

# Speech: International Humanitarian Law: We lack enforcement and accountability

Thank you Mr President.

As our briefers have made clear, and as we all know, International Humanitarian Law consists of a comprehensive and universal framework to which all Member States are not only committed but bound. It's important of course that we enhance that framework whenever we see an opportunity. And our briefers have mentioned today, Security Council Resolution 2462 passed just last week at the initiative of the French delegation on terrorist financing which contained important provisions on humanitarian action. Also 2417 of 2018 on starvation of civilians as a weapon of war.

But Mr President, we don't lack law. We lack enforcement and accountability. And sadly, we are too regularly used to hearing terrible humanitarian stories around this table. Time and time again, from Syria to South Sudan to Yemen, the DRC, in fact in every conflict situation on this council's agenda, we witness the human cost of the lack of respect for humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law.

The most appalling incidents become notorious and are brought not only to our attention by those agencies and operatives on the ground, but also often brought to our peoples on their TV screens. For example, attacks on aid workers or the bombing of hospitals. But we hear much less about the routine and insidious actions which nevertheless have a human cost in the end. I'm talking about such things as denial of visas for humanitarian staff; removal of medical items from aid convoy; medical leave procurement and transport processes; looting and diversion of preposition goods by armed actors or by the authorities; taxes and fines on goods and people; the closure of crossings; denial of registration of NGOs. There is a long long list.

The human cost is clear: people starve; they suffer; they die when the humanitarian space is not respected and we lose the development gains that we've taken years to achieve.

To give one example from South Sudan which we've talked about a lot in this council. An international NGO within in country staff of fewer than 200 people estimates that it spends approximately \$350,000 per year in South Sudan on administrative taxes and fees. These financial costs are primarily paid to official or quasi-official entities and this is all money which should be going to protecting the people that those officials are in place to serve.

So as well as documenting attacks on humanitarian personnel or other egregious crimes, we need to gather data on the bureaucratic impediments and the actions which impede humanitarian access and in that respect, let me

commend the work that OCHA is doing to map out how access constraints relate to the severity of needs and humanitarian assistance received.

Let me also say that the UK is supporting research to ensure that the nature, frequency, scale and impact on attacks on health care in conflict is better understood through improved data collection analysis as called for in Security Council Resolution 2286. All of this data should be brought to the attention of the Security Council and its Sub-Committees.

Mr President, for its part the United Kingdom is always looking for innovative ways to promote compliance in International Humanitarian Law. On the 11 March, we published our first voluntary report on the implementation of International Humanitarian Law at domestic level. Publishing specific examples of our practice to implement International Humanitarian Law is intended to help improve understanding of it and encourage and inform dialogue on these issues both at home and abroad. We hope it will encourage other states to publish details of their activities to implement International Humanitarian Law at the domestic level, to identify best practice and to improve implementation and compliance.

But Mr President, more can be done of course by state actors. Mark Lowcock talked about the importance of increasing the understanding and training of some countries' armed forces. But he also spoke about the need to do so with non-state actors – a point made also by Peter Maurer. I think this is an area to which Security Council could give greater focus. We can look both at education and training and ensuring Commanders are aware of their liabilities under International Law whether those are state or non-state actors and look at tackling actions through sanctions in particular of non-state actors.

Mr President, I hadn't intended to talk today about Syria which this Council regularly discusses. But the Russian Representative today chose to continue his government's misinformation campaign against the White Helmets. The Russian government does so to try to deflect attention away from the appalling war crimes committed by the Syrian regime. Its attacks on its own people including by its use of chemical weapons. So let us not have our attention deflected from the fact that Physicians for Human Rights corroborated 553 attacks on medical facilities in Syria in 2018. 498 of these 553 attacks were committed by the Syrian regime and its allies.

Mr President, it is very welcome that you have organised this briefing today and all here have reaffirmed their commitments. Good ideas have been shared by our briefers and by colleagues. However, I'm struck by the contrast between our willingness to stake out a clear position in the abstract while at the same time not tackling humanitarian violations in country-specific conversations. So in addition to today's meeting, I think that we need to:

- 1) Ask for, gather and then discuss data about not just the most egregious violations of International Humanitarian Law but also the bureaucratic impediments of interference in humanitarian assistance which kills so many of those in most desperate need;

- 2) Ensure that the UN system is able to support states in spreading

understanding of International Humanitarian Law and training armed forces and wider government officials;

3) We should consider how such understanding and training could be expanded to non-state actors and ensure they also are held to account.

