

Hong Kong and China: Foreign Secretary's statement in Parliament, 20 July 2020

Thank you Mr Speaker. With your permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement updating the House on the latest developments with respect to China and in particular Hong Kong.

[As I told the House on the 1st of July](#), the UK wants a positive relationship with China. China has undergone an extraordinary transformation in recent decades. Grounded in one of the world's ancient cultures, not only is China the world's second largest economy, it has a huge base in tech and science.

The UK government recognises China's remarkable success in raising millions of its own people out of poverty. China is also the world's biggest investor in renewable technology, so it will be an essential global partner when it comes to tackling global climate change, and the Chinese people travel, study and work all over the world, making an extraordinary contribution.

So, Mr Speaker, let me be really clear about this. We want to work with China. There is enormous scope for positive, constructive, engagement. There are wide-ranging opportunities, from increasing trade, to cooperation in tackling climate change as I've said, in particular with a view to the COP 26 summit next year which the UK will of course be hosting.

But, as we strive for that positive relationship, we are also clear-sighted about the challenges that lie ahead. We will always protect our vital interests, including sensitive infrastructure, and we won't accept any investment that compromises our domestic or national security.

Mr Speaker, we will be clear where we disagree, and I have been clear about our grave concerns regarding the gross human rights abuses being perpetrated against the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

And Mr Speaker it is precisely because we recognise China's role in the world, as a fellow member of the G20 and a fellow permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, that we expect China to live up to the international obligations, and the international responsibilities that come with that stature. That is the positive, constructive, the mature, the reciprocal relationship that we seek with China: striving for good cooperation, honest and clear where we disagree.

And, Mr Speaker, we have been clear regarding the new National Security Law which China has imposed on the people of Hong Kong. A clear and serious violation of the UK-China Joint Declaration, and with it a violation of China's freely assumed international obligations.

On the 1st July, I [announced that we are developing a bespoke immigration](#)

[route for British Nationals \(Overseas\) and their dependents](#), giving them a path to citizenship in the UK. And I can update the House that the Home Secretary will set out further details on the plans for a new bespoke immigration route for BN(0)s and their dependants before recess. This bespoke route will be ready by early 2021. In the meantime, the Home Secretary has already given Border Force Officers the ability to grant leave to BN(0)s and their accompanying dependants at the UK border.

Mr Speaker, beyond our offer to BN(0)s, today we are taking 2 further measures, which are a necessary and proportionate response to this new national security legislation, which we have now had the opportunity to assess very carefully.

First, given the role China has now assumed for the internal security of Hong Kong, and the authority it is exerting over law enforcement, the UK will extend to Hong Kong the arms embargo that we have applied to mainland China since 1989. To be clear the extension of this embargo means there will be no exports from the UK to Hong Kong, of potentially lethal weapons, their components or ammunition. It will also mean a ban on the export of any equipment not already banned, which might be used for internal repression, such as shackles, intercept equipment, firearms and smoke grenades.

Mr Speaker, the second measure relates to the fact that the imposition of the National Security Law has significantly changed key assumptions underpinning our extradition treaty arrangements with Hong Kong. And I have to say that I am particularly concerned about Articles 55 to 59 of the law, which gives mainland Chinese authorities the ability to assume jurisdiction over certain cases and try those cases in mainland Chinese courts.

Mr Speaker, the National Security Law does not provide legal or judicial safeguards in such cases, and I am also concerned about the potential reach of the extra-territorial provisions. So I have consulted with the Home Secretary, the Justice Secretary and the Attorney General, and the government has decided to suspend the extradition treaty immediately and indefinitely. And I should also tell the House that we would not consider re-activating those arrangements, unless, and until clear and robust safeguards which are able to prevent extradition from the UK being misused under the national security legislation.

Mr Speaker, there remains considerable uncertainty about the way in which the new national security law will be enforced. I will just say this, The United Kingdom is watching. And the whole world is watching.

And in the last few weeks, I have been engaged with many of our international partners, in a concerted dialogue about how we should best respond to events in Hong Kong.

On the 8th July, I spoke with our Five Eyes Foreign Minister partners. We agreed on the seriousness of China's actions and the importance of pressing Beijing to meet its international obligations. I welcome the fact that Australia, Canada and the US have taken a range of measures with respect to Hong Kong, including variously export controls and extradition, as we have

taken today.

I also discussed the situation with our European partners including Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, and the UK government also welcomes the EU announcement on the 13th July which sets out further proposed measures in response to the national security legislation.

A number of our international partners are also considering what offers they may be willing to make to the people of Hong Kong, following the UK offer in relation to BN(O)s.

And so I can reassure the House, that we will continue to take a leading role in engaging and coordinating our actions with our international partners, as befits our historic commitment to the people of Hong Kong.

Mr Speaker, as I said at the outset, we want a positive relationship with China. There's a huge amount to be gained for both countries, there are many areas, where we can work productively, constructively to mutual benefit together.

For our part, the UK will work hard and in good faith towards that goal. But we will protect our vital interests, we will stand up for our values, and we will hold China to its international obligations.

The specific measures I have announced today are a reasonable and proportionate response to China's failure to live up to those international obligations with respect to Hong Kong. And I commend this statement to the House.