

Foreign Secretary statement to Parliament on Hong Kong

I would like to update the House on the situation in Hong Kong.

Mr Speaker, as all members will know, Hong Kong's historic success was built on its autonomy, its freedoms and the remarkable resourcefulness and determination of its people.

We have long admired their prosperity and their values, respected through China's own expression of the 'One Country, Two Systems' approach. An approach that China itself has long articulated and affirmed as the basis for its relations with Hong Kong.

The UK, through successive governments, has consistently respected and supported that model, as reflected both in China's Basic Law and also the Joint Declaration. Which is, as honourable members will know, the treaty agreed by the UK and China and registered with the United Nations, as part of the arrangements for the handover of Hong Kong that were made back in 1984.

So Mr Speaker, set against this Chinese framework and the historic context, on 22 May during a meeting of the National People's Congress, China considered a proposal for a national security law for Hong Kong.

Then on 28 May, the National People's Congress adopted this decision.

China's Foreign Minister, State Councillor Wang Yi, made clear that this legislation will seek to ban "treason, secession, sedition and subversion" and we expect it to be published in full shortly.

This proposed national security law undermines the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework that I have described, under which Hong Kong is guaranteed a high degree of autonomy with executive, legislative and independent judicial powers.

Mr Speaker, to be very clear and specific about this, the imposition of national security legislation on Hong Kong by the government in Beijing, rather than through Hong Kong's own institutions, lies in direct conflict with Article 23 of China's own Basic Law.

And it lies in direct conflict with China's international obligations freely assumed under the Joint Declaration.

The Basic Law is clear that there are only a limited number of areas in which Beijing can impose laws directly, such as for the purposes of defence and foreign affairs, or in exceptional circumstances in which the National People's Congress declares a state of war or a state of emergency.

So the proposed national security law, as it has been described, raises the prospect, in terms of the substance and the detail, of prosecution in Hong

Kong for political crimes, which would undermine the existing commitments to protect the rights and the freedoms of the people of Hong Kong, as set out in the Joint Declaration, but also as reflecting International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

And, finally, the proposals also include provision for the authorities in Hong Kong to report back to Beijing on progress in pursuing national security education of its people. A truly sobering prospect.

Mr Speaker, we have not yet seen the detailed, published text of the legislation.

But I can tell the House, that if legislation in these terms, is imposed by China on Hong Kong, it would violate China's own Basic Law.

It would up end China's 'One Country, Two Systems' paradigm.

And it would be a clear violation of China's international obligations, including those made specifically to the United Kingdom under the Joint Declaration.

Let me also be clear about the approach the United Kingdom intends to take.

We don't oppose Hong Kong passing its own national security law.

We do strongly oppose such an authoritarian law being imposed by China in breach of international law.

Mr Speaker, we are not seeking to intervene in China's internal affairs,

Only to hold China to its international commitments, just as China expects of the United Kingdom.

We don't seek to prevent China's rise.

Far from it, we welcome China as a leading member of the international community, and we look to engage with China on everything from trade to climate change.

And it is precisely because we recognise China's role in the world that we expect it to live up to the international obligations, and international responsibilities, that come with it.

So, Mr Speaker, on Thursday, working very closely with our partners in Australia, Canada and the United States, the UK released a joint statement expressing our deep concerns over this proposed new security legislation.

Our partners in New Zealand and Japan have issued similar statements.

And the EU has too, and I have had discussions with a various number of our EU partners.

So the UK stands firm with our international partners in our expectation that China live up to its international obligations under the Sino-British Joint

Declaration.

Mr Speaker, there is time for China to re-consider, there is a moment for China to step back from the brink and respect Hong Kong's autonomy and respect China's own international obligations.

We urge the Government of China to work with the people of Hong Kong, with the Hong Kong Government, to end the recent violence and to resolve the underlying tensions based on political dialogue.

But if China continues down this current path, if it enacts this national security law, we will consider what further response we make, working with those international partners and others.

Mr Speaker, I hope the whole House agrees that we, as the United Kingdom, have historic responsibilities, a duty I would say, to the people of Hong Kong.

