

# Joint Statement from United States and the Great Lakes Special Envoys of Belgium, France and the UK

Press release

The UK Special Envoy for the African Great Lakes, Alison Thorpe, joins the United States and the Special Envoys of Belgium and France to issue a statement about the security situation in eastern DRC.



## **English**

The United States along with the Great Lakes Special Envoys of Belgium, France and the UK condemn in the strongest terms the continuing advance of the UN-sanctioned March 23 Movement (M23) illegal armed group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The resumption of violence since 20 October, including in and around the towns of Rutshuru, Kiwanja, Rumangabo and Kibumba, undermines peace efforts and has caused further insecurity and significant human suffering. We call on the M23 to immediately withdraw, end any acts violating international law, and to cease hostilities.

We reiterate our support for regional diplomatic efforts, including the Nairobi and Luanda processes, that promote de-escalation and create the conditions for lasting peace in DRC. We encourage renewed dialogue through these mechanisms and for Congolese non-state armed groups to participate in the Nairobi process. All support to non-state armed actors must stop, including external support to M23. We call on countries in the region to use all means available to them to urge an immediate cessation of hostilities and immediate resumption of consultations on concrete steps to deescalate current tensions.

We reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the Great Lakes region.

## Français

Les Etats-Unis et les envoyés spéciaux de la Belgique, de la France et du Royaume-Uni pour la région des Grands Lacs condamnent dans les termes les plus vifs l'avancée continue en République démocratique du Congo (RDC) du groupe armé illégal et sanctionné par les Nations Unies intitulé Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). La reprise des violences depuis le 20 octobre, notamment dans les villes de Rutshuru, Kiwanja, Rumangabo et Kibumba et leurs alentours, sape les efforts de paix et a entraîné un accroissement de l'insécurité ainsi que de grandes souffrances humaines. Nous appelons le M23 à se retirer immédiatement, à mettre fin à toute activité violant le droit international et à cesser les hostilités.

Nous réaffirmons notre soutien en faveur des efforts diplomatiques régionaux, notamment des processus de Nairobi et de Luanda, qui promeuvent la désescalade et créent les conditions d'une paix durable en RDC. Nous encourageons la reprise du dialogue à travers ces mécanismes et incitons les groupes armés non étatiques congolais à participer au processus de Nairobi. Tout soutien à des acteurs armés non étatiques doit cesser, y compris le soutien extérieur au M23. Nous appelons les pays de la région à faire tout ce qui est en leur pouvoir pour demander une cessation immédiate des hostilités et une reprise immédiate des consultations sur des étapes concrètes permettant de faire baisser les tensions actuelles.

Nous réaffirmons notre attachement à la souveraineté et à l'intégrité territoriale des pays de la région des Grands Lacs.

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## [Statement by the AUKUS Partners to the IAEA Board of Governors](#)

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States on our effort through the AUKUS partnership to determine the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

Chair,

We are now more than one year into our 18-month initial consultation period,

and we are pleased with the progress made so far.

Since the September Board meeting, senior officials and technical experts have held further trilateral discussions in our capitals. We have also continued to hold productive technical consultations with the IAEA's AUKUS taskforce and the IAEA

Secretariat in Vienna as we work to formulate a safeguards approach that will meet the IAEA's technical objectives. These consultations are regular and ongoing, and they reflect the depth of the AUKUS partners' commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We remain resolutely committed to setting the highest possible non-proliferation standards in relation to our co-operation on the AUKUS endeavour, and we will continue to keep Member States fully updated on our trilateral consultations with the IAEA.

Chair,

Sadly, there have been continued calls by some countries for the Agency to suspend engagement with us until a separate mechanism is established to discuss all aspects of AUKUS cooperation on nuclear-powered submarines.

All Member States have the right to confidential discussions with the IAEA Secretariat, and it is vital that the Agency remains the impartial and independent technical authority on the implementation of safeguards agreements. At the September Board, the Director General reiterated his satisfaction with AUKUS partners' level of engagement to date, and reaffirmed the mandate of the IAEA to engage with Member States on safeguards matters. To reconfirm what we have set out at the Board on previous occasions, Australia's proposed naval nuclear propulsion activities will occur within the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) and Additional Protocol, providing the firm legal basis on which the IAEA, through the Director General and the Secretariat, is engaging with Australia and AUKUS partners.

