

Speech: Protecting Human Rights

Updated: Location tagging changed.

Thank you very much indeed Mr Chairman. Having been the British Ambassador to the Human Rights Council, I'm particularly delighted to be able to join you today.

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Kingdom remains committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all people around the world. But while we may all be born equal in rights and dignity, sadly there are wide differences in our enjoyment of them. This is something that should concern all members of the United Nations. It is incumbent on us here to advocate for those whose rights are the most vulnerable or the least respected, and indeed all too often violated by the very governments that have the biggest obligation to protect them.

For the journalists who are detained, tortured, or killed simply for trying to find out the truth, or speaking truth speak to power.

For the people who are discriminated against, put on trial, detained, or killed for exercising their freedom of religion or belief, whether they be Jehovah's witnesses, Christians, Muslims, Baha'i, Jewish, Buddhists or atheists. For those who are prosecuted for blasphemy or apostasy – or put into so-called re-education camps without trial or due process.

For the modern day slaves, including children, who toil in servitude in sweatshop factories; as domestic servants with their passports confiscated, in brothels, in fields or mines, or on construction sites in unsafe conditions; or as labourers sent abroad as commodities to generate funds for a repressive regime.

For the people who are denied the right to marry the person they love, or the ability to form a family; who are discriminated against, attacked or killed; or denied services simply for their sexual orientation or gender identity. For those in non-conventional families, who find themselves under attack, even when they provide a loving home where children can thrive.

For the people who have had to flee to neighbouring countries to escape sexual violence, slaughter and ethnic cleansing, while the international community endeavours to hold the perpetrators to account.

For the people poisoned in foreign countries as political acts or because they have chosen to live in freedom, or criticised the repressive regime they left.

For people who are sentenced to death in mass trials, where due process is flawed, or put to death for committing minor crimes.

For the human rights defenders and their families, who are mistreated, arrested, 'disappeared' or killed for standing up for the rights of others. For people denied the right to vote, protestors and activists jailed for demanding democracy.

For girls discriminated against from birth; denied the same education as boys; denied control over their assets, income or bodies; married off too young or against their will; denied the right to choose when to have children, suffering increased maternal and infant mortality and complications.

Not only because our shared humanity dictates we should care about the human rights of all – although it does. But also because nations that respect human rights and the rule of law are the very societies that provide the best conditions for development, economic growth, peace, and stability and the happiness of their people. If we want to leave no one behind, we need to make sure we are all free to progress.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Speech: Humanitarian Access, Refugee Return, and Security in Syria

Thank you very much Mr President. Thank you Mark once again for a clear and stark briefing and to all your team on the ground.

I'd like to start by joining Kuwait in expressing our deepest condolences to the people and government of Indonesia for the plane crash. But I also wanted to say I thought the joint statement from Kuwait and Sweden was very powerful.

I wanted to start if I may not immediately with the humanitarian, but with the Istanbul Summit commitments, as briefed by the French representative – and thank you very much for that briefing. I completely agree with what the French Ambassador said about the political process. The Small Group is going on now in London. As we all noted last week, we hope that this combination of commitments and meetings will indeed Mr President see some real, concrete progress on both political and humanitarian tracks. But I think on the political side and on Idlib, I would very much like to receive confirmation today that the Idlib agreement between Russia and Turkey will indeed hold, that those 3 million civilians will indeed be kept safe. I'd like to see confirmation today that the Constitutional Committee will indeed be set up by the end of the year, and I'd like to know if that is something that both Syria and Russia agree should happen. I also agree with what my US colleagues said about CW.

Turning to the humanitarian side Mr President, which is the main purpose of the meeting today, I wanted to underscore what the Under-Secretary-General said about humanitarian principles and the aid needing to go to people in the most need. It's very worrying that we don't have full independent needs assessments; proper refugee return really can't happen without this so I'd be grateful to know from the Syrian Representative but also from the Russians; what is being done to address the UN's concerns on the independent needs assessment?

On Rukban, I take the point that there may be a security risk. I think it would be very good if the Council could have more detail on what that security risk is and how it might be overcome. I want to recall Mr President that UN Member States are obliged to ensure safe and sustained humanitarian access. So the Council needs to hear this assurance today, and it also needs to hear that something will be done about the security and that the UN convoys will then be able to get through to these desperate people. I think we keep ducking this issue in the Council, Mr President. We keep raising it but we keep not getting a satisfactory answer, so it would be very good to get clarity on it today.

