

COP26 President Alok Sharma's keynote speech to Columbia University World Leaders Forum

Good morning everyone.

And can I first start by thanking President Bollinger and Alex for the very warm welcome I've had today.

I am now into the final weeks of my time as President of the 26th United Nations Conference on Climate Change, or COP26.

It has been a near-three year journey in the thick of international climate politics and the maelstrom of wider geopolitics.

And it remains an absolute privilege to have opportunities like this one, to speak as part of your World Leaders Forum,

and to celebrate Columbia's pioneering climate school, the first of its kind in the United States.

Your school has had an auspicious start.

Not least with your roundtable, at COP26, with President Obama.

I understand the former President, and of course Columbia alumnus, noted the energy, and remarkable potential, of participating students.

That is coming from a man who knows what it means to mobilise, and to inspire action.

I have felt that same force when I've met youth climate activists around the world over the past few years.

And I do understand the anger of young people.

It is your future most at risk.

You and your generation will have to live with the consequences of the actions, or inaction, of current world leaders.

I have been directly challenged by young people on the need to push the world to go a lot faster to tackle global warming.

I convened an international meeting for ministers, on implementing the Glasgow Climate Pact, in Copenhagen in May. We saw youth protesters make their feelings and frustrations plain.

Every Minister saw that as they came into the meeting.

And at the end of the meeting, I encouraged Ministers to leave the meeting with the voices of those young people ringing in their ears.

Hearing those voices every time they made government decisions affecting the future of the planet.

And that brings me to the focus of my address.

You all know this, but it sometimes needs to be repeated.

We are facing a climate crisis.

The scientific evidence is absolutely clear, it's unequivocal.

We know that we are running out of time to avert catastrophe.

The reality is that if we do not bend the curve of global warming downwards, in this decisive decade – eight and a half years left – we will go beyond the limits of our ability to adapt.

Around the world, we are already seeing what that future could look like.

And that future is absolutely terrifying.

For some people across the world, it is here right now.

In recent weeks, an area the size of the United Kingdom has been flooded in Pakistan.

A monster monsoon bringing in its wake death, destruction and displacement of millions of people.

Hurricane Fiona has barrelled through the Caribbean.

This summer we have seen the US experience its worst drought in over a thousand years.

Europe has experienced its worst drought in 500 years.

And China its worst ever drought, as record temperatures have dried up key parts of the Yangtze River.

I could go on.

You will all have examples as well.

I was with the new UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell earlier this week, and he made the point that the reality of these events is a cycle of disaster, rebuild, disaster, rebuild, for millions of people around the world.

We need to do better.

And we also know that the increasing frequency, and ferocity, of these

extreme weather events is set to worsen.

So, in the context of the pressing need for more urgent climate action, I want to talk about my role, and the COP Presidency.

Our drive to implement the outcomes of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

The ability of global coalitions of the willing, including the United States, to deliver change.

And, most importantly, the capacity of the young climate leaders in the room this morning to hold governments and businesses to account.

The primary role of the COP President is to oversee a COP Summit, deliver a negotiated outcome, and then drive its implementation in the post-summit Presidency year.

I am proud that, when the world came to Glasgow last November, the UK Presidency shepherded nearly 200 countries to forge the historic Glasgow Climate Pact.

But the outcome of that Pact was not an inevitability.

There was huge scepticism in the international community at the start of the UK Presidency about whether we really could make progress on the road to, and at Glasgow.

And personally, COP26 was my very first COP – I had never been to one before.

But because of that, very early on, I sought the advice of past COP Presidents.

And from my very first day as COP President Designate, I sought to meet world leaders, ministers, chief executives, youth and civil society groups, and communities on the front line of climate change, around the world.

This was all about ensuring an open and neutral Presidency.

Underpinned by the principles of transparency, inclusivity, consistency of message and trust,

And trust, I have to say to you, is an incredibly fragile commodity in climate negotiations.

I wanted to ensure that those four principles would be the foundation on which we built an ambitious COP26 outcome.

But, having spent two years talking to governments around the world, trying to craft the key elements of the Glasgow Climate Pact, we almost fell short in the final hours of COP26.

We had an opacity in those one-minute-to-midnight negotiations.

China and India raised objections to key language on coal and fossil fuel subsidies.

