

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.

Press release: UK fingerprinting kits to help in fight against illegal wildlife trade

Foreign Office Minister Mark Field visited the London office of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) today for the official handover of 100 forensic fingerprinting kits to fight the illegal wildlife trade.

The kits, specially designed to lift fingerprints from ivory, have been donated by IFAW and will be distributed to countries attending the upcoming London Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in October.

The new fingerprinting technique, developed by the Metropolitan Police and King's College London, can reveal prints up to 28 days after poachers have touched the ivory, compared to the two or three days with current conventional powders. This will significantly increase the chances of identifying the criminals behind the illegal ivory trade.

The innovative technology will be used by law enforcement agencies around the world to test illegally traded wildlife products for fingerprints and bring criminals to justice. The Foreign Office has been working with IFAW to build links with priority countries and to share training and expertise with local law enforcement officers and rangers.

Foreign Office Minister Mark Field said:

These new fingerprinting kits are a fantastic example of British innovation and technology being used by law enforcement agencies around the world to put criminals involved in the illegal wildlife trade behind bars. The Foreign Office and IFAW have partnered up to distribute kits and boost training for rangers and police in countries in Africa and Asia already, and we hope these additional kits will be put to good use by those countries who will pledge to take action at our upcoming conference.

The illegal wildlife trade is devastating endangered species populations around the world, from the African elephant to the Asian pangolin. This is a serious organised crime, depriving local communities of sustainable livelihoods and lining the pockets of corrupt middlemen and criminal gangs. We must act now if we are to stop it in its tracks and save endangered species before it is too late.

These kits are already making a real difference in the fight against the illegal wildlife trade. When the original trial kit was put into use in

Kenya, it helped to secure evidence in four cases, which ultimately resulted in 15 arrests, including five police officers, and the seizure of 11 elephant tusks and 50 pieces of worked ivory.

Philip Mansbridge, UK Director at IFAW, said:

These pioneering ivory fingerprinting kits will aid wildlife crime investigators on the frontline in Africa and Asia, providing them with an additional tool in their vital work to catch elephant poachers, thus helping to safeguard elephants and other threatened wildlife from poaching for future generations.

This ground-breaking new method of fingerprinting ivory uses a small-scale magnetic powder, meaning it is now possible to detect fingerprints on an elephant's tusk for up to a month after it has been handled, as opposed to just 24-48 hours using traditional techniques.

Working with Kings College and the Metropolitan Police, IFAW has so far deployed around 100 ivory fingerprinting kits in 23 countries to help gather evidence to stop elephant poachers. This is just one part of IFAW's global efforts to protect elephants and the places they call home. We are grateful to the Rt. Hon Mark Field MP and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for helping us showcase and distribute these kits to attendees of the upcoming London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in October.

Notes to editors

- The ivory fingerprinting kit was researched and developed by the Metropolitan Police Forensic Imaging Team and Fingerprinting Department and also with Dr Leon Barron from the Forensic Department at King's College London, so is a London based partnership between the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Metropolitan Police and King's College London.
- The success of the new kit relies on the reduction in size of the powder used, which requires less sweat residue for the powder to adhere to and enhances the marks, giving better definition. It is also inert and allows DNA samples to be taken from the fingerprints and could become a vital tool in stopping the illegal wildlife trade. Further tests have shown it also works on hippo ivory, polished rhino horn, lion and tiger teeth and claws and even pangolin scales.
- The illegal wildlife trade is a serious organised crime with revenues worth up to £17bn a year, more than the combined income of the Central African Republic, Liberia and Burundi.
- Around 20,000 African elephants are killed by poachers each year. Savanna elephant numbers have declined by a third from 2007 to 2014 and

over 1,000 rhinos were poached in South Africa last year alone. Wildlife in many parts of Africa is at crisis levels.

- The UK will be hosting a conference on 11-12 October this year, bringing together leaders from both supply and demand countries so we can work together to stamp out the illegal wildlife trade for good. The conference will agree action to tackle IWT across three broad themes:
 - Tackling IWT as a serious organised crime, including increasing collaboration across continents to tackle IWT-associated illicit financial flows and corruption;
 - Building coalitions, particularly through increased engagement with the private sector, NGOs and academia, and;
 - Closing markets, by sharing successful approaches for reducing the demand for illegal wildlife products, including ivory.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Mark Field [@MarkFieldUK](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

Media enquiries

For journalists

Email

newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

Newsdesk

020 7008 3100

[Press release: Unemployment down by over 1.1 million since 2010](#)

Britain's unemployment rate has not been lower since the mid-1970s, as [official figures released by the Office for National Statistics](#) show it's fallen to 4.0%, with 1.15 million fewer unemployed people since 2010.

