

Press release: Secretary of State Appointments to the Birmingham Organising Committee for the 2022 Commonwealth Games

Jonathan Browning and Zara Hyde Peters have been appointed for 4 years and 8 months commencing 5 September 2018 until 30 June 2023.

Jonathan Browning

Jonathan Browning is Chairman of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership. He is also a Board Member for the West Midlands Combined Authority and a member of the Auto 1 Group Supervisory Board. He was previously Interim Chairman (2017) and a Non-Executive Director (2015-18) at British Cycling.

During his executive career Jonathan held a number of senior roles within the automotive industry with Volkswagen, Ford, Jaguar and General Motors. He was awarded automotive industry 'All Star' in both 2011 and 2012 and received an Honorary Doctorate from Coventry University in 2017 in recognition for his contribution to the global automotive industry.

Zara Hyde Peters OBE

Zara Hyde Peters is Managing Director at North Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group, where she relocated after a period as Strategy Director for Birmingham Community Health Care. She was previously Chief Executive of the British Triathlon Federation (2008-2014) and Director of Athlete Development at UK Athletics (2004-2008). Zara has also held Non-Executive roles with UK Sport, the Triathlon Trust and Sport Birmingham.

She competed for England at the 1994 Commonwealth Games and was awarded an OBE for national leadership services to athletics and triathlon in Great Britain in 2011.

The roles

The roles are not remunerated. These appointments have been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Jonathan and Zara have declared no such political activity.

Speech: DFID Ghana Country Director's speech at the launch of the report of the Poverty Profile in Ghana

I am very pleased to be here today to participate in the launch of this poverty profile report, and the release of new poverty data for Ghana.

This report is particularly timely coming in the wake of yesterday's launch of Ghana's Baseline Report on the Sustainable Development Goals, and as the Government drafts a Charter setting out the plan for Ghana Beyond Aid.

The UK has had a long-standing collaboration with the Ghana Statistical Service. In partnership with the World Bank we have supported the GSS to build its capability and produce and deliver the data needed to inform policy and development in Ghana.

We are also pleased to be supporting a new partnership between the GSS and the UK's equivalent, the UK Office of National Statistics.

Data plays a critical role in informing policy-making. Good data allows effective decisions to be made about where to target resources and to understand which policies are most effective.

Disaggregated data – data that shows location, gender, disability, age or other characteristics – also shows us where the needs are greatest and can help ensure that no one is left behind (the overarching theme of the Sustainable Development Goals).

Ghana is one of the few sub-Saharan African countries to achieve the MDG1 target of halving extreme poverty between 1991 and 2015. However, even as economic growth in Ghana has accelerated, inequalities persist.

Yesterday, at the event launching the baseline data for the SDGs, the data from 2013 showed that the percentage of the population living below the poverty line in rural areas was six times higher than in urban areas. Today – from a quick skim of this report – it appears that the gap between regions and between rural and urban areas remains wide, and in some cases is worsening.

Over the last two decades, the UK has invested over 2 billion pounds of development aid in Ghana, working hand in hand with the Government and other development partners, and contributing to Ghana's impressive development gains

... but we haven't made a dent in the high poverty rates in the North.

Poverty in rural northern Ghana remains stubbornly high. And decades of investment by development partners in the North has been less than transformational. Historically, Ghana's success in reducing poverty has largely been the story of the South.

Rising inequality presents a huge challenge for the government and development partners. We must maintain concerted efforts to address these inequalities in order for Ghana to leave no-one behind and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this new poverty data comes at a critical time, not just in establishing progress towards the SDG's but also to help inform the focus of the "Ghana Beyond Aid" agenda.

Let me be clear – the President's vision for a self-reliant Ghana is inspiring and is applauded by the UK and all development partners. In the long term, economic development with investment and, critically, jobs is the sustainable pathway to self-reliance.

But "Ghana Beyond Aid" must address the issue of why, despite record economic growth, inequality in Ghana is rising. The "Beyond Aid" agenda has so far focused only on investment, infrastructure and trade and there is a risk that Government, and development partners, shift their gaze from the immediate task of improving the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable in Ghana.

