

Speech: A historic vote for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo

Thank you, Mr President.

The fact that we've been fortunate enough to have so many briefers today testifies to the importance of this issue. I'd like to thank them. I'd like to thank the Minister and the SRSB in particular for being with us.

I'd like to make five brief points if I may, Mr President.

I think the first point, as many speakers have said, is this is a critical moment in DRC's history precisely because of the prospect of the peaceful transfer of power, so there's a lot at stake. Mr President, this is a historic chance for the DRC's people.

The second point is that the most important thing is that the democratic will of the Congolese people is respected. As others have noted, these are provisional results, so there is a chance for the Congolese people to have the result they voted for. To that end, it's critical, Mr President, that data and methodology of voting must be examined. We have noted the CENCO statement that their data does not reflect the announced result and we therefore request both CENCO and CENI to give further data and other analysis in the electoral process and we, like others, would like to know if it is possible for CENI to publish results at the level of local polling centres and bureaux de vote. We think that's a very important next step, Mr President.

My third point is that as we know the electoral process is ongoing, so it's important in the coming days that the Congolese people see a process that delivers what they voted for and that any disagreement is done through the proper channels and is done peacefully and constructively.

My fourth point, Mr President, is to echo calls for the lifting of media restrictions, including as regards the internet.

And my fifth point, Mr President, and my last point is to support the African Union call for all stakeholders to act in a way that consolidates democracy and preserves peace and for violence to cease.

Thank you very much Mr President.

Government response: Foreign Secretary statement on Macedonian vote



Today, Macedonia's Parliament voted in favour of amendments to the country's constitution to implement the Prespa Agreement. We look forward to the Agreement being ratified by the Greek Parliament. This will end a long-standing dispute between the two countries and open the way for Macedonia to progress towards NATO and EU membership.

Following the historic result, Foreign Secretary said:

The UK strongly welcomes the vote in Macedonia's Parliament today in favour of implementing the Prespa Agreement. This is an historic moment for Macedonia.

This marks a major step towards resolving the long-standing Name Issue with Greece, and brings the country closer to a more secure, stable and prosperous future at the heart of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Implementation of the Agreement will unlock greater opportunities for Macedonia's young people and demonstrates what can be achieved with courage, determination and a vision for the future.

Further information

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Press release: Unique 18th century

harpsichord at risk of export

Joseph Mahoon's 'double-manual harpsichord', built in 1738, has been blocked from export by Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The harpsichord is the only one of its type now known to exist, and one of only two surviving instruments from this decade. It was made during a significant musical decade in the UK, in which London was at the forefront of instrument making among the major cities of Europe. Harpsichords were known to be the preserve of the rich due to the cost of making them and were high status instruments.

Exeter-born Mahoon became a renowned spinet and harpsichord maker, and was appointed as 'Harpsichord Maker to His Majesty', King George II, in 1729. He died in 1773.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

Surviving instruments from this period are crucial in helping us to understand musical and cultural life in 18th century Britain, particularly as there was no way of recording sound.

There is so much we can learn from this instrument's history as well as the social context surrounding it, so it is right that we do all we can to preserve this valuable item for the nation.

While Mahoon was estimated to have been active as a harpsichord maker for more than 40 years, only two harpsichords and about a dozen spinets bearing his name have survived. The only surviving British harpsichords dated between 1730 and 1739 were those by Mahoon. This, the only surviving double manual harpsichord, is therefore unique and of outstanding significance.

Until recently, the item had been out of the UK for prolonged exhibits at the Germanisches National Museum in Nuremberg and at the Stadtmuseum in Munich.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, administered by The Arts Council. They made their recommendation on the grounds that the item is closely connected with British history and national life, and is of outstanding significance for the study of music, musical instrument making and the history of performance.

Upon observation of the harpsichord, the Committee also noted that a list of mechanical and technical instructions for the player of the harpsichord was pasted upon the case of the instrument, leading to speculation that the instrument may have been used for public performance by a variety of players.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural

Interest member Christopher Rowell said:

This double-manual harpsichord by Joseph Mahoon is a remarkable survival. As well as its significance in the history of British keyboard instrument making, it is beautiful in its own right.

Mahoon was well-known for such luxurious harpsichords to the extent that the famous print by his contemporary, William Hogarth, in 'The Rake's Progress' series, depicts Handel playing a harpsichord by Mahoon, while accompanying the Bolognese castrato singer, Carlo Farinelli. Given that this may have been a concert instrument it is not impossible that the great composer may have performed on it. This is a considerable rarity redolent of a high point in British musical life.