The UK saw a sixth continuous month of real terms pay increases, with regular wages up by 2.9% in July, or 0.5% against CPIH inflation.

Meanwhile the employment rate remains high, at 75.5%, with over 3.3 million more people in work since 2010 and youth unemployment at a record low, falling by over 45% since 2010.

1.45 million more children are living in a home with all adults in work, and the proportion of children living in a household with no working adults has fallen by 33% in the UK since 2010, reaching a record low and taking tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Esther McVey, said:

Since 2010 we have delivered significant growth in jobs, and in the last 6 months we've seen real terms wage growth.

We haven't had a lower unemployment rate for over 40 years and I'm especially proud that youth unemployment is at a record low, falling by over 45% since 2010 – opening up career opportunities for our next generation.

In the EU we see unemployment rates over double those of the UK. This government is transforming this country into a great working nation. Ready and prepared for the future challenges after Brexit.

Minister of State for Employment Alok Sharma said:

With unemployment rate still at its lowest level in 43 years, it is good to see that for the sixth month in a row wages have grown faster than inflation helping to put more money in people's pockets. In the last quarter regular pay is up by 2.9%, 0.5% above inflation.

Households across the country are benefiting from the security of being in work, and with increasing wages and GDP growth of 0.6% last quarter we are delivering an economy that supports working people.

We've taken millions out of paying income tax altogether, and by raising the National Living Wage have helped deliver the fastest pay rise for the lowest earners in 20 years.

Today's (11 September 2018) figures also show:

- older workers also continue to find work as the number of workers aged 50 and over is at a record high of 10.25 million
- the female employment rate remains at a near record high at 71.0%
- since 2010, the vast majority of jobs have been in full-time, permanent roles
- since 2010, there has been an increase of 3.75 million in private sector jobs

Contact Press Office

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5162

Press Office

Caxton House

Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

London Press Office (national media and London area enquiries only – not questions about personal claims)
020 3267 5144

Out-of-hours (journalists only)
07623 928 975

England and Wales (local media enquiries)
029 20 586 then 097 or 098 or 099

Scotland (local media enquiries)
0131 310 1122

Follow DWP on:

- Twitter – www.twitter.com/dwppressoffice
- Facebook – www.facebook.com/dwp
- LinkedIn – www.linkedin.com/company/dwp
- YouTube – www.youtube.com/dwp

[News story: Human Rights Council 39: Sri Lanka Core Group Statement](#)

This statement is delivered on behalf of Germany, Macedonia, Montenegro and the UK as members of the Sri Lanka core group.

We welcome further recent steps Sri Lanka has taken to implement commitments made to the Council in 2015 and 2017. We welcome the Government's continued engagement with the UN system and actions to implement its National Reconciliation Action Plan and Peacebuilding Priority Plan. We applaud the Office on Missing Persons' commencement of work and encourage everyone able

to advance or contribute to its work to do so. We hope the Government will establish an Office for Reparations quickly. We also welcome the return of further private land in the north, and commitments to return more military-occupied land to civilian ownership.

Nonetheless, the pace of progress on important areas remains much slower than many hoped for. As time passes, lack of progress in delivering key steps risks undermining reconciliation efforts.

In co-sponsoring resolution 30/1, Sri Lanka recognised that national accountability mechanisms are essential to dealing with the past, and to restoring confidence among its communities. These have yet to be established. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has not been replaced with a law that accords with international standards. And, though processes to consider reform to important provisions of the Constitution, including devolution of political authority, has been ongoing since 2016, a way forward has not been found. We are concerned by recent reports of harassment of and attacks on human rights defenders.

Our view remains that, with determined leadership and a clear time-bound action plan, this Government can make more progress towards delivering its Council commitments, and that doing so will better position Sri Lanka and its people to enjoy a more enduring reconciliation and prosperity. We urge Sri Lanka to prioritise and drive forward implementation of resolutions 30/1 and 34/1, before the Council next considers Sri Lanka in March.