

Third Meeting of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

News story

The Commission met for the third time, on Tuesday 4 October 2022.



UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

They discussed in detail the range of options for recognition and marking this period of our history that may be considered and eventually recommended to the Prime Minister. The Commission also looked in detail at the public consultation that will be launched shortly. Further details will follow.

The Commission continues to engage with stakeholders including bereaved families groups and has started hosting stakeholder meetings across the UK. The Commission has noted that a key theme emerging from these meetings at this early stage is that people want future generations to learn about what people went through during the pandemic whether through the education system or museums. Another key theme is that people want to be able to visit memorials that are accessible and local to them to remember those who sadly died during the pandemic.

The Commission is keen for organisations and members of the public to complete the [local Covid Commemoration survey](#) as this will play an important part in informing the Commission of existing initiatives across the UK.

The Commission will meet again in November.

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UK to give air defence missiles to help Ukraine defend against rockets

The UK will donate cutting edge air defence missiles to Ukraine which can help protect against Russian missile strikes, the Defence Secretary announced today.

The AMRAAM rockets, which will be provided in the coming weeks for use with the NASAMS air defence systems pledged by the US, are the first donated by the UK which are capable of shooting down cruise missiles.

The rockets will help to protect Ukraine's critical national infrastructure, with the announcement coming days after Russian missiles struck civilian targets in cities across Ukraine.

Hundreds of additional air defence missiles, of other types previously provided, will also be donated as part of the package, along with hundreds of additional aerial drones to support Ukraine's information gathering and logistics capabilities, and a further 18 howitzer artillery guns, in addition to the 64 already delivered.

Bolstering Ukraine's air defences has been and remains a priority for UK military support. So far we have provided a variety of air defence systems including Stormer vehicles fitted with Starstreak launchers, and hundreds of anti-air missiles.

Ben Wallace announced the latest tranche of equipment ahead of a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels today (Thurs 13 Oct), where Allies met on the sidelines yesterday to discuss further support for Ukraine. It also comes as Ukraine prepares to honour veterans and fallen soldiers on Defenders Day tomorrow (Fri 14 Oct).

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Russia's latest indiscriminate strikes on civilian areas in Ukraine warrant further support to those seeking to defend their nation. So today I have authorised the supply of AMRAAM anti-aircraft missiles to Ukraine.

These weapons will help Ukraine defend its skies from attacks and strengthen their overall missile defence alongside the US NASAMS.

The UK will also give £10 million to NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine. The funding will help to provide urgent non-lethal assistance to Ukraine such as winter clothes, shelters, generators, fuel trucks and ambulances for the Ukrainian Army ahead of the winter.

The Defence Secretary will urge his Allied counterparts to continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. They will review the implementation of decisions taken at the Madrid Summit designed to strengthen NATO's collective deterrence and defence. This will be the first time that Finland and Sweden will attend as official invitees.

They will also discuss defence industrial capacity, to ensure that Allies are able to increase stockpiles of munitions so that we can keep supporting Ukraine, while remaining ready to defend NATO territory.

Defence Ministers will speak about the recent sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines, as well as how the Alliance can safeguard critical infrastructure from future attacks.

NATO Allies have stepped up their presence in the Baltic and North Seas in response to the attacks, increasing security around key infrastructure across multiple domains, including with satellites, ships, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, and anti-drone systems.

Renewed momentum on peace in Colombia: UK statement at UN Security Council

Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to thank SRSR Ruiz Massieu, Ms Moreno, and Ambassador Muhith for their briefings. And I give a warm welcome to welcome Foreign Minister Leyva and Ambassador Zalabata to the Council today. Their presence with us is a reflection of their personal commitments to the peace process, and to working in partnership with this Council. So let me make three remarks today.