4) We could call out consistently violations of International Humanitarian Law by all actors in our regular business in our country-specific conversations, whether that's South Sudan, Syria, Myanmar or elsewhere;

5) We could put greater attention on humanitarian violations when designing and implementing sanctions regimes;

6) We should push consistently for accountability mechanism where states cannot or will not act. As Peter Maurer said, International Humanitarian Law and its upholding relies on our common acceptance that there are limits to war. We all therefore have a stake in upholding it and strengthening it for our common humanity.

Thank Mr President.

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## [Speech: Partners in Peace in Mali](#)

Thank you Mr President. May I start by thanking you for convening this important meeting and also thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative briefing. And I am also, like many others, looking forward to Prime Minister Maiga for giving his perspective on the challenges his country faces.

However, if I may Prime Minister, I begin by addressing you Sir. I do so by offering the sincere condolences on behalf of the United Kingdom Government for the tragic deaths of over 160 people in the most recent violence in Ogossagou. Given the ongoing security challenges, we particularly welcome the recent steps your Government has taken to implement the Mali Peace Agreement, including on the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process.

However, Mr President, while progress in recent months has been more encouraging in recent months than in previous years, the United Kingdom notes that the Secretary-General's report highlights a number of areas where progress has not matched the benchmarks set out in the MINUSMA mandate. It is clear that more still needs to be done to achieve long term peace and long term stability.

Even where positive steps have been taken, more fundamental changes are required to achieve peace, sustainable development, and indeed prosperity. This is particularly the case with constitutional reform and decentralisation, security sector reform, economic development in northern

Mali, and the meaningful participation of women in the peace process.

I commend the Government of Mali's commitment to hold a constitutional referendum before the end of June. To give the reform process the best chance of success, we would urge them to ensure that it is properly inclusive, involving a genuine consultation with all signatory parties to the peace agreement and with all sections of Malian society. We also welcome the Prime Minister's clear commitment to stabilise the situation in central Mali. We hope that he can give assurances that the Government's plan for the centre will be both truly comprehensive and indeed properly funded, to ensure its effectiveness.

Mr President, MINUSMA plays a crucial role in Mali, in extremely challenging circumstances. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns recent attacks against MINUSMA personnel and we wish to extend our condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives. As we approach the renewal of the mandate in June, the United Kingdom wants to work with all of you here today to build on recent progress and to further enhance the effectiveness of the Mission.

In particular, we want to see a mandate that allows it to continue to focus on its core tasks in the north and its areas of strength. MINUSMA has had the greatest political impact when it has used its good offices to defuse tensions and allow agreement to form around the tough compromises necessary. Those compromises are absolutely necessary for peace. We believe that it can do more of this, particularly in central Mali.

In its military operations, we are concerned that the Mission still spends too much time and money on resupply and force protection, rather than protecting the Malian people. We want to support the Mission to make longer-term cost savings, so that it can free up capacity – because its important to free up that capacity to save lives.

Finally, we should all recognise that MINUSMA is not a permanent solution but a means to an end – namely, a means to achieve sustainable peace in Mali. We all need to work together, across the whole UN family, to achieve this.

Mr President, allow me to finish by underlining the importance that the United Kingdom attaches to progress in Mali and the broader Sahel region.

The issues we are discussing today have major long-term implications – not just for the security and prosperity of the people of Mali, but also for the broader region, and indeed for Europe. This is why the United Kingdom is stepping up our engagement in the Sahel. We are already working with the countries of the region to support peace, development, and prosperity. We are the region's third biggest humanitarian donor. We are enlarging our Embassy in Mali, which spearheads our work on the very issues we have been discussing so far today. We are also establishing new embassies in Niger and Chad, and building a broader Stability and Development programme.

As we step up our engagement over the coming years, the principles of frank and open partnership will be central to our approach, both with the people

and governments of the region and with our broader international partners. I look forward to working with many here, with the Government of Mali, and all partners, to achieve our shared ambitions and our shared goals.

Thank you, Mr President.

