

News story: Minister for Africa urges restraint and dialogue in Cameroon

Minister for Africa at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, Harriett Baldwin, visited West Africa between 11 and 14 February. On her first trip to the region since taking up this role, the Minister visited Cameroon and Côte D'Ivoire.

During her visit to Cameroon (13 and 14 February), the Minister visited the Anglophone region to discuss the ongoing dispute. Meeting with senior members of the Cameroonian Government, traditional rulers, human rights groups, and members of civil society organisations, she encouraged restraint and for a de-escalation of current tensions.

On the situation in the Anglophone regions, Minister Baldwin said:

As a long-standing friend and Commonwealth partner, the UK wants to see urgent steps taken on all sides to de-escalate current tensions.

President Biya's announcement in his New Year speech of steps to rebuild trust, resume dialogue, and allow decentralisation are a welcome start – but only a start. Cameroonians need to come together to talk and to secure a peaceful resolution.

During her visit to Cameroon, the Minister discussed issues around democracy, security, prosperity and human rights in meetings with Prime Minister Philemon Yang and other senior ministers, as well as with representatives from Cameroonian and UK businesses and civil society organisations.

The Minister visited a girls' school supported by a UK charity as well as the Lake Ossa Reserve, a Zoological Society of London and Darwin sponsored conservation project, which is an important refuge for West African manatees and other freshwater biodiversity.

Minister Baldwin said:

The UK and Cameroon share historic ties, and I have seen ample evidence that those ties – of business partnership, security cooperation, and support to education and wildlife conservation – continue to strengthen.

During her visit to Côte D'Ivoire (11 and 12 February), Mrs. Baldwin visited the headquarters of the Transnational Organized Crime Unit (UCT) to inspect a recent seizure of more than 600 kilos of ivory and pangolin scales by the Ivorian authorities. She handed over technical equipment gifted by the

National Crime Agency to enable the UCT to improve the identification of illegal commodities during operations.

On the Illegal Wildlife Trade, Minister Baldwin said:

The extent of trafficking of wild and endangered animals is shocking. I am hugely impressed with the work here in Côte D'Ivoire to prevent wildlife being smuggled out of the country to overseas markets, and I am pleased that the UK is able to support these efforts.

Stronger regional and global cooperation is needed to prevent traffickers from profiting from this trade. That is why the UK is hosting a conference in October to bring countries together to ensure we take action collectively to tackle the despicable illegal wildlife trade.

As Côte D'Ivoire is a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Minister Baldwin held discussions on upcoming Security Council matters with President Ouattara and other senior ministers. She also met President of the African Development Bank, Akinwumi Adesina, to discuss the Bank's plans for inclusive growth across Africa.

Further information