Firstly, the United Kingdom welcomes the renewed momentum for peace in Colombia. The new Government's commitment to implementation of the peace agreement was clearly demonstrated through President Petro's attendance at the first meeting of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Peace Agreement (CSIVI) and the National Commission of Security Guarantees on 2 October. We commend the Government's focus on vital rural reforms including the intention to accelerate the titling and purchase of land. We note the progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace with the opening of three new cases and with another due to be opened on Sexual and Gender based violence.

Second, we encourage the Government to keep emphasis on the comprehensive implementation of the agreement, despite the challenges. We remain deeply concerned by the ongoing threats and violence faced by former combatants and human rights defenders. We welcome the swift action taken by the Government to set up 14 command posts as recommended by the Emergency Protection Plan. It is clear that further security initiatives are urgently needed. We welcome

the new government's further commitment to making further progress on implementing the gender and ethnic provisions of the agreement including on land ownership.

Third, Mr. President, we recognise the complexity of the instability in Colombia and the need for a multi-dimensional approach to address violence and ensure human security. In this light, the UK welcomes the progress made towards reinitiating talks with ELN. We hope that the delegations to peace talks will be representative and that lessons will be learned from the process which led to the 2016 agreement.

The United Kingdom also welcomes Colombia's commitment to reinforce international cooperation to tackle narco-trafficking and bring to justice those that profit from the misery of the drugs trade, in both producer and consumer countries.

Finally, President, let me reaffirm the United Kingdom's support to Colombia and to the Colombian people who remain committed to implementing the peace agreement despite the many challenges they face. In particular we look forward to working with Colombia, the UN and our co-penholder Mexico on the upcoming renewal of the UN Verification Mission's mandate. Thank you.

Strengthening the non-proliferation and disarmament system against growing global instability: UK statement at UN First Committee

Mr Chair

The maintenance of international peace and security, including through the suppression of acts of aggression, is one of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations and at the core of this Committee's mandate. Article 2 of the Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. On 24 February this year, the Russian Federation trampled over those fundamental principles by launching an unprovoked and barbaric invasion of its neighbour, Ukraine.

Over seven months into this war, its disastrous impact – on Ukraine, on Russia, and on the world – is clear.

And now, President Putin's efforts to incorporate Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson into the territory of the Russian Federation constitute a new low point in Russia's blatant flouting of international law, and a further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial

integrity.

The United Kingdom is proud to stand in solidarity with the Government and people of Ukraine, as they fight for their freedom and independence.

Mr Chair

Russia's aggression has also cast a long shadow over international disarmament negotiations.

Unable to acknowledge the consequences of its war for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – including issuing grossly irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, undermining security assurances by flouting the Budapest Memorandum, and recklessly endangering the safety of Europe's largest nuclear power plant – Russia alone blocked the adoption by consensus of a final document at the Tenth Review Conference in August.

Russia also tried – and failed – to airbrush from the record the criticisms it faced at the Conference on Disarmament this year.

Russia has attempted to exploit the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention by deliberately misrepresenting peaceful public health cooperation between the United States and Ukraine as a biological weapons programme. The Formal Consultative Meeting convened under Article V last month demonstrated that there is no merit in Russia's allegations. Such disinformation risks undermining scientific and technical cooperation between States for peaceful purposes under Article X.

Russia has also made baseless allegations about Ukraine in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Russia and its ally, the Assad regime in Syria, continue to impugn the expert, impartial and evidence-based work of the Technical Secretariat.

Consistent reports of Russia's use of anti-personnel mines and victim-activated booby traps calls into question its compliance with its obligations under Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The United Kingdom, as President of the Tenth Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, expressed its grave concern at Russia's repeated use of cluster munitions.

Moreover, Russia has resorted to desperate procedural manoeuvres to curtail any discussion of its war, or of the means and methods by which it is pursuing it. Russia repeatedly attempts to rewrite history to justify the unjustifiable. It portrays itself as the victim, when it is the aggressor. It blames everyone but itself for the consequences of its own choices. Try as it might, though, Russia cannot hide from the revulsion the world feels at its actions.