Ghana Beyond Aid can't just be about Ghana's "self-reliance" through industrialization. It has to be address the "self-reliance" of the poorest and most marginalized Ghanaians – including out-of-schoolchildren, vulnerable women and people with disabilities.

So the data and findings to be discussed today should contribute to a national debate, not just about how Ghana moves "beyond aid", but also about how Ghana can step up efforts to address inequalities and eliminate poverty at the same time.

The UK, as a friend and partner, stands ready to support Ghana to do this.

I am delighted to be part of this launch and I look forward to digesting the report.

[News story: Minister commits to transnational partnership](#)

The Universities Minister has hailed the UK and US as the 'heavyweights of higher education' and reinforced the special relationship between the two countries by pledging to forge transnational education partnerships.

Sam Gyimah spoke at the US-UK Fulbright Commission's reception in the House of Commons (12 September) to celebrate their 70th anniversary, and committed £1million for UK-US international exchanges. The funding will help more young people and academics, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, experience the world-class education that each country has to offer, building on the over 23,000 educational exchanges Fulbright have facilitated.

The Universities Minister praised the work undertaken by the Fulbright Commission and reaffirmed the UK Government's commitment to a global outlook beyond Brexit.

The Universities Minister Sam Gyimah said:

At the heart of our great nations' success is great education. The UK and the US are both powerhouses on the international stage, attracting talented students and teachers from across the globe to broaden both of our horizons.

I recognise that, with the prospect of Brexit here in the UK, there is much concern as to what the future holds for our relationship with the outside world. Let me reassure you with this gesture that we are committed to the UK remaining open to the world and becoming even more global and internationalist in outlook.

As the only scholarship programme supporting students and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, across all disciplines, the US-UK Fulbright Programme is a prime example of the special relationship that has blossomed between our two countries. And it is a partnership of which we are extremely proud.

Penny Egan, Executive Director of the US-UK Fulbright Commission:

As we approach the 70th anniversary of the signing of the treaty that created the US-UK Fulbright Commission, we warmly welcome the UK Government's endorsement of our work and its recommitment to our future. This significant extra funding will allow us to create more opportunities for British students, academics and teachers and even up the awards available on both sides of the Atlantic.

This is a bilateral partnership that celebrates the exchange of innovative ideas and best practice, cementing lasting collaborations and a deeper understanding of each other's country. We are enormously grateful for the continuing support of both governments, that will enable us to invest in future generations of Fulbright scholars.

The UK and US have long been seen as the powerhouses for higher education, with the two countries making up 9 out of ten of the world's best universities.

The funding builds on a strong history of the UK-US bilateral education relationship, and will introduce a programme enabling teachers from the UK to develop and share their professional skills and academic knowledge in the US.

Speech: V&A Dundee is ready to open its doors

Scotland Secretary David Mundell has hailed the arrival of the V&A Dundee, which opens on Saturday (15 September).

He said:

It is an incredibly important moment.

An amazing treasure trove from one of our greatest cultural institutions is about to be shared with millions of visitors from Scotland, the UK and around the world.

It was a great privilege for me to speak at tonight's (Wednesday 12 September) gala dinner and enjoy an all-too-brief tour of the exhibitions.

Architect Kengo Kuma's new building, on Dundee's wonderfully redeveloped waterfront, is simply breath-taking.



V&A Dundee Scotland ©HuftonCrow_070

Iconic is an overused word – but it is an instant icon.

I love the juxtaposition with that much-loved symbol of Dundee, RRS Discovery; the old and new side by side in city that is redefining itself for the 21st century.

But V&A Dundee is about much, much more than a stunning building.

Ultimately, it will be judged by its exhibitions and events.

Having been inside, I'm in no doubt it's going to be a huge success.

Inspired by the richness of Scottish art and design down the centuries, backed by the world-renowned strength of the V&A's collections and driven by an exceptional team of curators, it is a place people will want to return to time after time.

It is a place that people will cherish and a source of real pride for Dundee.

It will delight our senses, challenge our preconceptions and – of course – nurture generations of young minds.

I firmly believe V&A Dundee will quickly become as well-loved as our other great institutions. Our National Museum of Scotland in

Edinburgh, for example, or Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery. Or, indeed, 'V&A London,' as we'll have to start calling it.

The UK Government awarded an additional £5 million for the project in the 2016 Budget.