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## Speech: Commitment to Global Peacekeeping

Under-Secretary-General, your Excellencies, colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman,

I wish to begin by thanking the most important contributors to the United Nation's proud history of peacekeeping: the peacekeepers themselves. The brave men and women that we send far from home. Often into considerable danger, for months at a time in the service of peace, in the service of the security of others. Let us collectively put on record our deep appreciation of their commitment, their professionalism, and yes, their sacrifice. We thank you and we salute you.

We send our peacekeepers because they are a tangible demonstration of the commitment of United Nation Member States to defend the rights and freedoms contained in the United Nations Charter. We want our peacekeepers to be the best they can. It would be a dereliction of our responsibilities to our peacekeepers, and to those they protect, if we did not give them the very best guidance and training. So we arm them, not just with rifles and rules, but also with knowledge and know-how.

That is why our discussions here are so so important and why the United Kingdom Government backs the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping agenda. Successful implementation of the Peace and Security Architecture reforms is essential to bring about both a structural reorganisation but also a cultural change in working practices. If our peacekeepers are to be the best they can they must better reflect those that they serve and protect.

Yesterday I was delighted to announce a £1 million contribution to the Elsie Initiative, which will bolster women's participation globally. I am also pleased to be able to report that the United Kingdom has 7% female representation in our peacekeeping deployments. But we are under no illusion: we must, and we will, do better.

If our peacekeepers are to be the best then we must get their training right, and we must identify and hold to account those who betray our values and trust by abusing those that they are sent to protect.

United Kingdom forces currently train around 11,000 peacekeepers annually, and we provide capacity building support to peacekeepers from a number of

countries. Indeed last year Vietnamese peacekeepers demonstrated what is possible through these partnerships, when they deployed a Level Two Field Hospital in a UN mission for the first time in their history.

The United Kingdom plans to develop and launch a new prospectus of training support, and we therefore look forward to engaging with many of you who may be interested in future training partnerships.

Your Excellencies, Under-Secretary-General, I pledge today that the United Kingdom's commitment to work with you, today and in the future, to make UN peacekeeping the best it can be. Together to bring hope where there is despair. To bring peace where there is conflict.

Thank you.

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## **Press release: Schools to trial new multiplication tables check**

From today (Monday, April 1), schools up and down the country will be able to try out the new multiplication tables check.

The check is designed to help ensure children in primary school know their times tables up to 12 off by heart. As well as being important for everyday life, knowledge of times tables helps children to solve problems quickly and flexibly, and allows them to tackle more complex mathematics later on in school.

Schools will be able to sign up to and access the online system from today, allowing them to register pupils, familiarise themselves with the digital platform and let pupils try the check ahead of the national pilot in the summer.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Maths touches so many aspects of everyday life so it's hugely important that young people are equipped with the ability to perform simple calculations in their heads. Not only will this help them cope with the challenges of maths at secondary school, it will also stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

That's why we are bringing in this new check – to make sure all pupils leave primary school knowing their times tables by heart. Just as the phonics screening check has driven up literacy rates in primary schools, so this check will have a similar effect for basic maths.

By familiarising themselves with the check, teachers will have the opportunity to be a part of the development process to make sure the check is both effective and user-friendly.

The new check, which schools will be required to administer to year 4 pupils from June 2020, will consist of 25 questions based on the 2 to 12 times tables and will be conducted using laptops, computers or tablets in class.

This familiarisation period comes ahead of a national pilot between 10 and 28 June. Pupils will have 6 seconds to answer each question. In most cases, pupils will spend less than 5 minutes completing the check and teachers will be able to administer it to individual pupils, groups of pupils or whole classes at the same time. The check can be taken at any time during the school day within the 3-week window.

The system has been carefully produced in partnership with schools and has been developed to minimise any unnecessary burdens on school staff and pupils.

It features ground-breaking accessibility arrangements that have been developed for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Feedback from the pilot will be used to shape the final version of the check.

Mark Lehain, Director of Parents and Teachers for Excellence, said:

In providing a standard, quick and simple check of children's grasp of the times tables, the multiplication tables check will be invaluable for everyone in education. Its careful development and implementation, done in partnership with experts from the profession, is an example of how such things should be done more often.

