

# Disinformation hinders peacekeeping mandate delivery and threatens peacekeeper safety

Thank you President and thank you for Brazil's leadership on this topic, and thank you to our briefers. I join you in paying tribute to all peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace.

President, effective strategic communications are essential enablers of mandate delivery. They help to build trust and amplify the voices of those building and sustaining peace. They are also vital to the safety and security of peacekeepers.

As we heard from the Secretary-General, almost half of peacekeepers said disinformation hinders mandate delivery and threatens their safety and security.

I want to make three key points in this regard.

Firstly, strategic communications should be a whole-of-mission activity, integrated into planning and mandate implementation, and measured by the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System.

And they should leverage digital technologies to keep pace with changing communications landscapes. We support efforts to this end under Action for Peacekeeping Plus and the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of Peacekeeping.

Secondly, all actors should refrain from anti-UN misinformation and disinformation which undermines mandate delivery and the safety and security of peacekeepers, including in the DRC, the CAR and Mali.

Since the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group deployed in Mali, we have seen a significant increase in the volume of dangerous lies being spread about MINUSMA's mandate and activities. This puts peacekeepers' lives at increased risk in an already volatile environment.

It sows distrust which discourages local communities from sharing information with MINUSMA. That hinders the mission's ability to prevent attacks on civilians and peacekeepers alike.

The continued spread of dis- and mis-information will lead to more lives lost. There is no excuse for such activities.

Thirdly, President, I want to underline the importance of strategic communications in supporting the women, peace and security agenda.

I am proud of the efforts British peacekeepers and their German counterparts have been making in MINUSMA in this regard. They have met local women's

associations and helped local radio stations reach out to female audiences. This has helped build mutual understanding and given Malian women platforms for their peace advocacy.

In conclusion, President, let me stress that the United Kingdom continues to offer its full support to UN peacekeeping, including in mainstreaming an innovative, modern and integrated approach to strategic communications.

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## [Scotland Office and OAG Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22 published](#)

News story

The report includes an overview of work to respond to the pandemic, deliver the Levelling Up agenda and provide legal support on Westminster bills extending to Scotland.



The Annual Report and Accounts of the Scotland Office and Office of the Advocate General for Scotland (OAG) has been published today [12 July 2022].

The report provides an overview of Scotland Office and OAG activity from the financial year 2021 – 2022. Some highlights of this work include:

- Supporting the UK Government response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland, both in terms of rolling out the vaccination programme, providing testing and financial support.
- Supporting delivery of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda in Scotland, helping improve lives and expand opportunities.
- Working with the Scottish Government and local partners to deliver the City Region and Growth Deal programme to invest in projects tailored to the needs and strengths of Scotland's regions.
- Working in partnership with the Scottish Government to publish the Green Freeports bidding prospectus for Scotland, helping boost the economy.
- Providing legal support and advice on all Westminster bills extending to

Scotland, ensuring they operate smoothly within the framework of Scots law and the devolution settlement.

The report can be viewed [here](#)

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## [With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief: UK at Security Council](#)

Thank you, President. And I join others in thanking Norway and Ireland for their work as penholders.

The UK approached this renewal, as we have every year since the mandate was first agreed in 2014, on the basis of humanitarian need, and humanitarian need alone.

Humanitarian need in Syria is the highest it has ever been. 4.1 million people are in need of aid across the north-west, of which 2.4 million are reliant solely on the UN cross-border mechanism for life-saving assistance every single month.

We have heard repeatedly from the UN and from NGOs that a renewal for 12 months was necessary to provide operational certainty so they could prepare to meet that humanitarian need, especially during the harsh months of winter. Last Friday, Russia stopped this from happening.

With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief. The suffering and the uncertainty goes on. Without the confidence of at least 12 months, UN agencies and NGOs risk being caught in a perpetual cycle of pre-positioning and contingency planning.

It is therefore important that we are clear: while this renewal is only for an initial 6-months, the intent of the Council is to renew for a further six months, subject to another resolution.

The Secretary-General's report, requested by this resolution, will be able to set out the implications were this mandate to come to an end in January as winter is setting in.

The humanitarian case for a further renewal will be self-evident, and to oppose it will be to ignore the suffering of 4.1 million people.

The UK will continue to support the UN's efforts to deliver its Humanitarian

Response Plan. But we will not consider providing any reconstruction assistance without a credible, substantive and genuine political process firmly underway.

A genuine political process is the only sustainable means of ending suffering in Syria.

Thank you, President.

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## Statement on Supreme Court

News story

The Advocate General for Scotland has today lodged papers with the Supreme Court in relation to the Lord Advocate's referral of the Scottish Government's draft Scottish Independence Referendum Bill.



A UK Government spokesperson said:

“We have been clear that now is not the time to be discussing another independence referendum, when people across Scotland want both their governments to be working together on the issues that matter to them and their families.

“However, following the Lord Advocate's referral of the Scottish Government's draft Scottish Independence Referendum Bill, the UK Government has today lodged its initial response with the Supreme Court.

“The papers confirm that the Advocate General for Scotland will become a formal party to the case, and ask the Court to consider whether it should accept the Lord Advocate's referral.”

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## Teacher assessed grades in 2021 – student and teacher experiences

Two Ofqual reports published today outline student and teacher experiences of teacher assessed grades (TAGs) in summer 2021.

Summer 2021 exams were cancelled. Students' grades for GCSEs, AS and A levels and many vocational qualifications were based on teacher judgments.

TAGs were based on a range of evidence produced by the students, and only on content they had been taught.

Ofqual conducted [a survey in 2021](#) after TAGs were submitted and before students got their results in August.

A total of 1,785 teaching staff and 550 students completed the survey. [Researchers also interviewed](#) 39 teachers and 14 students to find out more about their experiences and opinions.

Among other findings, the survey showed:

- 57% of students said too much time was spent on assessments
- 4 to 6 pieces of evidence were used
- most assessments were taken under exam-like conditions

Different schools and colleges took different approaches to setting and marking assessments, and deciding on grades. Almost all teachers thought the grades they determined were accurate.

Students who responded expressed concerns about the pressure they felt from the assessment process, and the potential for different schools and colleges to take different approaches.

The majority of teachers who responded told us that the process was often stressful and time-consuming. They had no desire to undertake TAGs in this form again.

Ofqual Chief Regulator Dr Jo Saxton said:

We know from our research that teachers worked incredibly hard to award grades in the exceptional circumstances of summer 2021 and we are grateful to them. TAGs were necessary to allow more than a million students to move on with their lives, but our research highlights the additional burden on teachers and students.

It's great that exams and formal assessments have taken place this year, and again, I would like to thank teachers and pay tribute to

the resilience of students.

[Another Ofqual report](#) published today considers statistical alignment between subjects in GCSEs and A levels in 2021 compared with previous years. This work is a follow-up to analysis published in summer 2020.

Last year's TAGs and centre assessment grades (CAGs) in 2020 resulted in higher grades generally. The findings suggest the relative difficulty of subjects varied a little more between 2021 and 2020 than is typical between normal consecutive years of exams.