Chair,

We would like to briefly address the unfounded criticism that certain members continue to repeat at this Board. As an example, one distinguished delegate yesterday identified nine items on which they claim the Director General is required to – and has purportedly failed to – report with respect to AUKUS. In his September report, the Director General explicitly stated that Australia has “complied with its reporting obligations under its CSA and AP, including those required under Modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements to its CSA.”

The Director General also confirmed that further reporting by Australia at this time would be premature because Australia has “informed the Agency that...no activities listed in Annex I of the AP had either been conducted or were planned; no transfers of equipment/material listed in Annex II of the AP had either taken place or were planned; and no decision had been taken to

construct or otherwise acquire any nuclear reactor or other nuclear facility in connection with AUKUS.”

Given we have repeatedly responded to these unfounded allegations in previous meetings, we will not again refute them line by line. However, we would like to make one point clear: Australia and the AUKUS partners are fully compliant with their respective safeguards obligations. Any assertions to the contrary are without any factual or legal foundation.

Chair,

We will continue our engagement with the Agency over the coming months, and we anticipate there will be further reports from the Director General in the future upon which we look forward to further discussions. We will continue to update the Board in future, as appropriate.

Thank you, Chair.

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## **Royal Air Force completes world-first sustainable fuel military transporter flight**

- First time an aircraft has flown in the UK using 100% sustainable aviation fuel on all engines
- Potential to reduce lifecycle carbon emissions by up to 80% while improving operational effectiveness
- Another key step by the RAF towards achieving Net Zero by 2040

An RAF Voyager – the military variant of an Airbus A330 – took to the skies over Oxfordshire powered entirely by 100% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), paving the way for a range of possibilities for the future of flying military and civilian aircraft.

The flight, which took place on Wednesday, was a joint endeavour between the RAF, DE&S and industry partners Airbus, AirTanker and Rolls-Royce, with the fuel supplied by Air bp.

Sustainable aviation fuel – which is made from waste-based sustainable feedstocks, such as used cooking oil – reduces lifecycle carbon emissions on average by up to 80% compared to the conventional jet fuel it replaces, lessens the RAF’s reliance on global supply chains, and improves operational resilience.

## **Defence Minister Baroness Goldie said:**

The Royal Air Force has flown the UK's first military air transport flight using 100% sustainable aviation fuel on one of their operational Voyager aircraft. They should be rightly proud of this achievement; it is a breakthrough moment for the RAF and an exciting development for the MOD.

Through the RAF's pioneering spirit, expertise and partnership with UK industry, British science and engineering is leading the way in improving operational resilience and developing future operating capability in a climate-changed world.

Different approaches will suit different platforms and environments. As such, a range of alternative fuel options are being looked at to ensure the UK is at the forefront of this developing technology.

This success follows last November's small aircraft UK flight powered by 15 litres of synthetic gasoline – another world-first led by the RAF. Synthetic fuel is made from water and carbon dioxide, which is then put under pressure and an electric current run through it.

Wednesday's 90-minute flight from RAF Brize Norton, flown by a combined RAF, Rolls-Royce and Airbus flight test crew, replicated an air-to-air refuelling sortie and was witnessed by senior RAF and industry representatives. It demonstrated the RAF's potential for its future operational capability, ensuring the ability to contribute to UK defence wherever and whenever required.

## **Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston said:**

Climate change is a transnational challenge that threatens our resilience, our security and our collective prosperity. That is why I have set the RAF the ambitious challenge of becoming the world's first net-zero Air Force by 2040. The way we power our aircraft will be key to meeting that challenge and the RAF is already thinking about how we will operate beyond fossil fuels.

This exciting trial flight of a Voyager from RAF Brize Norton powered entirely by Sustainable Aviation Fuel is an important milestone on that journey, and marks another technological first for the RAF alongside our industry partners.

Engineers from Airbus' Commercial Aircraft and Defence and Space divisions have been working with the RAF, Rolls-Royce and Airtanker testing the aircraft's performance and handling on the ground and in the air in preparation for the final flight with both engines powered by 100% SAF.

## **Aviation Minister at the Department for Transport, Baroness Vere said:**

Our Jet Zero Strategy made clear that sustainable aviation fuels are key to greener flight for both military and civilian aviation.

This is a win for the planet and a testament to British ingenuity. We have launched the £165 million Advanced Fuels Fund to kickstart a homegrown SAF industry, as well as challenging the sector to deliver the first net zero transatlantic flight next year.

This breakthrough test flight is just one of the ways the RAF is actively working to reduce lifecycle carbon emissions produced by flying its aircraft. Other innovations have included a world-first, record breaking microlight flight using synthetic fuel, flying an electric aircraft at RAF Cranwell and creating fuel from genetically modified bacteria.

While continuing to fulfil the priority focus of protecting the nation, the sustainable aviation fuel could mark a step-change towards the RAF's goal to be Net Zero by 2040. Working towards the Government's Net Zero 2050 goal and Jet Zero Strategy, the RAF also plans for their first Net Zero airbase by 2025.

In addition to supporting the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel in the Armed Forces, the Royal Air Force Commander in Chief HM King Charles III has also supported an increase in its adoption in the private sector through the [Sustainable Markets Initiative](#). The SMI is a network of global CEOs from across all industries, working together to accelerate a sustainable future in line with its mandate. Part of the SMI's work is raising awareness of SAF amongst the business community and encourage greater SAF uptake in corporate travel in addition to increased purchase agreements to encourage demand from the public and private sectors.

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## **[Scottish Secretary responds to Chancellor's Autumn Statement](#)**

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack has responded to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement where the UK Government pledged to restore stability to the economy, protect high-quality public services and build long-term prosperity for the United Kingdom.

Jeremy Hunt outlined a targeted package of support for the most vulnerable, alongside measures to get debt and government borrowing down.

The plan he set out is designed to fight against inflation in the face of unprecedented global pressures brought about by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

**Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:**

We are facing complex global challenges, and the Chancellor has had to take some difficult decisions. By reducing our borrowing, tackling the root causes of inflation and putting our public finances on a stable footing, we will create the economic stability we need for our long-term prosperity.

As we promised, we have put in place extra support for those who need it most, with support on energy bills and increases in pensions, benefits and the National Living Wage.

The Scottish Government will receive an additional £1.5 billion, to help support public services in Scotland. We are also putting extra money into two key projects in Scotland. Catapult will help grow our offshore energy capability, and a feasibility study to upgrade the A75 will pave the way for much improved connectivity between Scotland, Northern Ireland and England.

As a result of today's tax and spending decisions, the Scottish Government will receive around an additional £1.5 billion over 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Delivering for the people of Scotland, the Chancellor has reconfirmed the UK Government's commitment to work with the Scottish Government on options to improve the A75, in line with the findings from the Union Connectivity Review.

He also confirmed that funding for the UK's 9 Catapult innovation centres will increase by 35% compared to the last funding cycle, this includes the offshore renewable catapult in Glasgow.

To protect the most vulnerable from the worst of cost-of-living pressures, the Chancellor announced a package of targeted support worth [£26bn], which includes continued support for rising energy bills. More than eight million households on means-tested benefits will receive a one-off payment of £900 in instalments, with £300 to pensioners and £150 for people on disability benefits.

The Energy Price Guarantee, which is protecting households throughout this winter by capping typical energy bills at £2,500, will continue to provide support from April 2023 with the cap rising to £3,000. With prices forecast to remain elevated throughout next year, this equates to an average of £500 support for households in 2023-24.

Working age benefits will rise by 10.1%, boosting the finances of millions of the poorest people in the UK, and the Triple Lock will be protected, meaning pensioners will also get an inflation-matching rise in the State Pension and

the Pension Credit.

The National Living Wage will be increased by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour, giving a full-time worker in Scotland a pay rise of over £1,600 a year, benefitting 160,000 of the lowest paid workers.

The Scottish Government is receiving additional funding at the Autumn Statement for the current Spending Review period to 2024-25, but will be expected to live within these new budgets and support our mission of fiscal discipline. To improve public finances, from 2025-26 onwards day to day spending will increase by 1% with capital spending held flat in cash terms. This means overall departmental and devolved administration budgets will continue to rise in real terms, although more slowly, increasing by 0.5% each year to 2027-28.

To raise further funds, the Chancellor has introduced tax rises of £25 billion by 2027-28. Based around the principle of fairness, all taxpayers will be asked to contribute but those with the broadest shoulders will be asked to contribute a greater share.

The threshold at which higher earners start to pay the 45p rate will be reduced from £150,000 to £125,140, while Income Tax, Inheritance Tax and National Insurance thresholds will be frozen for a further two years until April 2028. The Dividend Allowance will be reduced from £2,000 to £1,000 next year, and £500 from April 2024 and the Annual Exempt Amount in capital gains tax will be reduced from £12,300 to £6,000 next year and then to £3,000 from April 2024.

