

UN Human Rights Council 42: Interactive Dialogue on Burundi

The United Kingdom thanks the Commissioners for their work and welcomes the report. We strongly support the renewal of the Commission's mandate for another year, especially during this crucial pre-electoral period.

It is clear that there has been no progress in preventing serious human rights violations. We urge the Government of Burundi to fulfil their obligation to protect human rights, and to hold perpetrators to account. We encourage the government to engage with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which could help find a way for Burundi to set a course towards human rights protection and to pave the way towards peaceful elections in 2020.

We are concerned by trends and risks which could signal possible atrocity crimes linked to the 2020 elections. It is vital that the international community, and UN mechanisms, including the UN Security Council, remain focused and committed to resolve this crisis.

We also want to see Burundian refugees able to return home and live in safety and dignity, without the risk of further displacement in the future. To this end, UK aid supports refugees in neighbouring countries, voluntary returnees to Burundi, and the communities to which they are returning. However, we are clear that any returns must remain informed and voluntary. We would also encourage the Governments of Tanzania and Burundi to further work on issues of refugee management through the established Tripartite Process.

Mr. President,

We would welcome the Commissioners' views on what can be done by the international community to support the Government of Burundi in the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Building work starts on new Wellingborough jail

- Justice Secretary marks the start of construction at Wellingborough site
- New jail will deliver major boost to the local economy and help to cut crime
- Significant step in the Government's vision of a modern, efficient prison estate

The Justice Secretary was joined at the site by council leaders and senior representatives from Kier – who were awarded a £253 million contract earlier this year for the design and construction of the new prison.

The 1,680-place category C jail is a major element of the Government's bold strategy to create a modern, efficient prison estate that is fit for the future.

The prison is expected to open in 2021 and will be built on the site of the previous HMP Wellingborough, which closed in 2012.

Speaking at the event, the Justice Secretary told attendees that HMP Wellingborough will provide a major boost to the local economy – creating 100 new jobs and 50 apprenticeships, with a target of at least 25% of jobs being filled by ex-offenders. Once the jail becomes operational, hundreds of additional new jobs will be created in the prison.

Justice Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, said:

Modern and efficient jails are at the heart of the Government's plan to create a justice system that protects law-abiding citizens and cuts crime.

The new prison at Wellingborough will create and support hundreds of jobs, both during construction and afterwards, and will be a major boost to the local economy.

The prison will also provide a better environment to rehabilitate offenders and ultimately keep the public safer.

The new jail at Wellingborough will provide almost half of the 3,500 new prison places that are already being delivered – with construction of a further prison at Glen Parva in Leicestershire, due to start in 2020, while a new houseblock at HMP Stocken in Rutland, opened in June.

The Prime Minister also announced last month that the [Government will invest £2.5 billion](#) to transform the estate further, creating an additional 10,000 new places that will boost rehabilitation and cut reoffending. Outline planning permission for a new 1,440-place prison at Full Sutton was granted last week.

The funding will also be used to bring previously decommissioned prison places back into use through extensive refurbishment and maintenance work.

This comes alongside an investment of £100 million to bolster security and stability in prisons, in addition to £70 million committed previously.

This will fund tough airport-style security, including X-ray scanners and

metal detectors, across the prison estate to clamp down on the drugs, weapons and mobile phones that increase the risk to our officers and hinder rehabilitation.

[Call for views for independent review into local authority audit](#)

An independent review is calling for views on the quality and effectiveness of the audit and financial reporting of local authorities in England.

The review, led by the former President of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Sir Tony Redmond, was launched in July 2019 to examine the effectiveness of local authority financial reporting and the audit regime.

It will also examine whether the financial information provided in local authority accounts facilitates scrutiny by local taxpayers and by local press.

Today (17 September 2019) the independent review has announced it is seeking views on the topic and encourages practitioners who work in the local government sector, the audit community, representative bodies and other relevant or interested parties, to submit their response to an open set of questions.

Local Government Minister Luke Hall MP, said:

It's important that local authorities are held financially accountable to reinforce public confidence and deliver value for money for taxpayers.

That's why the independent review being carried out by Sir Tony Redmond, to ensure a robust local audit system, is so vital. I encourage all interested parties to submit evidence to help inform the review's recommendations.

Lead of the independent review, Sir Tony Redmond, said:

This call for evidence is a key part of my review of the effectiveness of audit in local authorities and the transparency of their financial reporting.

I will look to test the assurance processes in place with regard to value for money arrangements together with the financial resilience in local councils.

I am keen to hear from practitioners as well as the audit community, and will consider all information as I formulate my report to the Secretary of State.

