

Speech: Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson holds joint press conference with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson

Good afternoon everybody, I'm delighted to welcome Secretary Tillerson to London. We've had an excellent series of meetings including of course about the appalling damage wrought by Hurricane Irma.

I returned this morning myself from Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands where I saw the scale of the destruction and the ordeal that has been inflicted on the people across the Caribbean and in Florida. Our immediate task is to ensure that aid reaches everyone in need and today there are nearly 1,000 British military personnel deployed in our Caribbean territories supported by RFA Mounts Bay and two Puma transport helicopters. More than 40 tonnes of aid has arrived including one ton of food and enough shelter for 13,000 people. RFA Mounts Bay is now heading to the U.S. Virgin Islands to pick up more supplies before moving on to the Turks and Caicos.

I thank the United States for allowing the U.S. Virgin Islands to be used as a hub for the distribution of aid and I'm grateful to France and to the U.S. for assisting the departure of British citizens. We have been glad to respond to a request for assistance from our French friends by sending an RAF C17 transport aircraft to provide heavy lift for their aid effort.

The Prime Minister has announced £57 million of help for the overseas territories in addition the government will match every pound donated to the Red Cross appeal up to a maximum of £3 million. Later today I'm going to chair COBRA to check on the progress of our response.

The Minister for the Commonwealth Lord Ahmad is arriving in the Turks and Caicos tonight to assess the situation on that British Territory. Once the emergency phase is over the overriding need will be for long term reconstruction to get our Caribbean territories back on their feet. In that effort; Britain, France, the U.S. and the Netherlands will be working side by side.

I've also today chaired a meeting on Libya with Secretary Tillerson and our colleagues from Italy, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and France. Libya is a front line in our common struggle against terrorism and illegal migration and we all share a vital interest in that country's stability. Our shared goal is to break the political deadlock and rally behind the United Nations envoy Ghassan Salame as he seeks to bring all sides together. Our friends in North Africa share the same interest in a peaceful Libya and that prize is wholly achievable. We now have a new opportunity to make progress by helping the Libyan people to reach a political settlement based on compromise and consensus.

Finally, we discussed the grave situation in East Asia where North Korea has defied the world by testing a nuclear device and launching ballistic missiles. On Monday the Security Council unanimously adopted UN Resolution 2375, including the toughest sanctions imposed on any country in the 21st century. Today we discussed how best to enforce those measures with the aim of maximising the pressure on North Korea to reach a diplomatic solution. We resolved to continue to work together and with important partners who can influence North Korea including China with the aim of securing the complete and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

On all these issues and more I'm delighted again to work alongside Rex, Secretary Tillerson, demonstrating once again the strength of the alliance between our two countries.