Being able to get familiar with the set-up now means that when schools come to administer the check for real it should run smoothly. This will give heads, teachers, families and pupils reassurance that it provides an accurate picture of how fluently children know their tables.

This consolidation of basic mathematical knowledge is in line with the principle of the maths 'mastery' teaching, which is successfully practised by world leaders in mathematics, Shanghai and Singapore, and is now being introduced to schools in England.

The multiplication tables check was announced in 2016. In the following year, we confirmed in our response to the primary assessment consultation that the check would be taken by pupils in year 4 and that the check would become statutory from the summer of 2020.

Further information:

- The test will be sat by 8 and 9 year-olds in year 4, after teachers and schools told the Government this was the best point for it to be introduced. There will be no pass mark and no expected standard threshold for the MTC. Results from the check will not be published at school level, and will not be used by Ofsted and others to force changes in schools.
  - The check follows the successful introduction of the phonics screening check in 2012. There are now 163,000 more 6 year-olds on track to become fluent readers than in 2012 and England's recent rise up the international PIRLS rankings puts the success of the government's reforms on a global scale.
  - Pupils will answer 25 questions based on the 2 to 12 times tables and will have 6 seconds to answer each one.
  - The specification and time available are informed by trials we ran earlier this year that showed 6 seconds was the optimum amount of time to allow for each question.
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## **Press release: £75m investment set to revolutionise Royal Navy operations**

Robots and autonomous mine-hunters are set to revolutionise Royal Navy operations after the Defence Secretary announced a £75million injection into pioneering new technology.

The funding boost will be spent on two new autonomous mine-hunter vessels with cutting-edge sonars to enable remote mine-hunting at higher range, speed and accuracy in the Gulf, as well as a new joint military and industry hi-tech accelerator, NavyX.

The Royal Navy's new autonomy and lethality accelerator will look to overhaul and turbocharge the way the Royal Navy buys the latest technology, streamlining the process and creating a brand-new facility where industry, military and academia can test, assess and purchase new equipment.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today's announcement will not only allow the Royal Navy to rapidly harness dynamic, cutting-edge equipment at speed, but also ensure they can outpace adversaries both on the water and the sea floor.

Technology is moving faster than ever, and with the defence landscape rapidly evolving, we must ensure our Armed Forces are continually pushing the boundaries at the forefront of this change.



Secretary of State at QinetiQ's Portsdown Technology Park. Crown Copyright

By operating autonomous mine-hunters, the Royal Navy will not only improve current capability and put sailors at less risk, but also ensure the Royal Navy can evolve to meet developing underwater threats.

Admiral Sir Philip Jones KCB ADC DL, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, said:

From the invention of the steam catapult and aircraft carrier, to the first use of sonars and torpedoes, the Royal Navy has a strong pedigree in the development, testing and introduction of new technologies that help us keep our country safe.

Across the generations, our willingness to embrace innovation has kept us one step ahead of our adversaries, and to assure our continued success on operations into the future it is vital that the Royal Navy continues to be equipped with the latest cutting-edge capabilities we need to address the rapidly evolving challenges that pose a threat to our national interests around the globe.

During a visit to QinetiQ's Portsdown Technology Park, which is building the UK Centre of Excellence for Maritime Mission Systems, the Defence Secretary saw first-hand the world-leading work being done in the field by British industry.

More than fifty of the world's state-of-the-art autonomous vehicles, vessels and drones were on display at the technology park, including hoverbikes, wave gliders and Gravity's 'Ironman' flying suit.

The development of NavyX, which will combine the brightest military minds, civil servants, entrepreneurs and industry specialists, comes after the Royal Navy's involvement in Unmanned Warrior, Commando Warrior and Information Warrior, which was held at Portsdown Technology Park.

It also comes after Mr Williamson announced the first of the three Royal Navy Defence Transformation Fund programmes, an accelerated Concept and Development Phase for two new Littoral Strike Ships, in February.

After securing an extra £1.8bn for defence and overseeing the Modernising Defence Programme, the Defence Secretary has dedicated millions of pounds to transforming defence, arming the British military with innovative technology through fast-tracking new projects.

The MOD is embracing transformation at an ever-faster rate and the Transformation Fund is focused on investments in truly high-tech innovation that will create the armed forces of the future.