Sir Tony is a former local authority Treasurer and Chief Executive. He has also worked as a Local Government Boundary Commissioner and held the post of Local Government Ombudsman, along with a number of non-executive positions in the public and third sectors.

The call for evidence will close on 22 November.

Sir Tony Redmond is expected to submit his report with initial recommendations to the Secretary of State in January, with a final report published in March 2020.

Read the [call for views](#). Views can be submitted to the review team using the email address redmond.review@communities.gov.uk.

Local authorities in England are responsible for 22% of total UK public sector expenditure.

The review will also look at how councils publish their annual accounts and if their financial reporting system is sufficiently transparent to be held to account.

Read the full [terms of reference](#) of the review.

The review of financial reporting and external audit follows the full implementation of the [Local Audit and Accountability Act of 2014](#).

The responsibilities for local authority audits and how they are conducted is set down within the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The 2014 Act gave effect to manifesto commitments to abolish the Audit Commission and its centralised performance and inspection regimes and put in place a new localised audit regime, refocussing local accountability on improved transparency.

Now the Act has been fully implemented, the government is required to review its effectiveness. This review will meet the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's commitment to undertake a post implementation review of the audit framework and financial reporting elements of the Act.

[‘Get Ready For Brexit’ campaign](#)

Launches in Belgium

The information campaign, launched on 16 September 2019, will inform the more than one million UK nationals living in the EU about specific actions they need to take to secure their rights and services in their host country, including information on residency, healthcare, driving licences and passports.

It will also encourage people travelling to the EU to make all necessary preparations by checking passports, buying travel insurance and checking driving licenses and pet passports.

The campaign will use multiple channels – from Facebook posts to newspaper ads – urging people to take action ahead of 31 October.

Martin Shearman, British Ambassador to Belgium, said:

Protecting the rights of UK nationals in Belgium is an absolute priority as we leave the European Union.

I'd urge UK nationals in Belgium to visit our Living in Guide for Belgium where they can find out about the steps they need to take and get specific information about residency, healthcare, passports and driving permits in Belgium.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

We are stepping up efforts to ensure Britons abroad are prepared for Brexit on 31 October. This campaign provides practical advice to the more than one million British people living in the EU, as well as British tourists and business travellers.

There are over one million UK nationals living in the EU, with around 25,000 British nationals living in Belgium.

The UK government recently announced up to £3 million in grant funding for charities and other voluntary organisations who can inform UK nationals about the need to register or apply for residency and to support them as they complete their applications.

The Government also allocated an extra £300,000 to British Embassies and Consulates across the EU to engage with 'hard to reach' UK nationals such as disabled people, those living in remote areas or people who might need extra help to complete any paperwork in preparation for Brexit.

This extra assistance will build on the support that British Embassies are

already providing with more than 541 outreach events with UK nationals since November 2017. So far the UK Embassy in Belgium has organised 23 outreach events across Belgium, and another 4 are scheduled.

Europe is the most popular travel destination for British travellers, with around 60 million visits every year.

Living in Belgium guide

The new information campaign asks UK nationals to take action to prepare for Brexit by [checking the Living in Belgium Guide](#) and:

- apply for residency
- register for healthcare
- exchange their UK driving licence for a Belgian one
- check their passport is valid for travel

UK Statement on Democratic Institutions at HDIM 2019

Mr Moderator

I fully align with the statement given by Poland on behalf of the EU, but would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

15 September marked International Day of Democracy – the theme this year was “participation”, recalling that at the heart of democracy are people. This reflects our OSCE commitments, notably from Copenhagen in 1990. In this we agreed that: “The will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government.”

Given the challenging global environment, it is very important to mark the International Day of Democracy. And to continue to support and encourage strong, functional democracies globally.

This is particularly true in the OSCE context as democracy, human rights and the rule of law contribute to long-term security and prosperity.

Advocating respect for these values is in all our national interests. There is a strong correlation between societies that are secure and prosperous, and those that enjoy open and participative democracy.

The UK supports democracy around the world – including the OSCE region – by standing up for those individuals who strive to defend these principles, locally and nationally, when they are under threat. Without the vigilance and bravery of human rights defenders, democracy can be undermined and weakened.

Human rights defenders play a crucial role in the democratic process, often putting themselves and their families at great personal risk to stand up for the rights of minorities and others.

To make clear our commitment, in July, we published the [“UK Support for Human Rights Defenders”](#) document, which sets out the type of support the UK Government can offer.

The strength of any democracy can be measured by its ability to cope with strong differences of opinion, and its respect for the right of all persons to exercise their fundamental freedoms that underpin democratic societies.