

UN Human Rights Council 43: Universal Periodic Review on The Gambia

Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes The Gambia's engagement with the UPR and their determination to make progress on human rights.

We also welcome The Gambia's acceptance of all three of our recommendations. Namely, to protect the right to freedom of expression by repealing the Seditious Act and the Official Secrets Act; to set out publically, steps the Government will take to ensure women's full participation and leadership in public life; and to ensure effective implementation of anti-trafficking legislation, including timely and just prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking.

We commend the progress made in the reform agenda including through the tabling of the Freedom of Information Bill, the Anti-Corruption Bill and the Criminal Code Review Bill before the National Assembly. We hope these processes will be effectively implemented once concluded.

We urge the government to respect freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, and to ensure the media is free to operate without interference or intimidation.

We encourage the Government to continue to support the Constitutional Review process and ensure the necessary electoral arrangements are made to hold a referendum on the draft constitution in a timely manner, in line with international best practice, so all individuals can freely exercise their rights.

Thank you.

UN Human Rights Council 43: Universal Periodic Review on El Salvador

Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes El Salvador's engagement with the UPR. We note the events at the Legislative Assembly in San Salvador on 9 February and welcome actions taken since by all parties to reduce tensions. El Salvador's institutional stability over many years has been a democratic strength, and the continued effective functioning of constitutional institutions is an

important prerequisite for further improvements to rule of law, security and respect for human rights.

The UK welcomes El Salvador's support for two of our recommendations, including: to adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting UN treaty body national candidates; and to develop a national action plan to prevent and combat trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls, particularly by gangs, which includes increased institutional capacity for identification and support of victims.

However, we regret El Salvador could not support our recommendation to review laws criminalising the use of abortion, ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services and support for all women and girls, and guarantee women are not criminally prosecuted for suffering a miscarriage. We are concerned abortion is punishable by imprisonment, including in instances where pregnancy threatens the woman's life. It is troubling that women have been jailed despite reliable claims the pregnancies ended because of a miscarriage.

Thank you.

[Activation letter for the PSPRB 2020 Northern Ireland pay round](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Activation letter from the Minister of Justice Northern Ireland to the Chair of the PSPRB and response from the PSPRB Chair.

[Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers League table launches](#)

The Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings will celebrate some of the country's most outstanding apprenticeship employers and will assist potential apprentices, parents and careers advisers to identify the best apprenticeship opportunities with the highest performing apprentice employers in England.

New in 2020, the annual Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings will showcase the very best of England's large apprenticeship employers, alongside the Top 50 SME apprenticeship employers. These employers will be recognised for providing some of the most successful apprenticeship programmes over the

previous 12 months.

These new rankings have been developed in partnership with High Fliers Research, who will independently assess and compile the new national leader board of top apprenticeship employers.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Delivering high-quality apprenticeships is a vital part of our commitment to level up skills and opportunity across the country.

This new league table is a chance to showcase how apprenticeships have transformed businesses and changed lives. There are hundreds of employers of all sizes, up and down the country, providing people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to learn new skills and have successful careers.

This list will help everyone, from young people to career-changers, to make informed decisions about their future and unleash their full potential. I encourage all eligible employers to apply.

Apprenticeship employers in every industry and employment sector – from accountancy, fashion and law, to teaching, nursing and engineering – are invited to enter for the rankings. Entries for 2020 are open from today, Thursday 12 March, with the results to be announced at a special launch event for apprenticeship employers in the summer of 2020.

There are two apprenticeship employer categories for the 2020 rankings:

- Large employers – for organisations with 250 employees or more, that employ a minimum of 25 apprentices
- SME employers – for organisations with fewer than 250 employees that employ a minimum of 5 apprentices

Keith Smith, Director, Apprenticeships Group, ESFA said:

We know there are outstanding employers, of all sizes, delivering apprenticeships in all sectors. For us, the Top 100 large employer and Top 50 SME employer rankings will give recognition and thanks to those who show great commitment to apprenticeships. The process they will follow will enable them to highlight their dedication to creating apprenticeship opportunities.

I look forward to hearing the announcement of the Top 100 large and Top 50 SME apprenticeship employers in the summer.

Employers will submit entries by 5pm on Thursday 9 April and a follow-up telephone interview with each entrant will take place. Employer data will be independently verified and employers with the highest scores will be ranked.

The final rankings will be announced this summer.

More information about the process can be found by visiting the [Top Apprenticeship Employers website](#).

[Transport Secretary acts to make pavements safer for pedestrians](#)

- pavements set to become safer for parents and disabled people thanks to proposals to crack down on pavement parking
- consultation will look at options including how a national pavement parking ban could work, taking into account necessary exceptions, and extended enforcement powers for local authorities
- latest in a series of improvements by the Transport Secretary to accelerate pace of change for a more accessible transport network

New proposals to tackle pavement parking and make streets safer for parents and disabled people were set out today by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps (12 March 2020).

The government is set to consult on proposals in the summer designed to improve the lives of people with mobility or sight impairments, as well as parents with prams who may be forced into the road to get around parked cars.

The 12-week consultation will include options such as allowing local authorities with civil parking enforcement powers to crack down on unnecessary obstruction of the pavement. Currently, outside London, only police have this power.

It will also consider how a nationwide ban on pavement parking enforced by local authorities might work, allowing for any necessary exceptions or designated spots for pavement parking where needed, and how a tailored approach may be required in rural and suburban areas which face very different challenges.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Vehicles parked on the pavement can cause very real difficulties for many pedestrians.

That's why I am taking action to make pavements safer and I will be launching a consultation to find a long-term solution for this complex issue.

We welcome the Transport Select Committee's recent report and share

their drive to tackle pavement parking and improve people's daily lives.

In 2019 the Department for Transport concluded a review which looked at the problems caused by pavement parking, the effectiveness of legislation, and the case for reform.

It found that pavement parking was problematic for 95% of respondents who are visually impaired and 98% of wheelchair users.

The Transport Select Committee also recently conducted an inquiry into the issue, with the commitment to consult on proposals forming a key part of the government's response to its findings.

Blanche Shackleton, head of policy, campaigns and public affairs at Guide Dogs said:

Pavement parking prevents people with sight loss from getting out and about safely, resulting in feelings of loneliness and isolation.

We look forward to working with the Government to make this proposed law a reality.

Stephen Edwards, Director of Policy and Communications at Living Streets said:

Pavement parking forces people with wheelchairs, buggies and those living with sight loss into the road and into oncoming traffic and the most vulnerable pedestrians continue to be put at risk of injury and isolation every day that this dangerous act continues.

Clear pavements need clear laws, but currently regional differences cause confusion. We need a nationwide default ban, with the option to allow pavement parking in certain circumstances, as is currently available in London. This would be much simpler to enact and easier for everyone to understand.

The department is also looking at possible options to streamline and digitise the process used to create restrictions such as temporary road closures for roadworks, special events or permanent changes to speed limits and parking restrictions, known as 'traffic regulation orders'.

Emma Free, 39, from Suffolk, a guide dog owner and longstanding campaigner on pavement parking said:

This announcement is a big weight off my shoulders. Cars parked on the pavement frequently force me into oncoming traffic and it makes me feel so disorientated and anxious.

Sometimes it just becomes too much and it makes me feel like I don't want to go out at all, which defeats the purpose of having a wonderful guide dog. This announcement is fantastic news.

A TRO Discovery Project, carried out in partnership with GeoPlace, Ordnance Survey and the British Parking Association, completed last year which explored the process of making TROs, and how TRO data is made available and used across the country. A legislative review of the is now underway to find ways to improve it and make it easier for local authorities to implement restrictions.

Last month, the government launched an advertising campaign to improve the journeys of disabled passengers on public transport. 'it's everyone's journey' will raise awareness about the needs of disabled people when using public transport, particularly people with non-visible impairments, and will also prompt members of the public to think and consider how their behaviour might impact others.

For more information visit gov.uk/everyonesjourney, or follow [@IEJGov](https://twitter.com/IEJGov) on Twitter.