

Alok Sharma, COP26 President, returns to Viet Nam to drive progress on a clean energy transition ahead of COP27

- The COP President will meet with senior ministers and key stakeholders to progress discussions on a Viet Nam Just Energy Transition Partnership
- He will also visit the Mekong River Delta to observe the impact of river bank erosion and sea-level rise and meet with local communities impacted by climate change
- Ahead of attending G20 ministerial meetings in Bali, the COP President will reiterate the urgent need for updated climate commitments from countries before COP27

COP26 President Alok Sharma will travel to Viet Nam from 27-30 August 2022, to meet with key ministers to drive forward discussions on a Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) and to see the impacts of climate change in the country.

The Viet Nam Just Energy Transition Partnership will be a long term political agreement between the Government of Viet Nam and an International Partner Group (IPG) of countries, comprising the United Kingdom, European Union, France, Germany, Japan, and the United States of America. .

This country-led partnership will support Viet Nam to accelerate its transition away from coal as part of the country's commitment to its 2050 net zero target and their ambitious Power Development Plan (PDP8). The Partnership will be underpinned by clear plans to deliver a just energy transition and catalyse clean energy investment, offering Viet Nam the opportunity to become a world leader in renewable energy.

The COP26 President will also meet with G7 and development partner donors, as well as businesses and private sector stakeholders, to help drive public and private sector engagement and mobilisation of finance as part of the process.

He will join a roundtable with civil society organisations, to hear their views and insights on progress since COP26, the proposed Just Energy Transition Partnership, and the opportunities and challenges presented by Viet Nam's low carbon energy transition.

On his third visit to the country as COP President, Mr Sharma will continue the work of the UK COP Presidency in pressing for updated climate commitments from all countries ahead of COP27 as agreed in the Glasgow Climate Pact. Mr Sharma will urge Viet Nam to bring forward a revised 2030 Nationally

Determined Contribution (NDC), aligned with its 2050 net zero target.

Mr Sharma will also visit Can Tho in the Mekong River Delta – accompanied by researchers from Can Tho University and Dragon-Mekong Research Institute – to observe the impact of river bank erosion and sea level rise on vulnerable areas. Mr Sharma will hear first-hand accounts from local communities benefiting from a project on urban resilience against flooding and climate change impact.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President, said:

Urgent action is needed to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees and help build prosperous, low-carbon, resilient communities across the planet.

The proposed Just Energy Transition Partnership provides an excellent opportunity for Viet Nam to accelerate its transition away from coal in delivery of its 2050 net zero target. I am pleased to be back in Viet Nam to engage with government ministers, public sector bodies, business leaders, local communities, and civil society to discuss ways we can work together for effective climate action.

A clean, just energy transition not only delivers enhanced climate action, it will help create new jobs, economic growth, clean air and a resilient, prosperous future.

After his visit to Viet Nam, the COP President will travel to Indonesia to attend the G20 Climate and Environment Ministerial meeting in Bali.

** ENDS **

Background notes to editors

- According to the Viet Nam Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), climate change has contributed to temperature increases of more than 0.5C and a 20cm rise in sea level over the past 50 years. Extreme climate events have also been increasing. Over the last two decades, Viet Nam has reported 226 extreme weather events, which have killed an average of 286 people per year and caused annual economic losses of US \$2 billion.
- Can Tho is the fourth largest city in Viet Nam, and the largest city along the Mekong Delta region in Viet Nam. The area has experienced floods, storms, and droughts with increasing frequency and unpredictability in the last two decades. According to the Viet Nam

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's (MONRE) 'Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Scenario Report', if the sea level rises by 100cm, about 20% of Can Tho City will become inhospitable.

- The Power Development Plan 8 (PDP8), developed by Viet Nam's Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), is expected to set out Viet Nam's national energy strategy and energy mix for 2021-2030, with a forward vision to 2045.

[UK assisting Pakistan in flood relief efforts](#)

World news story

Up to £1.5 million will come from the UK to help the response



UK Government

The UK is providing urgent support to Pakistan after flooding in the south of the country killed at least 900 people. Extreme monsoon rainfall has affected millions, with at least 700,000 homes destroyed.

In response to the disaster, the UK will provide up to £1.5 million for the relief effort. The UN is carrying out a needs assessment over the weekend, and a UN appeal is expected to be launched on Tuesday.

Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South and Central Asia, North Africa, UN and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, said:

The floods in Pakistan have devastated local communities and the UK is providing up to £1.5 million to help the immediate aftermath. We are witnessing the catastrophe that climate change can cause and how it impacts the most vulnerable.

My thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and their families, and I would like to pay tribute to everyone involved in the relief efforts. We are also working directly with the Pakistan authorities to establish what further assistance and support they require. The UK stands with the people of Pakistan during this time of need.

The UK also provides assistance to Pakistan through international organisations working directly with the victims of the disaster, including the World Bank and the United Nations.

Notes to editors

- The £1.5m of humanitarian funding is an allocation from existing support to Pakistan and will go to the relief efforts in the areas worst-hit by the flooding.
- The UK pledged over £55m to partner with Pakistan to fight climate change, manage water more sustainably and unlock climate investment in November 2021 during the COP26 Conference in Glasgow. Read more [here](#).
- The Global Climate Risk Index report notes that Pakistan has reported 502 deaths and a loss of \$3.772 billion as a result of 173 extreme weather events between 2000 and 2019.
- Pakistan is among the most disaster-prone countries in South Asia and has suffered an estimated US\$18 billion in damages due to disasters during the past decade. This has included: recurrent floods; earthquakes; droughts; and urban shocks (such as heatwaves and dengue). Overall, in Pakistan, 25% of households (49 million people) are estimated to be moderately or severely food insecure, whereas 10% of the households (21 million people) are classified as severely food insecure. The Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index suggests that 36.43 million people are chronically vulnerable.
- Pakistan is the eighth most at risk country globally from the impacts of Climate Change (an improvement from fifth most at-risk country in 2020). This year, Pakistan has and is experiencing consecutive extreme climactic events. The country moved directly from winter into summer temperatures with a number of extreme heat waves, causing rapid glacial flash floods and forest fires.

- During the 2020 floods in Pakistan, the UK announced a £800,000 aid package through the National Disaster Consortium (NDC) and provided immediate relief in rural Sindh where many had lost their homes. It also provided life-saving clean water, sanitation, and shelter to over 55,000 vulnerable people in Pakistan to help them recover from the devastating floods.

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[Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference: Speech by UK Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament](#)

Mr President

In taking the floor, especially under an Argentinian President, I am reminded of Jorge Luis Borges' injunction not to speak unless you can improve the silence. I cannot promise to do that, but I will at least be brief.

We have finally reached the culmination of a seven-year review cycle. Throughout your almost three years as President-designate, and over the last four weeks of sometimes gruelling negotiations, you have guided us with great skill, professionalism, transparency, and good humour, and I thank you very sincerely for that. I know that you have been supported in this by a superb team, including the Chairs of the Main Committees and Subsidiary Bodies, by the Secretariat, led most ably by Mr Tudor, and by your own Argentinian team. Many others have facilitated and brokered discussions between delegations on various issues to prepare the ground for the final document you produced. You and they are all a credit to your services and your countries.

Mr President

That one delegation has prevented us from adopting a substantive consensus outcome document does not negate the four weeks of intensive discussions we have had on all aspects of our Treaty. I recognise that many delegations were disappointed at what was in your text—or perhaps rather what was not in it. But it was an honest attempt—by you and by all of us—to identify areas of agreement, which my delegation was ready to support. I deeply regret that it was unable to garner consensus.

That we were so close to reaching consensus is a tribute not only to how hard you and most delegations here have worked these past four weeks, but actually

is also testament to the fact that there remains more that unites us than divides us.

But we cannot escape the fact that there are deep divisions, in this Treaty and in the world. They are only exacerbated by Russia's illegal war against Ukraine. As well as trampling on the values and the Charter that underpin the United Nations, imperilling international peace and security, and plunging the world into a food crisis, Russia's aggression also poses grave challenges to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Many of us have highlighted those challenges consistently throughout this Review Conference, and they have been restated with admirable clarity in the statement delivered earlier by the distinguished Representative of France, with which my delegation fully associates itself. Perhaps it was inevitable that Russia would not allow this Conference to adopt a document that exposed those challenges to the world, even as obliquely as the one you put before us did. But they have been laid bare throughout these four weeks. Just as they have this evening, they try to to blame everyone but themselves for their actions. But while Russia can block the adoption of a document, or filibuster an international conference, they cannot hide from the world's revulsion at their actions.

Mr President

Even if there is no common agreement on the way forward, our obligations under the NPT endure. Our prior commitments, from 1995, 2000 and 2010, remain valid. We must continue to make progress along this path, even if we have been unable to update the roadmap.

The United Kingdom will do its part. In particular, we look forward to taking forward, with Norway, the initiative on clarifying and applying the principle of irreversibility; to contributing to the working group on strengthening the review process that we have agreed to this evening; and to establishing, with the United States and 30 other partners who have joined so far, the Sustained Dialogue on expanding access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies. We also remain committed to working internationally to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and enhance mutual trust and security—an increasingly urgent task.

Final document or no, the NPT remains, and will remain, the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, and makes a vital and integral contribution to international peace and security. The United Kingdom takes its obligations, commitments and responsibilities seriously. My country will continue to play its part in bringing about a safer world for all and achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

UK donating undersea minehunter drones to help Ukraine clear coastline

The UK is giving underwater drones to Ukraine and training Ukrainian personnel in Britain to use them to clear their coastline of mines.

Six autonomous minehunting vehicles will be sent to the country to help detect Russian mines in the waters off its coast. Three of these will be provided from UK stocks, with a further three to be purchased from industry.

The lightweight autonomous vehicle is designed for use in shallow coastal environments, operating effectively at depths of up to 100m to detect, locate and identify mines using an array of sensors so the Ukrainian Navy can destroy them.

Dozens of Ukrainian Navy personnel will be taught to use the drones over the coming months, with the first tranche having already begun their training.

Russia has been weaponising food by destroying Ukrainian agriculture and blockading the country's Black Sea ports to prevent exports, with devastating consequences for the world's poorest people as food prices rise.

A small number of ships carrying grain have left Ukraine since the UN brokered a deal in July to allow food exports, but efforts to get food out of the country continue to be hampered by sea mines left by Russian forces along Ukraine's coast.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Russia's cynical attempts to hold the world's food supply to ransom must not be allowed to succeed.

This vital equipment and training will help Ukraine make their waters safe, helping to smooth the flow of grain to the rest of the world and supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine as they look to defend their coastline and ports.

The Royal Navy's Diving & Threat Exploitation Group will conduct the three-week training courses, alongside the US Navy 6th Fleet. Having considerable experience using the equipment already they will conduct training at sea to operate the vessels and interpret the data they send back to identify mock mines.

Admiral Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, said:

Through the expert skills being taught here, our Ukrainian allies

will be able to clear their own waters of mines. These weapons target shipping indiscriminately, but particularly affect civilian traffic and trade and have had a devastating impact on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea.

This training is another powerful demonstration of the UK's ongoing commitment to Ukraine in their fight to defend their country and repel Russian aggression.

Captain Ben Vickery Royal Navy, Captain of Royal Navy Diving and Mine Warfare said:

The Ukrainian personnel have been fantastic, and it is a pleasure to be working with them and helping them in their struggle to defend their homeland against the aggression they are currently suffering.

These incredible, motivated and very professional sailors have thrown themselves into the task and have made incredible progress gaining an excellent level of proficiency.

I am hugely proud of them, and the Royal Navy Clearance Divers and Mine Warfare specialists delivering the training, standing shoulder to shoulder – stronger together to achieve this vital training mission driven by our shared values and a common bond.

The Royal Navy is also training Ukrainian sailors to operate Sandown Class Minehunter vessels.

Armed Forces Minister James Heappey and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Havrylov [visited Scotland in July](#) to watch trainees practicing key skills at sea, such as weapon drills and damage control, whilst learning to operate the machinery on the vessels.

The UK is also leading a major international programme to train up to 10,000 Ukrainian volunteer recruits in basic military skills, which Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Latvia and the Netherlands have all announced they will support.

[Museums and galleries urged to sign up for VAT refund to support free entry](#)

for the public

- Minister encourages more museums and galleries to join the scheme
- Those added to the scheme in 2020 are set to benefit from more than £70 million

Museums and galleries are being urged to apply for VAT refunds to support opening free of charge as part of plans to boost visitor numbers and give more people access to arts and culture.

Any museum and gallery open to the public free of charge for 30 hours a week can apply. It will help organisations boost their finances and open up their collections more regularly.

The VAT Refund Scheme, which has been running since 2001, was last open to new applicants in 2018/19 and is estimated to have refunded up to around £1 billion to museums and galleries so far.

