

# Political and economic progress in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Mr President, I'd like to start, if I may, on a different topic. I'd like to start by joining the Secretary-General in expressing our deep sadness at the passing of Mr Yukiya Amano, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. And I'd like to pay tribute to Mr Amano's tireless work in the pursuit of peace. And we send our deepest condolences to Japan and to his family and friends.

Turning to today's debate, Mr President, I'd like to start, as others have done, by talking about the recent Peace to Prosperity conference that was held in Bahrain at the end of June. US efforts to support the development of Palestinian economy are very welcome. It's crucial that we improve the daily life and prospects for Palestinians across East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. For the United Kingdom, Mr President, we are doubling UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories between 2018 and 2023. We are helping to address restrictions on movement and access and improving water and energy supply, particularly in Gaza. And we support efforts which complement this work.

As others have noted, Mr President, it is, of course, essential that political progress is made in order to unlock economic opportunities. And we encourage the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to engage and work with the international community to foster solutions that actively improve the situation on the ground. And what Dr Greenblatt said about the political aspect of the proposals was a welcome assurance.

For the record, Mr President, the United Kingdom's position on the two-state solution remains unchanged. But I wanted just to stress that in the interim, until there is political progress, steps need to be taken to address the constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy by the Israeli occupation. We want to see increasing external trade opportunities for the Palestinians, a reduction in internal movement and access restrictions and sustainable investments in water and energy infrastructure. We also want the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority to be realised.

Looking to fresh negotiations, it's obviously essential to build a conducive environment. That means we need genuine and committed engagement from both parties, including the end of actions which undermine trust and threaten the viability of the two-state solution.

Therefore, Mr President, we urge the Palestinian Authority to address allegations of incitement, including in the education curriculum, and to make reforms to prisoner payments, ensuring these are needs-based, transparent and affordable. We remain deeply concerned, as other speakers have noted today, by ongoing Israeli settlement advancements, including over 200 units in Gilo

on 10 July and by the retroactive approvals of unauthorised settlement outposts. Settlements are illegal and they undermine the physical viability of a future Palestinian state. Settler violence, the demolition of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians from their homes should be opposed and condemned wholeheartedly. The demolitions since Sunday of a number of Palestinian properties in the Sur Bahir area of the Jerusalem governate are particularly egregious, in part because much of the area lies in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas. And we also condemn the eviction of the Siam family in Silwan on 10 July. Mr President, the Israeli authorities have a responsibility to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

We remain deeply concerned by suggestions that any parts, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, should be annexed. Such a move would be contrary to international law, destructive to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged.

Let me be clear about our views on terrorism: we equally condemn in the strongest terms Hamas terrorism and that of other militant groups in Gaza. Since the Great March of Return began in 2018, there have been nearly 2000 rockets and mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel. This is completely unacceptable and we call on Hamas and other militant groups to cease such attacks immediately. We recognise Israel's legitimate security need. However, we do have concerns about excessive use of force by the Israel Defense Forces. Measures used need to be appropriate and in line with international law. Accountability needs to be sought through swift, transparent investigations and we welcome the investigations currently being pursued by Israel under the Military Attorney General.

I'd like to join others, Mr President, in expressing the United Kingdom's gratitude to the UN and to Egypt for their efforts to mediate between the parties and picking up what the Under-Secretary-General said, we also encourage those involved in the reconciliation process to allow the Palestinian Authority fully to resume its government functions in Gaza.

Mr President, we believe that it's essential that the international community continue work to support Palestinian refugees. Status of Palestinian refugees needs to be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. But until that time, the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and refugees across the Middle East. And we welcome the successful outcome of the pledging conference on 25 June, for which we were able to include an additional \$25 million of UK funding, taking 2019-2020 support to over \$70 million.

Mr President, I just wanted to pick up on something the German Representative said about international law. We share his view. The Security Council's responsible for maintaining international peace and security and we all agree that the Arab-Israeli conflict is such a threat to international peace and security. So it's right that we've passed resolutions and we are bound by those resolutions. And we all have a responsibility, Mr President, to implement them, just as we do in other areas. Indeed, this is the very basis of the Council's work.

I was also asked by the Israeli Representative about the JCPOA, so although I didn't want to talk about Iran today, let me just address that point, if I may. Together with France and Germany, the United Kingdom is urging Iran not to take further steps away from the Agreement and to return to compliance. And the agreement itself allows for this. On the general point, we are clear that the nuclear deal is still the best option and in the interests of both Iranian and global security. It's critical that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons. And this deal makes the world a safer place by taking the prospect of a nuclear armed Iran off the table. Indeed, Mr President, military representatives in some of the countries that criticised the deal have confirmed its role in national and international security. And I alluded earlier to the sad passing away of Mr Amano, where the IAEA is a critical part of looking at compliance of the deal.

Let me return, if I may, to the Middle East peace process. As I say, our position remains unchanged. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

Thank you.

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## [£20 million funding to help 10,000 young people into NHS careers](#)

The Health and Social Care Secretary has announced £20 million funding to support 10,000 young people from all backgrounds to get a career in the NHS. This will be matched by £7 million from the Prince's Trust.

The 3-year pre-employment programme will begin later this year and will involve up to 150 NHS trusts in England. Participants will gain basic skills and experience of working in the NHS. The programme will focus on helping those who otherwise may not have the opportunity to gain this experience to overcome barriers and enter sustainable employment.

