

# [The UK puts people at the heart of its Security Council Presidency](#)

The UK will put ordinary citizens at the heart of its Presidency of the Security Council, as it takes over from South Africa as the President of the United Nations Security Council, today (1 November).

Key issues due to be discussed during the UK's Presidency will include chemical weapons, Yemen, Syria, Somalia and Libya, and an open debate on reconciliation, which will include a focus on the role of civil society and religious leaders in reconciliation. In line with its focus on the importance of people, the UK will be inviting a number of members of civil society to brief the UN.

H.E. Karen Pierce DCMG, the Permanent Representative and Ambassador for the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York, said:

“During our Presidency, the UK wants to focus on the effect of problems in international peace and security on ordinary citizens. The issues before the Security Council include the targeting of hospitals, the use of chemical weapons and rape being used as a weapon of war. All too often the perpetrators walk free, and the leaders that let it happen remain in positions of power. We want to use our Presidency to promote practical steps to establish the facts of what is happening on the ground and address impunity, and highlight the costs of impunity, including the impact on millions of people around the world.

“That's why we will be giving a voice to those people affected by conflict, persecution and discrimination through those we invite to brief the Council. We will raise issues around the importance of respect for international law, religious persecution, attacks on media freedom and women, peace and security. We will also be looking at some of the components of sustainable solutions to conflict through our open debate on the role of the reconciliation processes and our support of the Rules Based International System with the UN at its heart.”

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## [The UK and ASEAN-BAC sign a Letter of Intent](#)



The United Kingdom and ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) signed a Letter of Intent on the ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation under the UK's Global Trade Programme (GTP) today.

H.E. Mr. Brian Davidson, British Ambassador to Thailand, and Mr. Arin Jira Chairman of the ASEAN-BAC signed the Letter of Intent which stated that the GTP, on behalf of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and ASEAN-BAC will carry out an Impact Assessment and Roadmap for ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation.

The ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation (RDTT) project aims to standardise and digitalise business documentation for trade within the ASEAN region. The project is intended to increase the efficiency of trade between ASEAN countries and their key trade partners – cutting waiting times and lowering the associated costs, as well as making it easier for SMEs to trade. The end-to-end digitisation also aims to increase the trustworthiness and reliability for international transactions and minimise the risk of fraud. By providing greater confidence to financial institutions it is hoped that it will also make it easier for SMEs operating international businesses to secure loans.

Following the signing of the letter, the UK will identify an international consultant company to assist the ASEAN-BAC to conduct this key establishing study. The study will provide guidance regarding standardization of regulation and documentation for international trade under the RDTT project, as well as a roadmap for the project.

The results will also serve as a guideline for the private sector to link with the National Single Window and ASEAN Single Window programmes being implemented by the governments. This will be a collaboration between the team set up by ASEAN-BAC, along with ASEAN Secretariat, and experts from the governmental and private sectors in the ASEAN member countries and their key trade partners.

Brian Davidson, the British Ambassador to Thailand, said:

The UK is strongly committed to free trade. As a global leader in enabling technologies, we are pleased to be able to work on trade digitisation with ASEAN BAC through the UK's Global Trade Program. This is just one in a series of similar programmes that the UK is

taking forward in partnership with ASEAN – a partnership which I hope will continue to expand.

Notes for editors:

- The UK's Global Trade Programme is a funded global programme aiming to significantly reduce the costs of trade, increase trade volume, allow more SMEs to participate in cross-border trade and promote development that is more inclusive and sustainable.

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1. 1 November 2019 Added translation
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## [Cross-border Western Gateway will form new 'powerhouse' in UK economy](#)

The pooling of cross-border skills and expertise on both sides of the Severn estuary can drive prosperity for the region, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Robert Jenrick will say today (1 November) at an event to launch the Western Gateway.

The Western Gateway is a strategic partnership promoting and maximising economic growth across south Wales and the west of England to create jobs, boost prosperity and support the world-renowned universities and businesses of the region.

Linking a number of towns and cities across a wide region either side of the Severn the Western Gateway will mirror the successful, established work of the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine and will seek to ensure that the region is globally competitive.

At the ICC in Newport, Mr Cairns and Mr Jenrick will tell an audience of partners from business, education, cultural and digital sectors that the Western Gateway has the potential to transform the economic prospects of the region, making it easier to do business, to increase inward investment and tourism and create jobs.

Communities and Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick is providing £400,000 from existing budgets for start-up funding to kick-start the partnership.

Katherine Bennett, Senior Vice President of Airbus, will be announced as the first acting chair of the Western Gateway, who will lead and shape the governance, management and initial priorities for the partnership.

**Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will say:**

The Western Gateway will provide an arena for the joint strengths of two neighbouring areas with distinct identities and traditions to be harnessed.

South Wales and the west of England already form a natural economic region with excellent transport networks in road and rail and well-established links in business, industry and education.

The region can be a true powerhouse of the UK economy if we take this opportunity to galvanise its many strengths to generate ideas, innovation and entrepreneurship in order to stimulate jobs and growth.

It also highlights how our United Kingdom is strengthened by maximising and harnessing in partnership the skills and talents of our nations and regions.

**Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP will say:**

The Western Gateway will draw on the diverse talents of both sides of the Severn to deliver an economic powerhouse that will drive growth throughout the region.

Already a major centre for cyber and tech, research, manufacturing and the creative industries – there's clearly huge potential for them to achieve even greater things together.

As this Government works to level up our regional economies, this initiative will give south west England and south Wales a powerful voice, just as the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine have done for those areas.

**Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid added:**

Today we are announcing an exciting partnership to turbo charge growth across Wales and the south west of England.

The Western Gateway is full of bustling towns and cities and boasts a rich cultural and industrial history – from the famous cheeses of Cheddar Gorge and iconic Roman Baths of Bath, to the thriving TV industry of Cardiff Bay.

We won't rest until we have unlocked the potential this region has to offer as we level-up opportunities across the UK.

**Katherine Bennett CBE, Western Gateway Chair, will say:**

With a vibrant population of more than four million people, world-class universities, strong transport links, and shared strengths across key sectors – from green energy and engineering, to the arts and digital media – I'm convinced that the west of Britain is a powerhouse waiting to happen.

By working together, across government, academia, and industry, with businesses at the core, we are determined to make this vision a reality.

Following Friday's launch event in Newport, Mr Cairns and Mr Jenrick will visit Bristol enterprise hub the Engine Shed, where they will meet owners and staff of some of the innovative businesses based there.

**ENDS**

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## **[£10 million fund to help vulnerable people claim Universal Credit](#)**

Secretary of State Therese Coffey has today (1 November 2019) announced a £10 million Universal Credit Transition Fund for outreach programmes to help vulnerable people make Universal Credit claims.

The fund will be available to partner organisations across the UK, including charities, from April 2020. It will aim to help vulnerable people, including disabled people, care leavers and those with mental health issues, claim Universal Credit as a route into work. It will support innovative ideas for engaging with vulnerable people early, helping them to make timely claims to the new benefit.

Figures show that a fifth of claimants delayed making a claim for Universal Credit, largely because they didn't know how to make a claim or because they thought they would find a job quickly.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Dr Therese Coffey MP said:

I am delighted to announce a £10 million challenge fund to support the most vulnerable in society with their Universal Credit claims.

Universal Credit is now supporting more than 2.5 million people. Around 1 million disabled households are better off under Universal Credit and we will continue to deliver targeted support through this fund and other measures.

The £10 million funding was allocated to DWP as part of the 2019 Spending Round process.

DWP is providing severe disability payments (SDP) to protect the most vulnerable. Severely disabled claimants can receive SDP to support their living costs as they move onto Universal Credit. This is worth a maximum of £405 a month to claimants – worth £600 million over the next 6 years for 45,000 claimants.

Around 1 million disabled households will receive an average of around £100 more per month through Universal Credit.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5118

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## **Ofwat non-executive Chair's appointment extended**

Jonson Cox's appointment as Chair of the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) has been extended by one year.

Ofwat is the independent economic regulator of the water and sewerage sector in England and Wales. It primarily serves to make sure that companies provide households and business customers with a quality service and value for money.

Cox has served as Chair for Ofwat since November 2012. His appointment, which was renewed in 2015 and was set to end on 31 October 2020, has now been extended to 30 October 2021.

The Environment Secretary has made the extension in conjunction with the Welsh Government after securing agreement from the Prime Minister. All non-executive appointments and extensions are based on merit and in accordance with the Ministerial Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Further information on Ofwat is [available on the organisation's website](#).

### **Biographical details of Jonson Cox**

Jonson Cox has been Chair of Ofwat since November 2012. He was appointed to resolve long-running issues between investors, companies and the regulator.

Since then, jointly with Ofwat's chief executive, he has co-lead the work to bring the water sector back to a core customer and public service focus while retaining an attractive proposition for investors. He has a background as chief executive and chairman in regulated and commercial infrastructure, with a focus on turnarounds and restructuring.

After an early career with Royal Dutch/Shell Group, Mr Cox served as managing director of Yorkshire Water (1996-2000) to lead the company out of a significant crisis with its customers and restored its top-ranking status in the industry. After other infrastructure roles, he returned to the water sector from 2004-2010 as Group chief executive at AWG plc, owner of Anglian Water Services and Morrison plc, to lead a successful turnaround following a long and sustained loss of stakeholder and regulatory confidence. He bought the Group back from its loss making construction and international operations and restored it to being a top-rated water company.

Mr Cox led the restructuring of UK Coal plc as Executive Chairman (2010 to 2012) to bring a managed "soft close" to coalmining in the UK and to secure for investors and the PPF the value in its property development business. He served as inaugural Chairman of Harworth Group plc from 2012 to 2018. He joined Cory Group, owner of the UK's largest waste-to-energy plant, as Chairman, when lenders took control in 2015 and led the board through the recovery and successful sale to infrastructure funds in 2018. He serves on the global advisory council of I Squared Capital and is senior Non Executive Director at Energia, the Irish energy group.