

# Statement to Parliament: PM statement on European Council: 6 February 2017

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the European Council, I am sure the whole House will want to join me in sending our congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen as she marks her Sapphire Jubilee today.

It is testament to Her Majesty's selfless devotion to the nation that she is not marking becoming our first Monarch to reign for sixty-five years with any special celebration, but instead by getting on with the job to which she has dedicated her life.

On behalf of the whole country, I am proud to offer Her Majesty our humble thanks for a lifetime of extraordinary service. Long may she continue to reign over us all.

Turning to last week's informal European Council in Malta, Britain is leaving the European Union but we are not leaving Europe – and a global Britain that stands tall in the world, will be a Britain that remains a good friend and ally to all our European partners.

So at this summit, we showed how Britain will continue to play a leading role in Europe long after we have left the EU.

In particular, through our contribution to the challenge of managing mass migration; through our Special Relationship with America – and through the new and equal partnership that we want to build between the EU and an independent, self-governing, global Britain.

Let me take each in turn.

## **Migration**

First, on migration, the discussion focused in particular on the route from Libya across the central Mediterranean.

As I have argued, we need a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach – and that is exactly what this council agreed.

This includes working hard in support of an inclusive political settlement to stabilise Libya, which will not only help to tackle migration flows but also counter terrorism.

It means working to reduce the pull factors that encourage people to risk their lives, building the capacity of the Libyans to return migrants to their own shores, treat them with dignity and help them return home.

It means looking beyond Libya and moving further upstream, including by urgently implementing the EU's External Investment Plan to help create more

opportunities in migrants' home countries – and by helping genuine refugees to claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

And it means better distinguishing between economic migrants and refugees, swiftly returning those who have no right to remain and thereby sending out a deterrence message to others thinking of embarking on perilous journeys.

And the council agreed action in all of these areas.

Britain is already playing a leading role in the region and at this summit I announced further steps including additional support for the Libyan coastguard and more than £30 million of new aid for the most vulnerable refugees across Greece, the Balkans, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan and Libya.

Britain is also setting up an £8 million special protection fund to keep men, women and children in the Mediterranean region safe from trafficking, sexual violence and labour exploitation as part of our commitment to tackle modern slavery.

And the council agreed with my call that we should do everything possible to deter this horrific crime, including by introducing tough penalties for those who trade in human misery and by working together to secure the necessary evidence for prosecutions that can put these criminals behind bars where they belong.

## **America**

Mr Speaker, turning to America, I opened a discussion on engaging the new administration and I was able to relay the conversation I had with President Trump at the White House about the important history of co-operation between the United States and the countries of Europe.

In particular, I confirmed that the President had declared his 100 per cent commitment to NATO as the cornerstone of our security in the West.

But I also made clear that every country needs to share the burden and play its full part, meeting the NATO target of spending 2 per cent on defence. Because, Mr Speaker, it is only by investing properly in our defence that we can ensure we are properly equipped to keep our people safe.

I was also able to relay my discussions with President Trump on the importance of maintaining the sanctions regime on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine.

And I very much welcome the strong words last week from the new US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, in confirming America's continued support for these sanctions.

Mr Speaker, of course, there are some areas where we disagree with the approach of the new administration. And we should be clear about those disagreements and about the values that underpin our response to the global

challenges that we face.

But I also argued at this council that we should engage patiently and constructively with America as a friend and ally – an ally that has helped guarantee the longest period of peace that Europe has ever known.

For we should be clear, Mr Speaker, that the alternative of division and confrontation would only embolden those who would do us harm, wherever they may be.

## **Brexit**

Finally turning to Brexit, European leaders welcomed the clarity of the objectives that we have set out for the negotiation ahead.

They warmly welcomed our ambition to build a new partnership between Britain and the European Union that is in the interests of both sides. They also welcomed the recognition that we in Britain want to see a strong and successful European Union, because that is in our interests and the interests of the whole world.

On the issue of acquired rights, the general view was that we should reach an agreement which applied equally to the other 27 member states and the UK, which is why we think a unilateral decision from the UK is not the right way forward.

But as I have said before, EU citizens living in the UK make a vital contribution to our economy and our society and without them we would be poorer and our public services weaker.

So we will make securing the reciprocal agreement that will guarantee their status a priority as soon as the negotiations begin, and I want to see this agreed as soon as possible because that is in everyone's interests.

Mr Speaker, our European partners now want to get on with the negotiations.

So do I.

And so does this House, which last week voted by a majority of 384 in support of the government triggering Article 50.

There are of course further stages for the Bill in Committee and in the other place. And it is right that this process should be completed properly.

But, Mr Speaker, the message is clear to all.

This House has spoken. And now is not the time to obstruct the democratically expressed wishes of the British people.

It is time to get on with leaving the European Union and building an independent, self-governing, global Britain.

And I commend this Statement to the House

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## Syria: UN provides emergency water around Aleppo, as 1.8 million cut off from water supply

6 February 2017 – The United Nations today voiced grave concern about nearly two million Syrians in the area of Aleppo who have been without water for almost a month, as UN agencies are helping to provide emergency access to some of the people in need.

The UN spokesperson today told journalists in New York that an estimated 1.8 million people in Aleppo city and rural eastern Aleppo have been cut off from their main source of water, which is under Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) control.

"The UN continues to respond to the water crisis by supplying fuel to operate 100 deep wells, and is supporting emergency water trucking, reaching nearly one million people in need of water assistance," the spokesperson said.

The UN is also working closely with its partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, to deliver food, nutrition, health and other emergency items to rural Homs.

The inter-agency convoy delivered items to 84,000 people in hard-to-reach Talbiseh yesterday, for the first time since 19 September.

