

Press release: Late payment reporting guidance launched for large businesses

- guidance published ahead of measures coming into force in April 2017 to boost transparency of payment practices to help small and medium sized businesses (SMEs)
- regulations laid in parliament today will make large businesses publish details on the time taken to pay their suppliers to shine a light on bad practice
- latest figures show SMEs are owed £26.3 billion in overdue payments

Guidance to help large businesses report on how quickly they pay their suppliers will be published today (31 January 2017), as regulations are laid in parliament by Small Business Minister Margot James.

The regulations confirm that from April 2017, large companies and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) will have to publically report twice a year on their payment practices and performance, including the average time taken to pay supplier invoices.

Failure to report will be a criminal offence and the guidance published today will help large businesses and limited liability partnerships prepare for these measures coming into force.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

The UK is home to a record 5.5 million small businesses and the industrial strategy will help address many of the challenges they face getting finance and scaling up. It's completely unacceptable that small and medium-sized businesses are owed £26.3 billion in late payments, which hampers their ability to grow and has no place in an economy that works for all.

Large businesses have an important role to play and the guidance published today will help them fulfil their responsibilities and improve payment practices across the board.

The changes are part of a package to shine a spotlight on bad payment practice and lead to improved standards. This includes the appointment of the Small Business Commissioner to support small businesses in resolving payment disputes, with the Commissioner's office expected to be up and running later in the year.

Recent findings from the payment processor Bacs report that nearly half of the UK's small-to-medium sized businesses experience late payment, with £26.3 billion owed to them in total. The regulations laid in Parliament today aim to tackle this by increasing transparency and helping small businesses make informed decisions about who they do business with.

The [modern industrial strategy green paper](#) sets out a plan to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. We encourage businesses of all sizes and anyone with an interest to respond.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

The new duty to report is the centrepiece of the government's transparency agenda to combat poor payment practice. We welcome this as an important tool to change a UK business culture where it is deemed acceptable to pay small firms late. We estimate that if payments were made promptly, 50,000 business deaths could be avoided every year, adding £2.5 billion to the UK economy. It's now crucial that these regulations are introduced and robustly enforced with proper sanctions put in place for any large business that tries to hide its payment practices.

There is now a clear will to tackle poor payments. Together with the new Small Business Commissioner and the developing corporate governance agenda to improve supply chain respect at board level, we must see a reduction in the £26 billion owed in late payments.

Jacqueline de Rojas, Managing Director of UK, Ireland and Northern Europe at Sage, said:

Our small business customers across the country tell us that late payment is still one of their biggest barriers to competing with larger suppliers. We know it impacts their ability to invest and innovate. And when you consider that people building these businesses create two-thirds of all new jobs, it's easy to see what a detrimental effect this could have on the financial health of the nation.

Through partnerships, advice and digital tools, we work hard to help small businesses manage cash flow challenges, and this new light-touch regulation is good news for them. This is a welcome move in the right direction to creating a stronger, fairer economy and making the UK the best place to start and run a business.

[Press release: UK to boost jobs and](#)

trade for world's poorest countries

The UK will sharpen its focus on economic development in the world's poorest countries to help create economic growth that will sustain rapidly growing populations, provide a long term solution to poverty and deal with the root causes of problems that affect Britain, International Development Secretary Priti Patel announced today.

Over the next decade a billion more young people will enter the job market, mainly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa's population is set to double by 2050. This demographic challenge will add to the pressure of protracted crises and mass migration.

DFID's first [Economic Development Strategy](#) sets out how investment in economic development will help developing nations speed up their rate of economic growth, trade more and industrialise faster, and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty.

By helping the world's poorest countries grow their economies, this investment will help create the UK's trading partners of the future, boost global prosperity and address some of the root causes of global issues such as mass migration and instability that affect the UK.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

There is no task more urgent than defeating poverty. The UK has a proud record of supporting people in desperate humanitarian crises, but emergency help alone won't tackle the global changes we face.

With dramatic increases in population across Africa and Asia, developing nations must act fast to create jobs and investment, which is why Global Britain is leading a more open, more modern approach to development through our economic development to help the world's poorest countries stand on their own two feet.

Over the next decade a billion more young people will enter the job market. Africa's population is set to double by 2050 and as many as 18 million extra jobs will be needed. Failure will consign a generation to a future where jobs and opportunity are out of reach, potentially fuelling instability and mass migration with direct consequences for Britain.

Developing countries want to harness trade, growth and investment opportunities, and Britain will lead the way to lift huge numbers out of grinding poverty to prosperity.

The department will work across government to increase the number and quality of jobs in poor countries, enable businesses to grow and prosper, and also support better infrastructure, technology and a skilled and healthy

workforce.

Today's announcement builds on the UK's existing work to drive economic development, which has helped almost 70 million people access financial services, over 6 million people improve their land and property rights, and improved access to clean energy for over 6 million people.

Through the new Economic Development Strategy DFID will:

- build the potential for developing countries to trade more with the UK and the world
- create economic opportunities in fragile and conflict states where jobs and livelihoods are desperately needed
- build partnerships with business – including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – to make it easier for companies, including those in the UK, to invest in markets of the future
- work closely with the City of London so it becomes the leading financial centre for the developing world
- focus investment in job-creating sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure and commercial agriculture to provide strong foundations for sustainable growth
- use the UK's voice in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to argue for better and fairer trading rules
- strengthen institutions, tackle corruption and help countries mobilise their own domestic resources to support their development
- continue to champion innovative private finance investment to stimulate growth. CDC will be at the heart of this.

