

Foreign Secretary's speech to United Nations General Assembly 2020

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The Beijing Declaration was a watershed moment, uniting countries to advance gender equality and further the empowerment of women and girls.

25 years on, we have made great strides. So at the start of 2020, more girls were in school than ever before. Fewer were dying during pregnancy and childbirth.

But COVID-19 has halted that progress.

We've seen a global surge in gender-based violence.

On top of that, an estimated 20 million adolescent girls who may not return to school, which in turn increases the risk of harm, including from things like female genital mutilation and child marriage.

We can't build back better without focusing on gender equality and without the empowerment of women and girls.

So the UK is working with our international partners to ensure gender equality is a central element of the COVID-19 recovery. We will continue to champion 12 years of quality education for every girl in the world.

And as co-leaders of the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence, we will tackle the root causes of violence, including using education to stop violence before it starts.

We will continue our work on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, supporting survivors and holding the perpetrators accountable.

Next we will champion women's rights, so at the most basic level, women can decide for themselves when to have children, and how many to have.

Next year, through our Presidency of COP26, we will be promoting a clean, inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19.

And we want to give a voice to the most affected by climate change, including women and girls.

Global Britain is proud to be a force for good in the world, holding up democracy and human rights as our guiding lights.

We must use this moment as a catalyst for change, so that all women and girls have equal rights, so that they can fulfil their potential.

ENDS