The most profitable with the broadest shoulders will also be asked to bear more of the burden. The threshold for employer National Insurance contributions will be fixed until April 2028, but the Employment Allowance will continue to protect 40% of businesses from paying any NICs at all.

In addition, the government is implementing the reforms developed by the OECD and agreed internationally to ensure multinational corporations pay their fair share of tax. And as confirmed last month, the main rate of Corporation Tax will increase to 25% from April 2023.

To ensure businesses making extraordinary profits as a result of high energy prices also pay their fair share, from 1 January 2023 the Energy Profits Levy on oil and gas companies will increase from 25% to 35%, with the levy remaining in place until the end of March 2028, and a new, temporary 45% levy will be introduced for electricity generators. Together these measures will raise over £55 billion from this year until 2027-28.

To ensure fiscal discipline while providing support for the most vulnerable, the Chancellor has introduced two new fiscal rules, that the UK's national debt must fall as a share of GDP by the fifth year of a rolling five-year period, and that public sector borrowing in the same year must be below 3% of GDP. Overall, the Autumn Statement improves public finances by [£55 billion] by 2027-28, and the OBR forecasts both of these rules to be met a year early in 2026-27.



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# Plans to level up and build new homes tabled in Parliament

Press release

Measures to clean up rivers added to Levelling Up Bill, with vital infrastructure to be delivered more quickly



Delivering much-needed housing, boosting local infrastructure and strengthening environmental protections are at the heart of government levelling up plans tabled in parliament.

Key amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill put forward this week, will put power in the hands of local people to bring forward development they want to see and clamp down on slow build out by developers.

The new measures will follow the Government's BIDEN principles:

- making sure new development is Beautiful
- supported by the right Infrastructure
- a more Democratic system where communities have their say
- enhances the Environment
- and creating better Neighbourhoods shaped by the people who live in them

This will help to regenerate communities and deliver on the levelling up missions set out in the [White Paper](#) earlier this year.

Minister of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Lucy Frazer MP said:

Levelling Up means creating vibrant and beautiful communities where local people and businesses can thrive. The measures we are setting out today will put protecting the environment at the heart of our plans, while bringing forward much needed new homes across the country.

We will make sure that new development is surrounded by the right infrastructure and that local people are given an opportunity to shape their neighbourhood.

Amendments being tabled will:

- Tackle slow build out by developers to make sure much needed new homes are delivered. Developers will have to report annually to councils on their progress and councils will have new powers to block planning proposals from builders who have failed to deliver on the same land.
- Improve our environment and enshrine in law an obligation on water companies to clean up our rivers by upgrading wastewater treatment works. Considering all catchments covered by the amendment, our initial estimates indicate that there will be around a 75% reduction in phosphorus loads and around a 55% reduction in nitrogen loads in total from wastewater treatment works, although this will vary between individual catchments. These upgrades will enable housebuilding to be unlocked by reducing the amount of mitigation developers must provide to offset nutrient pollution. This will be accompanied by a Nutrient Mitigation Scheme that will make it easier for developers to discharge their mitigation obligations.
- Give residents a new tool to propose additional development on their street, like extensions to existing homes, through 'street votes'. Planning permission will only be granted when an independent examiner is satisfied that certain requirements, such as on design, have been met and the proposal is endorsed at a referendum by the immediate community. Pilot Community Land Auctions – testing a new way of capturing value from land when it is allocated for development in the local plan to provide vital infrastructure, including schools, roads, GP surgeries, and the affordable housing that communities need.
- Enhancing powers for mayors to support them to managing their key route networks and increase transport connectivity across their area.
- Help Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects such as wind farms and new major transport links be delivered more quickly, by enabling a small number of public bodies to charge for their statutory services to help them provide a better, reliable, quality of advice to developers and support faster planning decisions.

Water Minister Rebecca Pow said:

These measures will help us to deliver the homes that this country needs, whilst protecting our precious environment.

It is vital that some of our most important wildlife sites are protected against nutrient pollution and water companies will need to step up and play their part to clean up our rivers. These new environmental requirements will ensure this happens.

Today's announcement builds on measures already announced in the [Levelling Up](#)

[and Regeneration Bill](#), which will see the biggest shift of power from Whitehall in modern times to make sure local leaders have the tools they need to harness the full potential of their area.

The Bill will deliver the right homes in the right places in keeping with local styles, tackle the scourge of boarded up shops on high streets and make it easier for councils to regenerate disused land to create thriving communities.

Further information:

More detail about the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill can be found [here](#).

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