"This convoy is the first cross-line land delivery in February and only the second in 2017," the spokesperson said.

He added that the UN continues to call for "unconditional, unimpeded and sustained access to all 4.72 million people in hard-to-reach locations across the country," including more than 600,000 in besieged locations.

Also today, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) confirmed that Stephen O'Brien, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, completed a two-day visit to Jordan. The country is the third-largest host of Syrian refugees in the region.

During his visit, Mr. O'Brien met with senior Jordanian officials, including Prime Minister Hani Mulki and General Mahmoud Frihat, the head of the Jordanian Armed Forces. He also visited the Azraq refugee camp, which is operated by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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# News story: PM meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu: 6 February 2017

From:

First published:

6 February 2017

Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May met with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel and discussed free trade, security and Iran.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister hosted Prime Minister Netanyahu at Downing Street today for their first bilateral meeting and a working lunch.

In their discussions, the Prime Ministers committed to working together to build on our longstanding relationship and the strong ties that already exist between our 2 countries in a wide range of areas, from trade and investment, to innovation and technology, and defence and security.

They discussed their shared belief in free trade and agreed to establish a new UK-Israel Trade Working Group to continue the progress we have seen in our burgeoning trade and investment relationship, and to prepare the ground for a post-Brexit trade agreement. It was noted that Lord Price will visit Israel soon to take this forward. They also discussed opportunities to increase investment in research and development and technology, and strengthen partnerships in these areas between our governments, universities and businesses.

They talked about the important work we do together on intelligence-sharing and cyber-security, and committed to talk further about how we can deepen this co-operation, to help keep our people safe.

They also discussed a number of international issues. On Iran, the Prime Minister was clear that the nuclear deal is vital and must be properly enforced and policed, while recognising concerns about Iran's pattern of destabilising activity in the region. They also talked about the Middle East Peace Process and the UK's firm commitment to a 2-state solution as the best way to bring stability and peace to the region. The Prime Minister reiterated the UK's

opposition to settlement activity.

As we prepare to mark 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, the Prime Minister underlined that Britain remains a close and firm friend of Israel and reiterated our support for Jewish communities in the UK. She invited Prime Minister Netanyahu to attend events taking place in the UK to mark the anniversary in November, as a Guest of Government. He also invited her to visit him in Israel.

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## News story: Innovative uses of data for defence staff: apply for funding

From:

First published:

6 February 2017

Part of:

Organisations can apply for a share of £6 million to investigate new ways of using data to improve decision-making in defence.

The [Ministry of Defence](#) (MOD) has up to £3 million to invest in innovative new technologies, processes and ways of operating that improve the ability of defence staff to analyse and exploit data in decision-making.

A further £3 million could be invested to develop the best ideas in a second phase of the competition.

The MOD is seeking solutions in 3 challenge areas:

- rapid and automated integration of new sensors
- freeing up personnel by the innovative use of machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence for military advantage
- effective use of operator cognitive capacity, particularly by human-machine teaming

The MoD is making more and more use of sensors. This means there is an increasingly large volume of complex data available to military operators and decision-makers.

It needs to increase its ability to analyse data and quickly use it to make informed and effective decisions.

This funding competition is part of [SBRI](#) (the Small Business Research

Initiative). A first phase seeks initial ideas. Winners of phase 1 funding will compete in a second phase to develop the idea further.

The competition will also see projects split between a fast track and standard track approach. The aim is to achieve greater pace but also to allow smaller companies and low maturity solutions to take part.

- the competition is open, and the deadline for phase 1 proposals is midday on 21 March 2017
- SBRI is open to any organisation, and projects will attract 100% funded development contracts
- phase 1 fast track projects could attract up to £150,000 and are expected to last up to 3 months
- phase 1 standard track projects could attract up to £100,000 and are expected to last up to 6 months
- briefing events for potential applicants will be held on 23 February 2017 and 27 February 2017

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## **Burundi: Measures being used to 'criminalize' work of human rights defenders, warn UN experts**

6 February 2017 – Speaking out against a ban and provisional suspension of a number of civil society organizations in Burundi, United Nations rights experts warned today of growing repression of human rights defenders and groups amid the already difficult environment in which they.

Also worrying, according to a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) were two bills adopted by the National Assembly of Burundi last December that require local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to obtain authorization from the Minister of the Interior for any activity and that the work of foreign NGOs must comply with priorities set by the Government.

"These moves are just the latest in a series of attacks on the rights to freedom of expression and association in Burundi," said the rights experts.

"Disturbingly, these measures take particular aim at human rights defenders and independent civil society, and are being used to unduly obstruct and criminalize their work on broad and often fallacious grounds."

Authorities in Burundi banned five civil society organizations in October 2016. In December 2016, they also barred two other groups, one of which was working for good governance and the fight against corruption. Additionally, four other organizations have also been provisionally suspended.



Relatives of a student killed in the Jabe neighbourhood of Bujumbura, mourn at home in the Burundian capital. Photo: Phil Moore/IRIN

Also in the release, the experts reiterated the “unanimous” strong stance of various bodies, including the UN Human Rights Council – the inter-governmental body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world – on allegations of serious human rights violations in Burundi, the experts called on the Governmental to “an end to the climate of impunity currently prevailing in the country” and to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and with OHCHR in a positive and collaborative manner, as an essential step towards ending the major crisis facing the country.

“It is crucial that the State promotes and protects the rights to freedom of expression and association enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Burundi is a State party,” they said.

“All individuals, including human rights defenders, have the right to express themselves and associate freely, without fear of threats, intimidation, violence, arbitrary detention or enforced or disappearance,” the experts added.

The human rights experts voicing their concern included:

Independent experts and Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva based Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.