The decision on the export licence application for the item will be deferred until 10 April 2019. This may be extended until 10 July 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £85,560.

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the harpsichord should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

Notes to editors

Details of the item are as follows:

- Double-manual harpsichord by Mahoon, London 1738
- Matching offer: £85,560
- The case of the instrument is in oak with walnut veneer and decorative crossbanding, while its keyboard has ivory naturals and 'skunktail' sharps of ebony/ivory/ebony. There are brass strapwork hinges, stop knobs and s-shaped lid hooks.
- Measurements: Length 248cm, width 94cm, case height including lid 29.5cm.

The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities

across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.
www.artscouncil.org.uk.

A Buyer's Premium is an additional percentage charge on the hammer price, which is charged by the auctioneer to cover their expense

[Press release: Wales announced as host for UK Space Conference 2019](#)

PLEASE NOTE: The date of the conference has changed from the previously announced meeting of 9 to 11 July to the 24 to 26 September.

The [UK Space Agency](#) has today announced at the [Farnborough International Airshow](#) that Wales will play host to the 2019 UK Space Conference, with the new [International Convention Centre](#) (ICC) near Newport confirmed as the event venue.

The UK Space Conference is considered the most influential event for the space community, bringing together government, industry and academia, to build links, share opportunities and address mutual concerns at a crucial time of unprecedented change and growth for the sector.

The position of Programme Committee Chair is now open for nominations; this committee is responsible for defining the theme, shaping the content and selecting the speakers. Nominations for members of the committee are also welcome. We are looking to ensure wide engagement in the conference and so encourage people from across the community to put themselves forward.

The 2019 conference is set to be the biggest and most significant event to date with over 1,200 delegates anticipated. The ICC Wales, an £84 million investment development, is due to open shortly before the 2019 event. This biennial conference has been held previously in Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester, with the first held in 2011 in Warwick.

CEO of the UK Space Agency, Dr Graham Turnock said:

We are working with the space sector to build on our significant capability and maximise the benefits of space to life on Earth, creating jobs and opportunities across the country.

The UK Space Conference is a fantastic event for sparking the kind of collaborations and partnerships that will help our sector grow. I am delighted that Wales will be hosting the 2019 conference and I'm sure it will build on the huge success of the 2017 conference

in Manchester.

Sir Martin Sweeting, Executive Chairman, [Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd](#) and founder of the Surrey Space Centre said:

The UK Space Conference provides a vital forum for the UK space sector, academia and policy makers to network, debate, form new collaborations, and do business. It's a key event for SSSL, and a fixture in my calendar.

This 2017 programme included 5 plenary and 28 parallel sessions which were carefully designed to inspire, enable and connect the space community. 180 speakers delivered a total of 43 hours' worth of content and discussion to 1,200 delegates. Speakers included British ESA Astronaut Tim Peake, one of the most inspirational figures in the UK space sector, who spoke in the closing plenary entitled 'Inspiring the future through exploration'.

Other influential speakers included; Professor Jan Wörner, Director General of the European Space Agency, and Andy Green, President of UKspace and chair of the Space Sector Council.

[News story: Lord Duncan opens National Decommissioning Centre](#)

The National Decommissioning Centre (NDC) was opened today [11 January 2019] by UK Government Minister Lord Duncan and Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Scottish Government Energy Minister, in Newburgh in North-East Scotland's Energetica Corridor.

The government ministers joined industry and civic leaders to celebrate the launch of this long-term partnership between the Oil & Gas Technology Centre and the University of Aberdeen. The NDC is part of the Aberdeen City Region Deal, from which it has received £180million in funding.

UK Government Minister Lord Duncan welcomed the centre's opening:

The National Decommissioning Centre is a real and tangible benefit to the region of the Aberdeen City Region Deal. This presents an exciting opportunity to establish a centre of excellence in the North-East of Scotland which will develop new capabilities, skills and jobs to meet the decommissioning challenge now and in the years ahead. It will be funded in partnership by the UK Government, Scottish Government, University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon

University and the private sector.

It's been two years since the Aberdeen City Region Deal started to make a huge difference to the region's economy. The Deal is helping to boost jobs and prosperity and is driving growth across the region. To date the UK Government has committed more than £1.1 billion to City Region Deals right across Scotland.

The opening of the National Decommissioning Centre

The centre will receive £90million in funding from both the UK and Scottish Governments as well as funding from the University of Aberdeen and the private sector.

The NDC aims to become a global leader in decommissioning as well as academic research into the area. The centre is home to the most powerful industrial laser of its kind at an academic institution in the UK and a supercomputer cluster.

The opening of the National Decommissioning Centre