

Prime Minister to chair UNSC session on climate and security: 22 February 2021

- PM chairing a UN Security Council (UNSC) session on climate and security – the first time a British PM has chaired the UNSC since 1992
- Sir David Attenborough will also address the Council to warn of the risks from climate change and call for action
- UK holds the presidency of the UNSC this month and will host the COP26 climate summit in November

The Prime Minister will warn the UN Security Council today [Tuesday] that unless we take urgent action to tackle climate change, the world risks worsening conflict, displacement and insecurity.

He is chairing a virtual session of the Council to call on members to help the most vulnerable countries adapt to the impact of climate change and take steps to cut global emissions to net zero by 2050. It is the first time a British Prime Minister has chaired the UNSC in nearly 30 years and the first leader-level discussion on climate at the Security Council.

Sir David Attenborough will also speak to the 15 members of the UNSC by video, before UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Sudanese climate activist Nisreen Elsam brief the Security Council live.

The impacts of climate change are already being felt around the world, with the effects of rising temperatures and extreme weather forcing population movements and creating competition over increasingly scarce natural resources. Of the 20 countries ranked most vulnerable to rising global temperatures, 12 are already in conflict.

Ahead of chairing the UN Security Council session, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The UNSC is tasked with confronting the gravest threats to global peace and security, and that's exactly what climate change represents.

From the communities uprooted by extreme weather and hunger, to warlords capitalising on the scramble for resources – a warming planet is driving insecurity.

Unlike many issues the Council deals with, this is one we know

exactly how to address. By helping vulnerable countries adapt to climate change and cutting global emissions to net zero, we will protect not only the bountiful biodiversity of our planet, but its prosperity and security.

Sir David Attenborough, British Broadcaster and Natural Historian said:

If we bring emissions down with sufficient vigour we may yet avoid the tipping points that will make runaway climate change unstoppable. In November this year, at COP26 in Glasgow, we may have our last opportunity to make the necessary step-change.

If we objectively view climate change and the loss of nature as world-wide security threats – as indeed, they are – then we may yet act proportionately and in time.

The UK has led the way on climate action, committing in law to reach net zero by 2050 and pledging to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68 per cent by 2030 – the steepest reduction of any major economy.

We have also pledged to spend £11.6 billion on international climate finance over the next five years, including on efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change on vulnerable and fragile countries.

In the last few years, the UK helped pastoralists in the Sahel deal with the impact of drought; strengthened natural resource management in the Darfur region of Sudan; and supported 200 communities in Somalia to build resilience to climate shocks.

The Prime Minister is addressing the UN Security Council today as part of the UK's month-long presidency. The UK will also host a high-level Climate & Development Ministerial event on the 31st March with representatives from the countries most vulnerable to climate change around the world, as well as major donors and international institutions.