The programme will provide:

- job application support
- NHS trust work placements
- courses in basic healthcare, literacy and numeracy skills

It is expected to help 5,000 young people get into the NHS through entry-level positions, with a further 5,000 joining through apprenticeships. Roles will include digital and business administration, healthcare assistant, facilities, catering and portering.

The programme will be delivered by The Prince's Trust and supported by Health Education England (HEE). HEE has already worked in partnership with The Prince's Trust to run 250 pre-employment programmes, helping over 1,000 young people find work in healthcare across the country.

Nick Stace, UK Chief Executive, The Prince's Trust, said:

Each year, The Prince's Trust supports thousands of young people across the country to develop the confidence and skills they need to get a job – with our 'Get into Healthcare' programme we help young people to take their first step into employment with the NHS.

We are delighted that through this enhanced partnership we will give thousands more young people across the country exciting job opportunities. Placing young people into frontline roles at the heart of our National Health Service will empower them to realise their potential, kick start their careers and make a valuable contribution to our society.

We believe that when young people succeed, our country succeeds and this is a great example of what that can mean in reality.

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## [Period Poverty Taskforce meets for the first time](#)

- Taskforce chaired by Minister for Women & Equalities, Plan International UK and Procter & Gamble
- Work to focus on tackling period poverty and stigma around menstruation
- Providing a joined-up approach, working with experts from all sectors and beginning by learning from and building on existing initiatives

The newly formed Period Poverty Taskforce met for the first time today (23rd July).

Announced earlier this year, the taskforce will focus its efforts on tackling the issue of period poverty and wider stigma around menstruation in the UK.

The group is co-chaired by Plan International UK, Procter & Gamble and the Minister for Women & Equalities. Following today's meeting, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) is announcing several convenors who will lead specific areas of the taskforce's work:

- Bloody Good Period – focusing on improving access for to period products for everyone
- phs Group – also focusing on improving access

- Irise International – focusing on providing improved data and evidence on period-related issues
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – also focusing on providing improved data and evidence
- Binti International – focusing on breaking down stigma, shame and taboos around menstruation
- PSHE Association – also focusing on tackling stigma
- Sport England – also focusing on tackling stigma

Today's meeting looked at the work that needs to be done in these three key work areas, as well as agreeing a united vision which all organisations involved will work towards.

Tom Moody, Vice President & Managing Director, P&G Northern Europe said:

“Tackling the societal challenge of period poverty and related issues in a holistic way is critical to supporting girls' confidence and wellbeing. This ambition is fully in line with what we stand for as Always.

“I am happy that as Always and P&G, we are part of the taskforce, a diverse group working together to make a meaningful difference.”

Tanya Barron, Chief Executive of Plan International UK, said:

“We're delighted to have co-chaired the first meeting of the Government's Period Poverty Taskforce, which represents the first real opportunity to tackle period poverty and stigma.

“We'll be working hard to make sure the voices of UK girls are heard and that any course of action reflects their needs and concerns. Together we can put an end to period poverty and stigma once and for all.”

David Taylor-Smith, Chief Executive Officer of phs Group, said:

“We're delighted to contribute to the period poverty taskforce, to make a difference to millions of girls in the UK by ending the stigma and taboo surrounding periods in the UK. Sanitary products are not a luxury and our research has proven that being unable to afford these items can have a detrimental affect. We'll be looking to provide practical solutions to ensure no girls or women in the UK miss work or school because of lack of access to period products.”

Working with the new convenors and a host of other membership organisations, the taskforce is set to begin working on:

- Improved data and evidence – those working on this area will produce a research paper looking at existing information on period poverty, menstrual health and the associated stigma. Following this they will commission new research where necessary, encouraging other bodies to do the same.
- Tackling stigma, shame and taboo – this work will focus on putting forward a plan which sets out how the taskforce can take meaningful steps to end stigma and taboo across the UK through knowledge, awareness

and education. All work in this area will engage closely with Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

- Ensuring access for all – there are already a number of productive initiatives working towards the same goals as the taskforce, this work will seek to identify these, developing a clear example of what good access looks like. We will then identify gaps and develop new approaches to improve access to period products.

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## [Minister publishes review of the UK search and rescue helicopter service](#)

I am delighted to publish this independently produced [post-implementation review of the UK search and rescue helicopter service](#). The service has been in place since 2015 and in that time, has been responsible for the rescue of thousands of lives. As Minister responsible for the service, I am proud of the work of our helicopter crews who routinely put their own lives at risk to rescue others.

I recognise the high expectations the public has for this service, particularly given the fact that it replaced the much respected military sea king service. I equally recognise the degree to which our stakeholders in the emergency services and the volunteer rescue organisations value our search and rescue helicopters and how critical it is to enable those services to undertake their lifesaving work.

To assure itself that the UK search and rescue helicopter service is meeting our stakeholders' needs and to evaluate the impact the service has had on the ability to respond to people in distress, the MCA commissioned this review to evaluate the work of the UK search and rescue helicopter service since it has been in operation.

The review draws upon statistical data and insight from partner rescue organisations to reach its conclusions. The general opinion of the review is that the transition to the UK search and rescue helicopter service was successful. It concludes that the anticipated benefits are either met or on track to be met. It further identifies a number of unanticipated benefits that present opportunities for the future to grow the service to be offer even greater value for money to the public.

This review will be used to inform the government's plans for the next generation search and rescue aviation capability, work on which has now started.

Nusrat Ghani MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport