

Home Secretary's speech on UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership

I am delighted to be here in Kigali, Rwanda alongside our friend and partner Minister Dr Vincent Biruta.

I would like to express my personal thanks to him and his team for the constructive way in which they have worked with my team over many many months to achieve and deliver this partnership.

The UK has a long and proud development history with Rwanda. Our shared interests have resulted in strong economic and development growth lifting millions out of poverty, but also resulted in growing manufacturing and technology sectors, which are generating jobs and sustainable growth for generations to come.

I know at first hand that your country, Minister is a regional and international leader. You are on the global stage, very much yourself more often than not but also hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the World Telecommunication Development Conference, and the Sustainable Energy for All Forum.

Your national leadership is the African voice on international initiatives, which really speak to and seek to find solutions to regional and international challenges.

I am very honoured to be here, and the United Kingdom is delighted to be working ever more closely with Rwanda.

We have many, many interests in common, and we face many of the same challenges. I want to turn to one of those challenges now.

The global migration crisis and how we tackle illegal migration requires new world-leading solutions.

There are an estimated 80 million people displaced in the world and the global approach to asylum and migration is broken.

Evil people smugglers and their criminal gangs are facilitating people into Europe, resulting in loss of life and huge costs to the UK taxpayer.

The tragic loss of life of people in the Channel and in the Mediterranean at the hands of these evil smugglers must stop.

And today, our approach as two outward-looking countries has led to the signing of a new international partnership – which is a world first. It is a migration and economic development partnership with the country of Rwanda and UK.

This will see some of those arriving illegally in the UK, such as those crossing the channel in dangerous small boats, relocated to Rwanda to resettle and rebuild their lives in ways in which the minister has just outlined.

More than 28,000 migrants crossed the channel last year by small boat in very dangerous and perilous conditions

The UK asylum system is collapsing under a combination of real humanitarian crises and evil people smugglers profiteering by exploiting the system for their own gain.

Criminals are exploiting the hopes and fears of migrants, pushing them to make dangerous journeys to the UK with fictitious and false promises that they can settle in the UK if they make it.

This has devastating consequences for the countless men, women, and children who have tragically lost their lives or lost loved ones on perilous journeys.

It is also deeply unfair, because it advantages those with the means to pay people smugglers over vulnerable people who cannot.

Global systems and conventions have failed to address this global crisis.

The world has changed and renewed global leadership is required to find new innovative solutions to this growing problem.

Today the United Kingdom and Rwanda have signed a joint new migration and economic development partnership to put an end to this deadly trade in people smuggling.

This is part of the United Kingdom's New Plan for Immigration to control our borders, protect our communities, stop dangerous illegal migration, help the world's most desperate people, and welcome international talents to the UK.

It is the biggest overhaul of our immigration system in decades, underpinned by our Nationality and Borders Bill, which will soon become law.

Our country, the United Kingdom, has always extended the hand of friendship to those in need.

In recent years alone, we have proudly welcomed tens of thousands of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, and BNOs from Hong Kong.

Rwanda has one of the strongest records of refugee resettlement and in recent years and as the minister has just said, Rwanda has resettled over 100,000 refugees.

It has an established record of welcoming and integrating people, such as those from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, but also including, for example, people from Libya evacuated under the EU's Emergency Transit Mechanism, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency and the African Union. Rwanda is also a State Party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the seven

core UN Human Rights Conventions.

Border control is fundamental to national sovereignty. Uncontrolled immigration reduces our capability and capacity to help those who most need our support. It puts intolerable pressure on public services and local communities.

And at home, as the Prime Minister has said today, because the capacity of asylum system is not unlimited, the presence of economic migrants – which these illegal routes introduce into the asylum system – inhibits our ability to support others in genuine need of protection.

The British people are fair and generous when it comes to helping those in need, but the persistent circumventing of our laws and immigration rules and the reality of a system that is open to gaming and criminal exploitation has eroded public support for Britain's asylum system and those that genuinely need access to it.

Putting evil people smugglers out of business is a moral imperative. It requires us to use every tool at our disposal – and also to find new solutions.

That is why today's migration and economic development partnership with Rwanda is such a major milestone.

It is also very much in keeping with our vision for a Global Britain that harnesses the potential of new relationships and stimulates investment and jobs in partner countries.

Working together, the United Kingdom and Rwanda will help make the immigration system fairer, ensure that people are safe and enjoy new opportunities to flourish.

We have agreed that people who enter the UK illegally will be considered for relocation to Rwanda to have their asylum claim decided.

And those who are resettled will be given support, including up to five years of training to help with integration, accommodation, and healthcare, so that they can resettle and thrive.

This agreement fully complies with all international and national law, and as part of this ground-breaking agreement, the UK is making a substantial investment in the economic development of Rwanda.

This will support programmes to improve the lives of the people in Rwanda and develop the country, economy, job prospects, and opportunities.

In addition, the UK will provide funding and expertise to implement this agreement.

As I have said many, many times, this is a global issue, with many countries struggling to address the challenges and the causes. And there is no single or simple solution.

This agreement illustrates that we can no longer accept the status quo. People are dying and the global migration crisis requires new ways to find new partnerships and to find new solutions.

It will deal a major blow to the evil people smugglers.

We know this will not be easy, we know that we will face challenges along the way, but together with the Nationality and Borders Bill, and the New Plan for Immigration, the UK will support those fleeing oppression, persecution, and tyranny through safe and legal routes, while controlling our borders and deterring illegal entry.

Our world-leading migration and economic development partnership is a global first and will change the way we collectively tackle illegal migration through new, innovative, and world-leading solutions.

Thank you.