Mr Chair

We cannot let Russia's aggression distract our attention from the many other challenges the world faces.

We reiterate that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon. We regret that Iran has chosen not to seize the opportunity to restore the JCPOA and instead continues to escalate its nuclear programme. We urge Iran to return to full implementation of the JCPOA and to urgently provide credible answers to the International Atomic Energy Agency's separate investigations to fulfil Iran's legally binding safeguards obligations.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched an unprecedented number of ballistic missiles in 2022. It has also restored its nuclear test site. Any nuclear test must merit a swift and robust response from the international community. These programmes continue to threaten international peace, the stability of the Korean Peninsula and the integrity of the NPT, and violate unanimously adopted Security Council Resolutions. We call on all Member

States to condemn these provocations, and urge the DPRK to take concrete steps towards denuclearisation in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Syria's non-compliance with its chemical weapons obligations must be resolved, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 2118.

More generally, the illicit and uncontrolled proliferation of conventional arms contributes to instability, terrorism, and organised crime and causes untold death and devastation.

We are concerned by continuing efforts by some States to undermine and discredit Multilateral Arms Control Regimes, which are a critical part of the non-proliferation system, and facilitate exports and technology transfer around the world.

And States' consistent concern that information and communication technologies can be used for purposes that are inconsistent with international peace and security is now a reality.

The world must stand together to promote the application and observance of International Humanitarian Law both in the physical and virtual worlds, and in outer space.

Mr Chair

Notwithstanding these dark clouds, there are some rays of light. The fact that every country bar one was prepared to join consensus on the draft final document at the NPT Review Conference was an expression of their determination to uphold the centrality of the NPT. And we welcome the decision to establish a working group on strengthening the review process.

We warmly congratulate President Gustavo Zlauvinen and the whole bureau for their superb efforts. We will continue to work in this constructive spirit in the new cycle.

The Ninth BTWC Review Conference at the end of November is a vital opportunity to strengthen this important regime, including through proposals

for a science and technology review process, operationalising Article VII, and more agile decision-making. To keep the Convention fit for future challenges, we also support the proposal for an Experts Working Group to study the key issues and identify steps to strengthen implementation of the Convention in all aspects.

We also welcome the progress made by the Open-Ended Working Group on reducing threats to space systems through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, thereby preventing an arms race in outer space and maintaining the use of space for peaceful purposes. This task is increasingly urgent. Space systems underpin life in the 21st Century, and are vital for the functioning of the global economy, for the mitigation of the climate and humanitarian crises we face, and for ensuring defence and security. Disruption or damage to these systems could have far reaching consequences, including conflict.

One of our key concerns is the destructive testing of direct ascent anti-satellite missiles. Such tests generate significant debris and puts continued use of space at risk, as well as being potentially destabilising. I am therefore pleased to announce that the United Kingdom has joined others in committing not to carry out destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. We encourage others to do the same, especially those countries with such capabilities.

Mr Chair

We must seize on these opportunities. In the face of growing global instability, the international security, non-proliferation and disarmament system has never been so important. Instead of undermining it, in this Committee or elsewhere, now is the time for the

UN membership to work together to protect and strengthen it. It is in all our interests to do so.

Foreign Secretary statement: UN General Assembly vote on Ukraine

Press release

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly has said today's vote on Ukraine at the UN General Assembly shows that Putin stands alone on the international stage.



The Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly, said:

Today's UN General Assembly vote is a powerful demonstration of the international community's widespread condemnation of Russia's outrageous, illegal attempts to annex the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

This is an important show of international unity against an aggressor that seeks to destabilise the international norms that protect us all. In the face of President Putin's unprovoked aggression, 143 nations across the globe have come together in defence of the UN Charter and in solidarity with Ukraine.

The vote is indisputable evidence of what we have known for some time – Putin stands alone on the international stage and his actions are driving his country further into self-inflicted isolation.

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