Ahead of a speech at the Edinburgh International Culture Summit, Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay today announced that the scheme will reopen for new applications in the autumn.

He is encouraging museums and galleries which are considering putting on exhibitions for free, as well as institutions already eligible but not currently taking advantage of the scheme, to apply.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

The UK's brilliant museums and galleries can be proud of the huge range of free exhibitions they put on and the role they play in increasing access to arts and culture.

We want to see even more museums offering free entry, and to support organisations which are providing great opportunities for the public to enjoy.

I encourage cultural institutions across the UK to apply for the VAT refund scheme so they can help make sure people from all backgrounds get to experience great arts and culture for free.

Institutions taking part in the scheme are entitled to a refund on VAT incurred on goods and services which are purchased in order to provide free admission. A total of 159 sites across the UK currently benefit from the scheme, including the People's History Museum in Manchester, the Peter Scott Gallery in Lancaster, the Burns House Museum in Kilmarnock, Falkirk's Callendar House, the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh, the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, and National Museum Cardiff.

The Athelstan Museum in Malmesbury used the scheme to improve its public

exhibition spaces for visitors. When the museum acquired a J.M.W. Turner watercolour of Malmesbury, it used the scheme to help enhance its mezzanine gallery area to display the artwork.

It is estimated that museums and galleries which were added to the scheme in 2020 will benefit from more than £70 million in VAT refunds in the six years after joining. New museums and galleries wishing to benefit from the scheme can apply in the autumn.

Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal Lord Mendoza said:

In my review of museums I identified this specially designed scheme as one of the most important government interventions to help museums right across the United Kingdom.

I hope that we continue to see growth in the number of applications to ensure that as many people as possible can visit our outstanding museums for free.

Free entry for museums is a distinctive cultural intervention and I'm thrilled that the government hopes to help even more places this year.

Helen Smout, CEO, Culture Perth and Kinross Limited, said:

The VAT Refund Scheme for museums and galleries alongside the Museums and Galleries Tax Relief has been of enormous benefit to our organisation and critically has helped us sustain a programme of free-to-access exhibitions.

This work has helped us re-engage with audiences after the disruptions of the pandemic and to date in 2022 we are outperforming our pre-pandemic footfall bringing additional benefits and income to the organisation.

Without the support this scheme provides for museums our programmes would not be as rich, ambitious, or engaging and our future would be much bleaker.

Sharon Nolan, Chair of Trustees, Athelstan Museum, Malmesbury, said:

Athelstan Museum Malmesbury has benefited greatly from the VAT Refund Scheme for museums and galleries. When we first joined the scheme we were in the process of acquiring an old Moravian Church (now the Julia and Hans Rausing Building) for renovation, to create a new museum store and event/ workshop/ talks space to attract more diverse audiences. The scheme enabled us to save the VAT on our building work and supplies.

Similarly, when we acquired a Turner watercolour of Malmesbury and wanted to enhance our mezzanine space to display it, we again benefited from the scheme. It helps with the day-to-day running of the museum; we receive no funding other than donations, Gift Aid, and income from the gift shop.

We are totally volunteer-run. The scheme is invaluable to small, volunteer-run museums like ourselves. It enables us to retain our free-entry status, and to be ambitious and take on new projects. Our visitors really appreciate the museum and numbers are now increasing post-Covid.

The Government has also extended the sunset clause on the Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief scheme, which aims to encourage cultural venues to develop new exhibitions through financial incentives. The scheme has been given a temporary uplift, meaning there will be 45 per cent tax relief for permanent and temporary exhibitions and 50 per cent tax relief on touring exhibitions respectively up to a maximum of £100,000. From 1 April 2023, these rates will be reduced to 30 per cent and 35 per cent respectively, before returning to their usual rates of 20 per cent and 25 per cent on 1 April 2024.

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- The full criteria for a museum and gallery applying are:
 - being open to the general public for at least 30 hours per week, without exception
 - offering free entry without prior appointment
 - holding collections in a purpose-built building
 - displaying details of free entry and opening hours on the museum website
- More information, and a full list of current organisations on the scheme, can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-refund-scheme-for-museums-and-galleries-notice-998>
- Between April 2001 and June 2022, the total amount of VAT refunds issued to museums and galleries, under Section 33A of the VAT Act 1994 is estimated to be between £900 million and £1,000 million. This is based on HMRC VAT returns and assessments of the proportion of non-business activities.