[Yemen: UN envoy condemns attack on building used to monitor cessation of hostilities](#)

30 January 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Yemen strongly condemned today the attack on the De-escalation and Coordination Committee building, which regularly houses UN Staff, in Dhahran Al-Janoub, which is in Saudi Arabia near the Yemeni border.

“It is especially tragic that this attack took place at a point in time where we are calling for a restoration of the cessation of hostilities,” UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said.

Noting that the building attacked was supposed to host the committee that will oversee the cessation of hostilities and report on violations, the Special Envoy said: “The United Nations maintains a regular presence in this building and this incident is not a sign of good faith.”

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed urged Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress to commit to participate in the De-escalation and Coordination Committee's preparatory workshop. He underscored the importance of the support to the work of the committee which is critical for the success of a renewed truce.

"It is of the interest of both parties in the conflict to commit to the rapid resumption of a long-lasting cessation of hostilities in the coming days and weeks. The improvement in the security situation will open space for renewed dialogue," he added.

In a briefing to the UN Security Council late last week, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed said those seeking a military solution will only prolong the suffering caused by the war, allow the terrorist threat to grow and deepen the challenges that will face the eventual recovery. "With political courage and will, the war can be stopped," he said, pressing both sides to demonstrate the political courage needed to stop the nearly two-year-long war.

[World must implement pledges on women's empowerment and rights – UN Women deputy chief](#)

30 January 2017 – Speaking at a consultation in preparation for the Commission on Status of Women, a body exclusively dedicated to promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, a senior United Nations official today called for sustained commitment and leadership to ensure a successful outcome of the Commission.

"We are at an important [juncture] in the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and women's human rights," said Lakshmi Puri, the Deputy Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

Recalling recent adoption of a number of far-reaching global commitments, such as Beijing+20 (the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on climate change, the New Urban Agenda, and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, she added: "Now it is about the normative of implementation – how do we implement different parts of the compact and how do we follow up and monitor the implementation."

Ms. Puri was speaking at a multi-stakeholder forum, which has been organized to contribute to the preparations for the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women – a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council – that will meet in March this year.

In particular, today's forum sought to raise awareness on existing commitments as well as to identify key areas and issues that should be considered by the Commission in the context of its priority theme, and to strengthen dialogue and galvanize partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the outcomes of the Commission.

It also provided a platform to share result-oriented approaches and strategies and to highlight areas that require enhanced consensus.

Further in her remarks the UN-Women deputy chief said the upcoming session, held under the theme of 'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work,' will provide concrete, practical and action-oriented recommendations that will cover significant new ground, on overcoming structural barriers to gender equality, gender-based discrimination and violence against women at work.

VIDEO: Speaking at the forum, UN Women's deputy chief Lakshmi Puri said that "enhanced interventions" are required in order to tackle "persistent gender inequalities and gaps" in the workplace.

"There is a dynamic new element of assessing how the world of work is changing due to technology, migration, and other factors and whether women can be enabled to leapfrog beneficially into this new context and not adversely affected and left behind," she added.

Also in her statement, Ms. Puri underlined important commitments such as those under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on gender equality and women's empowerment and spoke of processes underway in different regions of the world to prepare for the session.

[UN agency 'alarmed' by uncertainty facing refugees in the process of being resettled in US](#)

30 January 2017 – The head of the United Nations refugee agency today said he is "deeply worried" by the uncertainty facing thousands of refugees around the world who are in the process of being resettled to the United States after the country suspended its refugee programme last week.

According to a news release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 800 refugees were set to make America their new home this week alone, but instead find themselves barred from travelling to the US.

The statement follows President Donald Trump's signing last Friday of an Executive Order that, among things, suspends the US refugee programme for 120 days and, according to the media, bars entry of refugees from several mostly Muslim countries, including Syria, until further notice.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi underlined once again UNHCR's position that refugees should receive equal treatment for protection and assistance, and opportunities for resettlement, regardless of their religion, nationality or race.

UNHCR estimates, based on average monthly figures for the last 15 years, that 20,000 refugees in precarious circumstances might have been resettled to the US during the 120 days covered by the Order.

"Refugees are anxious, confused and heartbroken at this suspension in what is already a lengthy process," the release said.

"Those accepted for resettlement by the United States are, after a rigorous US security screening process, coming to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. UNHCR hopes that they will be able to do so as soon as possible," the release added.

Noting that for decades, the US has been a global leader in refugee protection, a tradition rooted in the tolerance and generosity of the American people, UNHCR expressed the hope that the country will continue its strong leadership role and its long history of protecting those who are fleeing conflict and persecution.

Meanwhile, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement on child refugees that might be affected by the new US policy.

"The needs of refugees have never been greater. Worldwide 28 million children have been uprooted by conflict, driven from their homes by violence and terror. They need our help," the statement said.

"The United States has a long and proud tradition of protecting children fleeing war and persecution. We trust that this support will continue and that the recent measures will prove to be temporary. All refugee children need our support."

UNICEF said it is committed to continuing its work with governments and other partners around the world to help some of the most vulnerable children everywhere, from Syria to Yemen to South Sudan.