We went behind the stage to negotiate.

As we negotiated, I wrote out word-by-word the minimum changes which China and India could accept.

I can tell you it was fraught.

I still have the marked up piece of A4 paper at home on which we wrote out the text.

For me, that is an eternal reminder that things could have turned out very differently.

Because there were critical moments in those final hours when I was really concerned that a global deal, effectively two years in gestation, was about to collapse.

For anyone watching, you will have seen me crossing the plenary floor, showing the proposed revised text to the Chairs of the UNFCCC negotiating groups.

Yes, I did become emotional, when I put the final text to the floor.

I was disappointed that, after such effort to run a transparent Presidency, the COP26 negotiating process was ending in hushed and rushed conversations.

But I was, and continue to be, incredibly proud of what my UK COP Presidency team achieved in delivering the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Our overall goal, right from the start, was to garner enough commitments to ensure that we were keeping alive the prospect of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

And we achieved that goal.

Prior to the Paris Agreement, scientists were telling us that the world was on course for 4 degrees of global warming by the end of the century.

Post-Paris it was 3 degrees.

After Glasgow, we were able to say with credibility that we had kept 1.5 alive.

And whilst 1.5 degrees was our North Star, we made critical progress on adaptation, on finance, on loss and damage, on empowerment, and on so many other issues.

In fact the Chair of the Climate Vulnerables Forum recognised the steps we had taken “on all the priorities of the most climate threatened nations”.

Yes, we achieved a Pact.

But frankly, the Pact is nothing but words on a page.

The pulse of 1.5 will remain weak until the Pact, every element of it, is implemented in full.

And we have to be frank that implementation is very challenging.

First, we did all sign up to an ambitious programme of work.

And second, the world has changed markedly since last November, overshadowed by the Putin regime's brutal and illegal war in Ukraine.

Countries around the world are facing perilous economic and geopolitical conditions, and threats to energy security.

We are grappling with soaring inflation, rising debt, and food insecurity.

For many, climate has not been front of mind.

But I do truly believe there remains cause for hope.

I see climate leaders doing remarkable work.

Take for example the Prime Minister of Viet Nam, who I saw again last month.

He is utterly relentless in driving his country's economic transformation, based on clean energy.

And we as a G7 nation, and other developed nations, are supporting that effort with Viet Nam's Just Energy Transition Partnership, which can be the gold standard for sustainable economic growth for developing countries around the world.

Businesses and financial institutions are radically reimagining what it means to be a responsible, 21st century company.

Bill Gates, who I spent time with earlier this week, rightly noted that COP26 was the COP where businesses came in force.

And you will have seen, just last week, the founder of Patagonia, dedicating his company's fortune to the climate cause.

Now, where are we in this process?

We will get a clearer sense that when the UNFCCC publishes its latest Synthesis Report.

The deadline for countries to make submissions on their 2030 emissions reduction targets is tomorrow.

I am sure that the report will make clear that the job is far from done.

I was in Indonesia earlier this month at the G20 Climate, Energy and Environment Ministers Meeting.

Unbelievably, our negotiators had to fight to simply restate commitments we have all previously signed up to.

Inexplicably, there were debates about the unequivocal science of the IPCC reports.

Some countries sought to push against language from the Glasgow Climate Pact, agreed just ten months ago, and the foundational Paris Agreement, on which that Pact is built.

And there was even rowing back on the collective agreement that was reached by G20 leaders last year to lead on climate action.

So my message here in New York this week has been frank.

The Glasgow and Paris language must be the baseline of our ambition.

We cannot retreat from that.

And this is a critical moment to redouble our efforts, resist backsliding, and ultimately go further, and faster.

Collectively, the world's richest countries, and the biggest emitters, have looked too many climate vulnerable countries and communities in the eyes, and promised too much action,

to step back now.

To do so would be a betrayal.

And the United States is a key player in all of these discussions.

It is the second biggest emitter, and the largest by capita.

The US therefore has a responsibility to lead on climate action.

In all my travels as COP President, and all my time speaking with the world's most vulnerable countries and communities, that is a firmly held view.

They want to continue to see the US leading.

Thankfully, the US also has unparalleled resources, and expertise.