We all owe a huge debt to everyone involved in the delivery of this inspiring project – surely the biggest single investment in culture and the arts in our lifetimes.

So I want to put on record my thanks all those who have turned the dream into reality, from the City Council to the V&A staff, from the builders to the architect.

They have worked wonders to enrich the cultural life of Dundee, Scotland and the whole of the UK.

Speech: Idlib: Allow Turkey and opposition groups the space and time to separate out the terrorists and tackle them themselves.

Thank you Madam President and I join my colleagues in expressing our condolences and solidarity with you, with your Mission, with all our American friends and the citizens of this great city of New York for the losses of 9/11 and to all those countries who like my own lost their own nationals in the attacks.

Speaking as someone who worked very closely with the American and other governments on the aftermath of 9/11, I think I can say we will never forget that day and we will never cease to stand alongside you in the fight against terrorists and the unwavering campaign to protect our societies and defend civilians. The attacks of 9/11 came without warning out of a clear blue sky. The horror of Syria has been unfolding before us for more than six slow years. After 9/11, Russia and Iran worked with us. We urge them to work with us now to halt the attacks and protect the civilians of Idlib.

There have been many inflection points that have come and gone on Syria. The Astana meeting, one would like to think, was another inflection point that would succeed and I think it's very important that we can have this discussion and this debate today.

We will soon hear from our Turkish colleague who we welcome to the Council but I wanted to say right at the start that we strongly agree with President Erdogan and this morning he wrote in the Wall Street Journal that Asad's solution to countering terrorism is a false one. He said that the plan to militarily attack Idlib will only create new hotbeds of terrorism. ISIS was an outcome and not the cause of what is happening in Syria. We face a choice, Madam President, between an Asad-Russian military assault on Idlib in which, as many colleagues have said today, thousands of civilians will die. We've seen from eastern Aleppo and eastern Ghouta what that looks like the killing of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, even ones in deconflicted areas, the barbaric use of chemical weapons – or we allow Turkey and opposition groups the support space and time to separate out the terrorists and tackle them themselves.

Turkey has a plan, Madam President, in Idlib and it does involve reaching an agreement with the Syrian opposition whereby the regime refrains from attacking them while they combat terrorism. This is what we should be discussing today, Madam President, but I think it has been absent from the briefing we received from Russia just now.

We would like also to talk about how we can get together through Astana or another grouping that works to work out how the regime can work with the opposition to bring security and stability back to Idlib and I would like to know why the Council can't spend time discussing how to build on the work of Astana to this end. This would not only, Madam President, provide a plan to rid the area of extremists but it would also provide the beginnings of a model to discuss the political process to resolve this conflict which has gone on too long.

Every speaker today has talked about the importance of there being no alternative to a political solution. Of course we agree with that but the UN Special Envoy has told us that progress on a political solution is impossible if there is a military assault on Idlib. So I would like to know from Russia and Iran that they will heed those words, that they will stop the military operations, that they will come to the Council and discuss with all of us including Turkey how exactly we can build on Astana to engage seriously to finally, six years after the worst horrors we have seen in war since the Second World War, how we can bring that to an end and how we can get a political process underway in Syria and I would be grateful to hear from Russia and Iran how exactly we can bring that about.

Thank you Madam President.

Second intervention:

Thank you very much Madam President. I will be brief but I wanted to thank the Turkish Representative for setting out again the Turkish plan. We've listened very carefully, all of us, to the Astana briefers. We don't want to detract from the efforts of Astana. We support any move that gets the political process underway but we've only heard one plan today for trying to

avert the bloodshed in Idlib and actually make a difference on the ground.

I would urge all Council members to rally to the plan that our Turkish colleague has set out. What worries me is that instead we've heard a narrative that restoring full Syrian control over its territory is synonymous with fighting terrorists and for the people of Idlib that isn't the equation.

The people of Idlib are going to suffer terribly if this military assault goes ahead. It is precisely for these situations that the doctrine of proportionality under International Humanitarian Law exists. So I hope, Madam President that the Council can come together over the coming days to talk further about how we can maximise the political process building on Astana's efforts but also have a very serious discussion about how we can avert an all-out military attack on the people of Idlib.

Thank you.