I also wanted to note that on humanitarian access, refugee return, we do need to include the issue of security – freedom from political persecution and from arbitrary arrest – if communities are to feel safe and secure about returning to their homes.

Finally Mr President, I wanted to endorse the five asks that the Under-Secretary-General set out today. I want to echo the call for unity on renewing SCR 2165. I think that would be a very powerful signal of progress on the ground.

I want to speak again about the importance of movement forward on the political process. Mark mentioned the need for more generosity from donors in terms of funding some of the UN plan. I'd like to say that in response to the crisis, the British government has committed \$3.47 billion to Syria since 2012, and this includes \$1.25 billion actually spent inside Syria itself.

Notwithstanding that Mr President, I'd like to echo what the French Ambassador said about reconstruction. There's a difference between humanitarian assistance and reconstruction money. Reconstruction money will only be available from Western governments in the context of a credible, sustainable political process that redresses and addresses of the underlying concerns in Syrian politics today.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: The 2018 Budget: what it means for Scotland

The Budget committed £1 billion in extra money for Scotland, maintained the freeze on whisky and fuel duty, and saw a £150 million investment in the Tay City Region Deal. The Chancellor also committed to progress growth deals in Ayrshire, Moray and Borderlands.

Today's announcements for Scotland include:

- An extra £950 million for the Scottish Government, meaning its budget will have grown in real terms to £32 billion by 2020.
- £150 million for a Tay Cities Deal to support growth and create new jobs.
- A boost to the Scotch Whisky industry, which already accounts for 20% of UK food and drink exports, as Spirits Duty is frozen for the second Budget in a row. This means the price of a typical bottle is 30p lower than if it had risen by inflation.
- A UK-wide £10 million Fisheries Technology Fund to help transform the industry and make fishermen in Scotland world leaders in safe, sustainable and productive fishing.
- Opening formal negotiations for a Moray Growth Deal and progressing talks for Ayrshire and Borderlands Growth Deals.
- Continuing support for the oil and gas sector, through maintaining our globally competitive position and further strengthening Scotland's role as a world leader in this area.
- Appointing a dedicated manager from the British Business Bank in Scotland, for the first time, to help to reduce geographical imbalances in small businesses' access to finance.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

Today's Budget is great news for people in Scotland.

The Chancellor's decisions mean there will be an extra £1 billion to invest in public services in Scotland. I urge the Scottish Government to use this extra money to support the NHS in Scotland, fix the roads, boost Scotland's economy and reinvigorate Scotland's high streets.

The freeze on spirits duty will be a boost to Scotland's whisky industry, maintaining the favourable tax climate for oil and gas will continue to help support the recovery of the sector, investing in fisheries technology will help support a key Scottish industry, and freezing beer duty will support large and small brewers across Scotland.

I welcome the significant investment – £150 million – in the Tay

Cities Deal. The Deal will drive economic growth in Tayside, boosting jobs and prosperity throughout the region. I also welcome the announcement that we are to open negotiations on a Moray Growth Deal, and we continue to make progress on Growth Deals for Borderlands and Ayrshire. In all, the UK Government is investing more than £1 billion in City Region Deals right across Scotland, helping to drive growth in Scotland's economy.

On top of our extensive investment in Scotland's economy, individuals up and down Scotland will benefit from the ongoing freeze on fuel duty and the increase in personal allowance. Today's Budget demonstrates clearly how the UK Government is delivering for people in Scotland.

News story: Problem with our phone lines

Updated: Issue with our phone lines.

We're investigating an intermittent problem which is affecting our phone lines. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Our online services are available as normal and you can use [our guidance](#) for further assistance.

If you have a query, email us at enquiries@companieshouse.gov.uk

Press release: HS2 begins archaeology work exploring over 10,000 years of British history

- Over 1,000 archaeologists set to explore 10,000 years of British history across more than 60 separate sites, Neolithic tools, medieval pottery and Victorian time capsules already discovered
- Four-part BBC documentary on the history of Britain exposed by HS2 to be aired 2019/20 presented by Professor Alice Roberts

As part of HS2's enabling works, over the next 2 years, more than 1,000 archaeologists, specialists, scientists and conservators from across the UK will be exploring and recording over 60 archaeological sites for the project.

