

New diplomatic vehicle regulation increases oversight

China is beefing up efforts to better manage diplomatic vehicles with the recent release of a new regulation.

The regulation, jointly promulgated last month by the Foreign Ministry and other several ministries, will for the first time control the total number of such vehicles, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a news briefing on Friday.

Applications for these vehicles will be approved individually and the owners are required to buy third-party liability insurance for an insured amount of at least 1 million yuan (\$147,000), the regulation says.

The number of diplomatic vehicles has surged amid China's opening-up, which has drawn a growing number of diplomats and larger staffs at international organizations, Geng said.

Under the regulation, new license plates will replace the old by May 1, Geng said. On Monday, the Laotian embassy received the first new plates. Previously, diplomatic license plates had the Chinese character for ambassador followed by numbers. Now the order is reversed, and the character is white instead of the former red.

The regulation allows ambassadors to register two such vehicles for private use. Other diplomats may register only one. Administrative and technical staff at diplomatic missions can register only one vehicle per household within the first six months of their terms of office in China.

Seven situations are listed in the regulation that would deprive the vehicle of diplomatic status. For example, a diplomatic vehicle loaned to someone who is not a diplomat forfeits its immunity privileges.

In addition, traffic violations will no longer be condoned as the ministries will closely oversee the purchase, use and traffic law compliance of these vehicles, Geng said.

The new regulation comes against the background of the long struggle to ease traffic jams in Beijing, where one-fifth of the more than 4 million vehicles in the city are restricted from the roads between rush hours on work days, said Sun Lijun, a professor of transportation at Tongji University in Shanghai.

Moreover, the recurrent smog in northern China has government promoting policies that limit emissions and help to improve air quality, he added.

Press release: Prime Minister's plans to transform the way we tackle domestic violence and abuse

Theresa May has today announced plans to transform the way we think about and tackle domestic violence and abuse – one of the most widespread and heinous offences, but one where victims are often let down by the legal system.

Domestic violence and abuse shatters lives but the way we deal with it at the moment does not go far enough – with a plethora of different offences and procedures scattered across the statute book.

This lack of clarity has led to an unacceptable diversity across the country in terms of the degree of effort put in to try and tackle it. Although the prosecution of, and convictions for, such offences have started to improve in recent years, there is inconsistency in the use and effectiveness of the various law enforcement measures across the country.

In recognition of this, the Prime Minister has announced plans for a major new programme of work leading towards bringing forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Act.

The programme of work will look at what more can be done to improve support for victims especially in the way the law, and legal procedures, currently work for such victims. Experts in this area will be invited to contribute ideas and proposals for improving the way the system works which is likely to lead to legislation – making it much easier for law enforcement bodies to find and use more consistently the measures at their disposal. The Prime Minister will also ask for any potential 'quick wins' in the intervening period to be identified and acted upon. The Prime Minister will directly oversee this work, which will be truly cross-governmental – but co-ordinated by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

Like the [Modern Slavery Act](#), the Prime Minister believes that the measures that come out of this work will raise public awareness of the problem – as well as encourage victims to report their abusers and see them brought to justice.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Domestic violence and abuse is a life shattering and absolutely abhorrent crime; tackling it is a key priority for this government – and something I have always attached a personal importance to, both as Home Secretary and now as Prime Minister. I am clear that we need to build on the [measures I introduced as Home Secretary](#) –

including the new offence of 'Controlling and Coercive Behaviour', Domestic Violence Protection Orders, and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – and ensure that no stone will be left unturned in delivering a system that increases convictions, and works better for victims.

She added:

I believe that the plans I have announced today have the potential to completely transform the way we think about and tackle domestic violence and abuse. There are thousands of people who are suffering at the hands of abusers – often isolated, and unaware of the options and support available to them to end it. Given the central importance of victim evidence to support prosecutions in this area, raising public awareness – as well as consolidating the law – will prove crucial.

[Germany is symbol of tolerance and hospitality for those in need of protection – UN chief Guterres](#)

17 February 2017 – Speaking to the media in Munich, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres hailed the important role Germany has placed at a number of multilateral institutions, including the European Union and the United Nations.

