxpayers can be confident that this reduced profit rate will deliver better value for money on contracts as our defence budget rises and we deliver our £178bn equipment programme.

The defence sector is important for our prosperity, supporting high

skilled jobs, and this rate provides a fair return comparable with that in other international markets.

A strong supplier base is essential to the security and prosperity of the UK. However, big businesses must do their part to deliver savings and balance the UK's budget. The new lower profit rate ensures that these businesses receive a fair return for the work they do, while freeing money for reinvestment in vital defence equipment, supporting jobs and innovation.

The figure of 7.46% is the starting point for calculating the profit on each contract before taking into accounts factors such as risk and the amount of their own money suppliers invest. The new rate is similar to profits earned by government defence suppliers in Western Europe and North America. It will come into effect from 1st April 2017.

The Single Source Contract Regulations were brought into force in 2014, following the Currie Review into single source procurement, to ensure that such contracts were charged at the best possible rate both for taxpayers and suppliers.

The Written Ministerial Statement on the new rate is available [here](#)