Ranging from the Prehistoric and Roman Britain to the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods, and the Industrial Revolution and World War 2, HS2's archaeology programme is Europe's biggest dig and promises to provide a fascinating insight into the everyday lives of the people and communities who made modern Britain.

The [archaeology programme](#) is a central part of HS2's ground preparation works for Phase One of the project, London to Birmingham. HS2, its contractors and supply chain are well underway with a programme of work, clearing sites, ahead of main construction works next year. Given the historical significance of the sites, HS2 will be engaging over 1,000 archaeologists to ensure that we carry out the works to a professional standard while leaving a lasting legacy of skills and apprenticeships as well as new discoveries.

Early finds include prehistoric tools in Buckinghamshire, medieval pottery in Stoke Mandeville and 2 Victorian time capsules with more discoveries to come as archaeologists begin the exploration of our past.

[HS2: A train through time](#)

Commenting on HS2's archaeology programme, Mark Thurston, HS2 Ltd Chief Executive, said:

How we build HS2 is as important to us as what we are building and we are committed to sharing as much of our cultural heritage as possible. Before we bore the tunnels, lay the tracks and build the stations, an unprecedented amount of archaeological research is now taking place between London and Birmingham. This is the largest archaeological exploration ever in Britain, employing a record number of skilled archaeologists and heritage specialists from across the UK and beyond.

As well as improving connectivity, generating 30,000 new jobs and creating a network of new wildlife habitats, our archaeology programme shows that HS2 is more than a railway; it's an opportunity to tell the story of our past, create opportunities in the present and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Highlights along the line of route include:

- exploring a prehistoric hunter-gatherer site on the outskirts of London;
- researching an undiscovered multi-period site (Bronze and Iron Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval) in Northamptonshire;
- excavating a Romano-British town in Fleet Marston, Aylesbury;
- uncovering the remains of a medieval manor in Warwickshire;
- finding out more about the Black Death and its impact on medieval villages;

- re-telling the story of a Buckinghamshire village through the careful excavation of a 1,000 year old demolished medieval church and burial ground;
- comparing and contrasting the lives of the buried population in 2 Georgian/Victorian burial grounds in London and Birmingham; and
- discovering a WW2 bombing decoy in Lichfield.

HS2 has granted BBC Two access to this pioneering project, to be documented in a new series made by Lion TV, due on air in 2019/20 presented by Prof. Alice Roberts.

HS2 will also share the finds with local communities through a series of open days and talks and will create a permanent archival legacy of artefacts and discoveries for future generations.

Helen Wass, HS2 Ltd Head of Heritage, said:

The sheer scale of possible discoveries, the geographical span and the vast range of our history to be unearthed makes HS2's archaeology programme a unique opportunity to tell the story of Britain. From Prehistoric remnants and Roman settlements to deserted medieval villages, Wars of the Roses battlefields and Victorian innovation, HS2's archaeology programme has it all.

All artefacts and human remains will be treated with dignity, care and respect and our discoveries will be shared with communities in a variety of ways through open days, expert lectures, the BBC documentary and online. This is a very exciting time for archaeology in Britain and we are committed to make sure that HS2's archaeology programme creates knowledge for further study, engages with communities and leaves behind a lasting archival and skills legacy.

The archaeological investigation is expected to last around 2 years with over 1,000 archaeologists, experts and engineering personnel beginning work on site. They are part of more than 7,000 people already employed on the project, which is expected to support up to 30,000 jobs at the peak of construction.

Welcoming the launch of HS2's archaeology work, Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England, said:

With the building of HS2 comes a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve our understanding of how people have shaped England's landscapes over thousands of years, from the first prehistoric farmers through Roman and Saxon and Viking incomers to the more recent past.

Historic England is working closely with HS2 archaeologists so we can make sure that this opportunity is seized and we are advising

on how we can get the best possible results from the discoveries.

Press and media enquiries

For enquiries during office working hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
020 7944 6149

For enquiries outside of these hours and at the weekend
020 7944 0550

The press and media enquiries line is for accredited journalists only