

Alok Sharma has been appointed Secretary of State for International Development

I am delighted to have been appointed International Development Secretary. We will work across the whole of government to deliver Brexit and make sure UK aid is tackling global challenges that affect us all, such as climate change, disease and humanitarian disasters.

Investing 0.7% of GNI on international development shows we are an enterprising, outward-looking and truly global Britain that is fully engaged with the world.

I am committed to transforming the lives of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, giving them access to quality education and jobs, while promoting Britain's economic, security and foreign interests.

Elections and protection of healthcare workers and civilians in DRC

Thank you, Mr President. I'd like to focus on three issues: the security, humanitarian and political situations in the DRC.

Mr President, the deterioration in the security situation in North Kivu and Ituri provinces is particularly concerning. Civilians continue to face killings and kidnappings in Beni territory. In the Petit Nor, citizens face illegal taxation, rape and killing from armed groups like NDC-R. Attacks against Ebola responders in North Kivu continue to undermine the response to the outbreak. The government must do more to protect civilians and responders and to provide greater general stability, including through holding perpetrators to account in the courts and by doing more to address the underlying drivers of conflict. We note with concern that armed groups in North Kivu are reported to have perpetrated over half of all documented cases of sexual violence in DRC during this reporting period.

As the Ambassador of Kuwait noted during his briefing, some members of the 1533 Committee and MONUSCO have expressed an interest to list individuals, including based on the sexual violence designation criteria. In this regard, the United Kingdom encourages the Group of Experts to provide the committee with updated information on the sanctioned individuals and entities and also to provide statements of case in relation to the sexual violence designation criteria.

It's particularly alarming that some elements of the DRC armed forces are alleged to have colluded with the NDC-R, the largest perpetrator of attacks against civilians in North Kivu. The United Kingdom welcomes the issuing of a warrant for the arrest of Guidon, the leader of the NDC-R, who is also under UN sanctions. We look forward to the government of the DRC taking action against Guidon and investigating and holding to account any FARDC members found guilty of using armed groups as proxies.

In Ituri, we note with concern that renewed violence has caused significant displacement of civilians and increased humanitarian needs. We also note that a hiatus in the political process to demobilise the FRPI armed group has led them to increase their activity. We look forward to President Tshisekedi's support to enable the FRPI disarmament process to move forward, including the signing of a peace agreement between the government and the FRPI.

Second, Mr President, the humanitarian situation is dire and deeply concerning in the DRC. More than one in ten Congolese are expected to be in need of protection and humanitarian assistance in 2019.

The UK is at the forefront of the humanitarian response. In 2013, we provided \$124 million to humanitarian appeals, making the UK the second largest humanitarian donor in the DRC and the largest contributor to the DRC's Multi Donor Humanitarian Fund. We echo the Secretary-General's call for donors and partners to provide the necessary support in order to close the humanitarian funding gap as quickly as possible. And this is particularly relevant to the appeal for further funding to address the Ebola outbreak where much more is needed. And we urge other countries, particularly those which have a presence and a history in the region, to support the response with funding, technical expertise and political support.

Mr President, finally, let me say a brief word on the political situation. Despite some positive developments which we've heard about today, attention must not drift from the ongoing electoral process in the DRC, in particular the local elections planned for late 2019 and 2020. In this regard, we call for the prompt appointment of a new, balanced, inclusive leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission, otherwise known as CENI. The production of an electoral calendar for the upcoming local elections will also help efforts to ensure that they are credible, free and fair. By taking these steps, the government of the DRC will help to generate trust among the population in future electoral processes and strengthen democracy in the DRC.

The UK recognises some positive steps taken by President Tshisekedi since his election, including the release of several political detainees and efforts to promote regional collaboration. However, this is just the start. It is vital that when the new government is finally formed, it makes concrete progress on President Tshisekedi's commitments to improve human rights, strengthen transparency and the rule of law, drive forward poverty reduction and tackle the Ebola outbreak. The United Kingdom, therefore, urges all Congolese parties to engage constructively to enable the swift formation of a government – a government that can deliver the change that the Congolese people clearly voted for.

Thank you.

[Dominic Raab appointed new Foreign Secretary](#)

The new Foreign Secretary spoke to media on arrival at the Foreign Office. He said:

I'm hugely humbled to take on this role at this time and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. Obviously we've got the challenges of Brexit, that's something we wanted the country to rise to. Obviously the Foreign Office, the message we send about the opportunities around the world and our confidence in our country, taking those opportunities with enthusiasm, optimism, is something I can't wait to get involved with.

[Priti Patel appointed Home Secretary](#)

This evening, the Rt Hon Priti Patel has been appointed Home Secretary.

She was welcomed to the department by the Permanent Secretary Sir Philip Rutnam.

Speaking outside the Home Office, she said:

It's a great honour to be appointed Home Secretary.

With this great office of state comes significant responsibility and I will do everything in my power to keep our country safe, our people secure, and also to fight the scourge of crime that we see on our streets.

I also want to thank my predecessor Sajid Javid for his commitment to the Home Office and law and order.

I look forward to the challenges that now lie ahead.

6 things to know about our performance in 2018-19

1. Supporting the UK economy

There are now more than 4.2 million companies on the register. Information from the [Companies House register](#), which is free and available online, was accessed over 6.8 billion times this year.

Company data underpins confidence in the UK economy, is used by all sectors of society for important decision making and supports law enforcement in the fight against economic crime.

2. Transforming our organisation

Our organisational wide transformation programme started this year and we've already made some good progress against our strategic goals.

We're working on a range of new digital services and have extended the range of accounts that can be submitted digitally by introducing a service for filing small full accounts.

3. Planning for the future

We've continued to work collaboratively with colleagues across government to prepare for upcoming legislative change. These changes include the 5th Money Laundering Directive, Limited Partnership Reform and a new beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property.

Reforming how we operate to better support the UK economy, enhance the value of our information and expand our role in combatting economic crime has also been a major focus this year. Working with [BEIS](#), we've developed and launched a consultation on corporate transparency and register reform.

As we move into next year, we'll be considering the responses, developing proposals and preparing new legislative measures that will enable us to reform Companies House.

4. Building a high-performance culture

We achieved an engagement score of 69% in the [2018 Civil Service People Survey](#). This is a 3% increase on last year and made us the top scoring Civil Service department for organisations of 400 to 999 employees.

In line with this, we're the first organisation in Wales to be awarded the [Mind gold standard](#) for our commitment to promoting mental health in the workplace.

We also successfully retained the Investors in People gold standard and have been recognised for [our work in employee engagement and wellbeing](#), and diversity and inclusion, with a variety of award nominations.

5. Helping our local communities

We're committed to having a positive impact on the local community, and this year we recorded our highest number of employee volunteers. 41% of our colleagues took part in 501 volunteer days with a wide variety of local organisations.

Our fantastic employees raised £10,494.26 for charity through fundraising efforts including:

- Children in Need
- Mental Health Awareness ribbons
- Cupcake Day for Alzheimer's
- a charity bike ride for Cancer Research Wales

6. Celebrating success

We're particularly proud to have won awards across a wide range of activities this year. These include:

- Wales HR Awards – Employer of the Year
- Investors in People – Gold standard
- CIPD Wales – Winner, best engagement initiative
- Chwarae Teg Fair Play – Silver award
- Disability confident – Level 2
- Mind Index – Gold standard
- Customer Service Excellence