That was evident, as we all watched, with a mixture of hope and trepidation, the machinations surrounding the Build Back Better Bill,

and the ultimate passage of the Inflation Reduction Act,

the largest climate spending package in US history.

I congratulate President Biden, and my very good friend John Kerry for their roles in securing that historic achievement.

So now, I urge the Senate to now press home the advantage.

Match the domestic ambition with international action.

In particular, deliver the billions of international climate finance being asked of Congress for the coming years.

Finance, my friends, is a key ask of climate vulnerable countries and we must all, including the United States, deliver on our promises.

I want to turn now specifically to the role of the students in the room.

I know there is much talk of the midterms right now, and of the partisan nature of climate policy at federal level.

In fact because of this,

I encourage you to run towards the heart of the climate debate, on both sides of the aisle, at national and subnational level.

Of course I know that many of you will be considering the 30-minute hop on the 1 train, to Wall Street.

That work will be pivotal too.

All of the climate action I have talked about today, all the promises that have been made, has one thing in common: it requires us to turn the billions currently flowing in climate finance, into trillions.

We need advocates like you in the boardrooms and on trading floors here in New York, and around the world.

And there are similarly catalytic roles in civil society, particularly recognising climate justice is completely interlinked with economic and social justice for so many people around the world.

In all of this work, I am heartened to know that you will be joined by colleagues from the increasing number of climate and sustainability schools, in the US and around the world.

From the students who hosted me just up the coast at Tufts in March, to those I met last month at Can Tho University, in the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam.

I had the privilege of attending on Monday, the State Funeral of our Late Monarch, Her Majesty the Queen.

In a moment of quiet reflection in Westminster Abbey, I thought back to Her Majesty's words, delivered to world leaders attending COP26.

She said:

“It is the hope of many that the legacy of this summit – written in the history books yet to be printed – will describe you as the leaders who did not pass up the opportunity; and that you answered the call of those future generations.”

That history is still to be written.

And I hope that the leaders of today, in my own country, in the United States, and across the world will heed the late Queen’s wise words.

To those of you setting out on your own leadership journeys.

Make them count.

And whilst my formal role ends at COP27, I will be there with you, continuing to champion the cause of climate action, which is so vital.

Thank you.

ENDS

Human rights in Russia: OSCE’s Moscow Mechanism expert report, joint statement

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following 38 participating States that invoked the Moscow (Human Dimension) Mechanism on 28 July: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Professor Nußberger, on behalf of the invoking States I wish to thank you for your work as Rapporteur under the OSCE’s Moscow Mechanism. We are most grateful for your professional and meticulous approach to your mandate, for the thorough methodology that you have applied and for the substantial report which you have produced. Your integrity and dedication to human rights and fundamental freedoms are evident in your report. We hope that all 57 participating States to the OSCE will do justice to your report by considering carefully your findings and recommendations, which are addressed not only to the Russian Federation but also to OSCE participating States and the wider International Community.

Mr Chair, we invoked the Moscow Mechanism because we identified the situation in the Russian Federation as a particularly serious threat to the fulfilment of the provisions of the OSCE human dimension as set out in various documents. The mandate provided was substantial, reflecting the scope and severity of the alleged human rights violations and abuses.

It is clear from the report that we were right to be concerned. The report is based on in-depth analysis of Russian Federation legislation, extensive documentation, including decisions by the European Court of Human Rights, opinions by the Venice Commission, statements by the autonomous institutions of the OSCE and other international organizations, and reports and testimonies by civil society. Regarding the legislative changes in the realms of freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly, the report concludes, "Russian legislation is obsessed with restricting these rights more and more. [...] Russian legislation in this area is clearly incompatible with the rule of law. On the contrary, the multitude of detailed provisions gives the authorities wide discretionary powers and thus provides the basis for arbitrariness." The report goes on to shed light on the correlation between peaceful protest and repressive legislation, "Whenever there were mass protests [...], new restrictive laws followed."

The report provides us with some answers as to why the Russian Federation clamps down on human rights and fundamental freedoms. "Ultimately, it is about integrating civil society into the vertical of power."

Silencing civil society puts Russia's authorities in a position in which they deem themselves free from answering to citizens. In addition, with its clampdown on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Russian Federation has helped prepare the ground for its war of aggression against Ukraine. The report outlines Russian government thinking: "restrictive measures are considered necessary in order not to be disturbed during the preparation for war or after it has started. This explains the wave of repressive measures in Russia immediately before, but, above all, after 24 February 2022."