“Germany has been extremely active in all aspects in which the international community needs to come together to face the dramatic challenges that are threatening our daily lives,” said Mr. Guterres at a press encounter alongside German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

He further noted that in a world where diversity is perceived as a threat and not a richness and where so many populist, xenophobic demonstrations exist, Germany and Chancellor Merkel had been a symbol of “tolerance” and “hospitality” for people displaced from their homes and who are in need of protection.

“A symbol I would like to see followed in many, many other parts of the world in order for us to be able to respond to the dramatic suffering that we are witnessing because of the terrible conflicts that have spread around the world,” the UN chief added.

“So, in this moment, I would like to say that I am sure that the cooperation that, as Secretary-General, I will have with Germany and its Government will be as solid, as positive, as deep and as successful as the cooperation we had when, as High Commissioner for Refugees, I could be fully in support of the German policy for the protection of refugees.”

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres also underlined the need for global responses to global challenges such as complex and interlinked conflicts, rising terrorism, impact of climate change and enormous movements of people and migration.

He further emphasized the importance of multilateralism and for countries to come together and to use multilateral institutions, in a spirit of solidarity, to overcome the obstacles of today’s world.

Iraq: UN condemns car bomb attack in Baghdad

17 February 2017 – The United Nations today condemned the deadly terrorist attack in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, for which the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) has claimed responsibility.

“We condemn the terrorist attack in the south of Baghdad [...] This week has seen a series of such atrocious crimes in the Iraqi capital,” said the statement issued by the spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

“The United Nations will continue to stand by the Government and people of Iraq in their efforts to fight terrorism and violent extremism, notably by building trust and mutual understanding through peaceful and inclusive,” the statement added.

Meanwhile, the UN envoy in Iraq also strongly condemned yesterday’s car bomb attack in the Bayaa district of Baghdad, which, according to news reports, left more than 50 people dead.

“Yet again, the terrorists are continuing with their carnage against innocent civilians. This is totally unacceptable,” said the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Iraq, Ján Kubiš.

“The Iraqi people have shown their courage and determination in the fight against terrorism, and these desperate tactics by the terrorists will only increase the resolve of Iraqis, who want to live in peace and tranquility to terminate the so-called ISIL throughout the country,” Mr. Kubiš added.

[A decade on, UN urges all Governments to endorse convention on enforced disappearance](#)

17 February 2017 – Marking the tenth anniversary of an historic treaty to keep people from suffering enforced disappearance or secret detentions, the United Nations today urged all Governments that have not done so to ratify it, as the world body honoured victims separated from their loved ones.

The UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances on 20 December 2006, and it opened for signature the following February.

Speaking at a High-Level Assembly meeting, the current President of the 193-member UN body said that since its adoption, the Convention has filled “an important judicial void in the international system” by preventing future victimization and seeking to redress past wrongs.

“While the catalyst to establishing the Convention was the horrendous events that took place in Latin America during the 1970’s and 1980’s, in many parts of our world today the scourge of enforced disappearance continues,” said Peter Thomson.

As the international community’s attention focuses on implementing the 2030 Agenda, it is important that the Convention be seen as a vital element in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“This applies particularly to SDG 16 in promoting the rule of law, ensuring equal access to justice, ending impunity, protecting human rights, sustaining peace, and in achieving the central tenet of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind”, he continued, adding that faithful implementation of SDG 16 will create the conditions that will ensure no one will ever be subjected to enforced disappearance.

The idea that forced disappearances – in one form or another – continue today were echoed in the video message from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, who noted that most of the family members attending the high-level meeting have had members of their families disappear.

“The practice of enforced disappearance is not decreasing – it is morphing,” he said. “In the context of migration, internal conflict, transnational organized crime, humanitarian crises and the struggle against violent extremism, we are seeing new and alarming patterns of enforced disappearance.”

Mr. Thomson and Mr. Zeid commended the at least 55 Member States that have ratified or acceded to the Convention, and urged those remaining to join.

In their separate addresses, both senior officials also commended the work of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which alongside the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, is the main UN expert mechanism in this field.

Speaking on behalf of the Committee, its Chair, Santiago Corcuera Cabezut said there were 347 urgent actions currently under consideration by the Committee – up from just five in 2012.

“The values protected by this Convention are universal, and therefore, the universality of the instrument should be achieved in the near future, just like the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” he said.

To support the principles of the Convention, the UN General Assembly has designated 30 August as the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearance to draw attention to the global problem of enforced disappearance.