So, I can tell the House now that if China enacts this law we will change the arrangements for British National Overseas passport-holders in Hong Kong.

The House will recall that BNO status was conferred on British Dependent Territories Citizens connected with Hong Kong as part of the package of arrangements that accompanied the Joint Declaration in 1984, in preparation for the handover of the territory.

And under that status, currently, BNO passport holders are already entitled to UK consular assistance in third countries.

And the British government also provides people with BN(0) passports visa-free entry into the UK for up to six months as visitors.

Mr Speaker, if China follows through with its proposed legislation, we will put in place new arrangements to allow BNOs to come to the UK without the current 6 month limit, enabling them to live and apply to study and work for extendable periods of 12 months, thereby also providing a pathway to citizenship.

Mr Speaker, let me just finish by saying that even at this stage I sincerely hope China will reconsider its approach.

But if not, the UK will not just look the other way when it comes to the people of Hong Kong.

We will stand by them, we will live up to our responsibilities.

And I commend this statement to the House.

Welsh winners of the 2020 Queen's Award for Voluntary Service announced

Four organisations from Wales have been awarded the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service this year.

The Roots Foundation Wales, Cymer Afan Community Library, Hands Around the World and Swansea Canal Society have received the highest award given to organisations delivering exceptional service within their communities.

Coinciding with Volunteers' Week (1-7 June), this year's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service celebrates the work of a fantastic, diverse range of volunteer groups whose work has enhanced and supported local communities over a number of years.

The Queen's Award offers a chance to highlight their outstanding contribution to society and also to recognise the crucial role many have played to support vulnerable people during the pandemic.

This year's recipients demonstrate the diversity of organisations supporting our communities and also their ability to innovate – many have been able to adapt their services in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

When a local food bank closed in Neath Port Talbot because its volunteers were self-isolating, the Cymer Afan Community Library quickly decided to repurpose their building, staff and volunteers and transform the library into a temporary food bank for the community.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Independent Committee Chair Sir Martyn Lewis, said:

This year's Queen's Awards highlight the considerable achievements of groups of volunteers who have been making a real impact to the fabric of our country for many years – in some cases decades. Inspired by all that is best in the human spirit, they are made up of local people who have come together to address particular issues and problems facing their communities – often in new and imaginative ways.

All of these award winners have demonstrated a long-term commitment to volunteering that gives real meaning to society, and which shows Britain at its best. Moreover, some of them have also managed to provide valuable support with the fight against Covid-19. We owe them our gratitude – and our congratulations.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

These awards recognise the hours of hard work that volunteers and organisations across the UK put in to serve their communities and create a sense of local pride. This year's Welsh recipients are no exception, and in the current global pandemic their work in their communities is more valuable than ever.

Congratulations to the four Welsh recipients who all thoroughly deserve this award for the positive role they play in society.

Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran said:

This prestigious award recognises the important work being done by volunteers across the country and I'd like to congratulate all of the winners for their hard work and dedication supporting their communities.

Charities, social enterprises and their volunteers are the beating heart of our communities. In these challenging times, they have stepped up their response and been vital to the national effort, for which we are all grateful.

It is fantastic to win this award in recognition of the contribution our volunteers make to our local community – we are all delighted! This is a significantly disadvantaged area and we all work tirelessly to give people opportunities that would otherwise not be available here.

The recipients of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service are announced every year on 2 June, the anniversary of The Queen's Coronation.

Any volunteer-led group comprising two or more people having a positive impact on the lives of others in an exceptional way can be nominated for an award. A group must satisfy the eligibility requirements before the nomination can be processed through to the assessment stages of the award. More details can be found on the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service website.

Nominations for the 2021 awards close on 25 September 2020.

[Find this year's winners near you on our map tool.](#)

New Trade Commissioners to Lead UK trade and investment overseas

- International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss, appoints three HM Trade Commissioners
- They will operate across China and Hong Kong, South Asia and Europe
- HM Trade Commissioners champion British trade around the world

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss, has named three new HM Trade Commissioners (HMTCs). They will champion British trade with some of the UK's biggest economic partners as the Coronavirus crisis highlights just how important it is to keep trade flowing and supply chains open so we can all have the essential supplies we need.