Mr Chair, the Russian government and administration not only excessively limit human rights and fundamental freedoms, but actively work to their detriment to propagate the war. In that context, the report analyses speeches delivered by President Putin that call civil society the "fifth column" and de-humanise those considered to be enemies, thus revealing "an attitude of deep-seated hatred".

The report also cites several astonishing examples of pressure in opinion formation, for instance towards students and artists, and of excessive violence against critical civil society activists, journalists, and other media actors, such as the case of Grigory Yudin, political scientist and sociologist. "On 24 February 2022, he was arrested during an anti-war protest in Moscow and severely beaten in a police van, until he lost consciousness. Many more cases have been documented by human rights organisations who claim that the degree of violence has considerably increased – many interviewees drew a parallel to the violent suppression of protest in Belarus."

Not all violence is committed by state representatives, the report points

out, but it goes on to state that “[t]he Russian State implicitly supports this development through its lack of protection and its ineffectiveness in freedom-of-speech related cases.”

Freedom of expression is also particularly affected by the war. “Especially the extension of espionage [...] and therefore of “high treason” [...] under [...] the Criminal Code [...] makes journalistic work during the ongoing war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine impossible.”

Importantly, the report sheds light on the specific ramifications for women and members of the LGBTQI+ community. For instance, the report describes gender-based violence against women protestors. Women “are in an especially vulnerable position, especially if they are detained alone. Sexualized violence is a relatively new phenomenon, more noticeable since February 2022.”

Mr Chair, colleagues, “repression on the inside and war on the outside are connected to each other as if in a communicating tube.” May this conclusion of the report be a lesson and warning to all of us. It is a timely reminder of one of the cornerstones of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act on the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being. What is at stake is nothing less than the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. It is our common duty to properly defend the values and principles of this organization.

Once again, I offer our sincere thanks to Professor Nußberger.

Thank you.

[Magnox seeks suppliers for major decommissioning projects](#)

Magnox Limited is inviting suppliers to collaborate on two separate decommissioning projects at the former nuclear research site at Harwell, Oxfordshire.

Interested companies are invited to join pre-market engagement webinars on Wednesday 5 October 2022 to:

Investigate the current market capabilities and gain knowledge about existing and future products, and techniques which may assist informing the development of the sourcing strategy and any subsequent tender documentation.

Explore supply chain interest and expertise and to gain knowledge about existing or future products and techniques that could deliver this work.

Companies that are either new to nuclear or existing decommissioning suppliers are encouraged to attend.

BEPO reactor decommissioning programme

Comprises of two main projects running in tandem: BEPO reactor project and BEPO ancillary project. Magnox is seeking early engagement with suppliers on how they can support delivery of the BEPO reactor scope of works depending on the outcome of the scheme design being developed and suggested costs.

Further information is available on the prior information notice [here](#).

Click [here](#) to sign up for the preliminary market engagement webinar commencing 10am Wednesday 5 October.

B220 Radiochemistry laboratory complex

A three year £7.9m project to establish the legacy radiochemistry inventory and to complete a refurbishment and demolition asbestos survey within the B220 complex prior to its future de-plant and demolition.

The facility consists of approximately 120 laboratories and offices that supported the UK's pioneering nuclear mission for over six decades. Further information is available on the prior information notice [here](#)

Click [here](#) to sign up for the market engagement webinar commencing 1.30pm Wednesday 5 October.

Interested suppliers should have the capability to deliver value for the UK taxpayer while also maintaining the highest standards of safety and social value.

Linda Sapsford, Magnox Head of Procurement and Supply Chain, said: "This is an incredibly exciting time in the nuclear industry and the opportunities at Magnox have never been so great. 60% of our mission is delivered through our specialist supply chain partners who all form an integral part of the Magnox team. Our continued goal is to forge and sustain effective and productive relationships via collaborative, transparent and well-regulated procurement delivery."

[HMRC late payment interest rates to be revised after Bank of England](#)

increases base rate

News story

HMRC interest rates for late payments will be revised following the Bank of England interest rate rise to 2.25%.



The Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee voted on 22 September 2022 to increase the Bank of England base rate to 2.25% from 1.75%.

HMRC interest rates are linked to the Bank of England base rate.

As a consequence of the change in the base rate, HMRC interest rates for late payment and repayment will increase.

These changes will come into effect on:

- 3 October 2022 for quarterly instalment payments
- 11 October 2022 for non-quarterly instalments payments

[Information on the interest rates for payments](#) will be updated shortly.

HMRC interest rates are set in legislation and are linked to the Bank of England base rate.

Late payment interest is set at base rate plus 2.5%. Repayment interest is set at base rate minus 1%, with a lower limit – or ‘minimum floor’ – of 0.5%.

The differential between late payment interest and repayment interest is in line with the policy of other tax authorities worldwide and compares favourably with commercial practice for interest charged on loans or overdrafts and interest paid on deposits.

The rate of late payment interest encourages prompt payment and ensures fairness for those who pay their tax on time, while the rate of repayment interest fairly compensates taxpayers for loss of use of their money when they overpay or pay early.

[Human rights in Russia: UK statement on OSCE's Moscow Mechanism expert report](#)

Thank you, Mr Chair. I wish to make a statement in my national capacity, to supplement the statement delivered by Ambassador Callan on behalf of the 38 States which invoked the Moscow Mechanism on Russia's legal and administrative practices.

I would like to thank the independent expert Professor Nußberger for her expertise and her drafting of a robust and important report.

Mr Chair, the United Kingdom supported the invocation of this Moscow Mechanism because the issue of Russia's repression of human rights is vitally important. It is important to the Russian people who face restrictions on their fundamental freedoms and it is important for peace and security in the OSCE region.

I want to highlight 3 elements of this forensic report. First, President Putin's Russia has waged a systemic and a repressive war against the freedoms of its own people over the last two decades. Repressive legislation is used to restrict the rights of Russian people, most notably through the "foreign agents" and "undesirable organisations" laws.

Since the invasion, the Kremlin has implemented a wave of legislation targeting the dissemination of "knowingly false information" and "discrediting" of Russian armed forces. The real purpose is to criminalise the dissemination of the truth and for calling Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine what it is. Over 4,000 people have been prosecuted because of these laws, including dual British Russian national Vladimir Kara-Murza. As the report says, "this is military censorship".

Secondly, Russia has created a climate of fear and intimidation to silence independent voices further. President Putin and the authorities employ propaganda to de-humanise Russian civil society. Murders and physical attacks are either carried out on the direct orders of the Kremlin, or are tacitly welcomed with no follow-up investigations. Between 1992 and 2021, at least 58 journalists were killed in Russia in connection with their work.

Police use violence and intimidation to suppress anti-war protestors. Over 16,000 people have been arrested. And overnight over 1,000 more were arrested for peacefully protesting mobilisation. The report highlights many cases of violence towards those detained. Grigory Yudin, a political scientist, was

arrested at an anti-war protest and beaten in a police van until he lost consciousness. Female protestors were arrested, forced to undress, and physically attacked.

Thirdly, Russia's domestic repression is a key enabler of its aggression abroad. Professor Nußberger writes that "repression on the inside and war on the outside are connected to each other as if in a communicating tube." A tightening of freedoms at home allows the State to pursue conflict abroad with limited domestic accountability. This state of perpetual war provides a justification for further restrictive measures domestically. And we are seeing the grim outcome of this interrelation play out in Ukraine.

Mr Chair, this report reveals the horrifying scale of restrictive policies implemented by Russia over the last decade. Putin pursues these policies because he fears that a free society would hold him accountable for the abuses his regime have committed at home, and restrain his ability to commit abuses abroad. The tragedy is that both Russian and Ukrainian people, particularly vulnerable groups, are enduring the worst effects of this repression.

The UK, with partners from across the OSCE and the world, will defend human rights and the fundamental freedoms of citizens everywhere. We call on Russia to heed the warnings and recommendations of this Moscow Mechanism report. In particular, to comply with its OSCE Human Dimension obligations, and to critically assess the short- and long-term consequences of the "foreign agents" law, amongst other repressive legislation, on civil society.

I want to express the United Kingdom's solidarity with all those who suffer repression at the hands of the Russian authorities. And to reiterate once again our resolute support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.