CEO of the Commonwealth Enterprise & Investment Council, Alan Gemmell, has been appointed as HMTC for South Asia. Consul-General in Shanghai, John Edwards, becomes HMTC for China and Hong Kong. The previous HM Trade Commissioner for China, Richard Burn, has been appointed temporarily to the role of HMTC Europe.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

By attracting inward investment and supporting UK businesses, our HM Trade Commissioners will play a key part in delivering free trade agreements that benefits every part of the UK.

It's fantastic to welcome Alan, John and Richard who are great champions of British trade and bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to their new roles.

Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade, Antonia Romeo said:

I am delighted to welcome John, Alan and Richard to their new roles on the DIT leadership team. They all have proven expertise and experience in supporting British businesses to export and grow internationally, and attracting inward investment into the UK. At this time, this work is more important than ever.

£286 billion of goods and services were traded between the UK and Asian countries in 2019. The continent is also home to 6 of the top 20 fastest-growing economies in the world and the diverse and fast-growing economies of the region offer huge potential to UK business.

In 2019, the total trade in goods and services between the UK and South Asia was £30 billion, an increase of 9.9% or £2.7 billion compared to 2018; and

the total trade in goods and services between the UK and China and Hong Kong was £104.6 billion, an increase of 16% or £14.4 billion compared to 2018.

Speaking after his appointment, HMTc for South Asia, Alan Gemmell said:

I'm excited to return to South Asia as HM Trade Commissioner. The UK and South Asia share deep personal links and strong business connections.

I look forward to helping these relationships flourish with trade and investment at their heart.

John Edwards, HMTc for China and Hong Kong said:

Our bilateral trade with China and Hong Kong broke £100bn for the first time in 2019 with our exports to China growing faster than any other global region. Regions across the UK also continue to benefit from Chinese investment – more than any other country in Europe.

Richard Burn, HMTc for Europe, added:

All European countries will remain critically important trading partners for the UK, as we agree a new trading relationship with the EU.

The mission of DIT across the Europe region will be to help British businesses succeed in the new trading environment and to build an ambitious level of inward investment.

About HMTcs

All of the new HMTcs cooperate closely with HM Ambassadors and High Commissioners, the wider diplomatic network, and other HM Government colleagues based in countries in their region, in a joined-up and coordinated government effort overseas to promote UK trade and prosperity.

In total, there will be 9 geographical areas that the HM Trade Commissioners cover:

- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
- China
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia Network
- Europe
- Latin America
- Middle East
- North America

- South Asia
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Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

News story

The AAIB confirms we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19.



During these unprecedented times the Air Accidents Investigation Branch continues to remain operational and fully complies with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19.

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Ofsted to review students' and apprentices' online further education experience

News story

Ofsted is carrying out an exploratory review of the quality of learners' experiences of online education in further education and skills settings during the Covid-19-affected summer term.



Ofsted is working with the Department for Education (DfE), the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Association of Employer and Learning Providers (AELP) and HOLEX to review further education learners' experience of online learning during the Covid-19 (coronavirus) lockdown.

The review aims to provide insights into the sector's experiences of online education and to identify areas of strength and potential for improvement. This will support post-16 providers re-visiting their online education strategies, particularly from September 2020 onwards. The review will look at the online education that providers are delivering in light of the necessary social distancing measures

Her Majesty's Inspectors will carry out the review during June and will speak remotely to managers, teachers and trainers in volunteer further education colleges and skills providers that have volunteered to discuss their delivery of online teaching and learning.

In particular, inspectors will speak to students and apprentices about their experience of learning online and the support they have received for this. This will be done by phone and a report on the findings will be published in due course.

The review is not an inspection. There will be no inspection judgements and no inspection consequences for the provider. Involvement in the review is entirely voluntary.

Data gathered during the review will be confidential and staff, students and apprentices will not be identified.

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