

Speech: Farewell to Special Envoy and reflections on the political situation in Syria

Thank you very much Mr President. Like others, I pay tribute to our good friend and colleague Staffan. It was a sad day when we learned you would step down. You have given the most enormous service to the United Nations. I personally have worked with you on Afghanistan and other issues and your track record in that country, in Iraq, in Lebanon speaks for itself. You have tried harder than anyone to try and bring a resolution to this truly terrible conflict in Syria. And as you yourself said Staffan, you have worked on it longer than the First World War, exceeding that of your predecessors, Mr Brahimi and Kofi Annan. And I think as the tribute to you showed, there isn't a person in the United Nations who doesn't feel very deeply the amount of commitment and energy and resolve and passion that you have brought to this most difficult of all UN Envoy tasks and through you can we also salute your wonderful team who have supported you – both the members sitting behind you but also some of those who we've seen on the VTC and who I know also personally from previous incarnations. I'd like to welcome Geir Pedersen but I will save that for another time when Geir is in your shoes but I hope you know that we are very indebted to you and we recognise how much we owe to you.

I think as other speakers have said it's deeply regrettable that there hasn't been more progress on the constitutional committee. It's unfathomable that – for an idea that was set up to advance the political process at Sochi – that there hasn't been more progress because it ought to have been possible to have made progress in this area. There are just a handful of days left within which to meet President Putin's self-imposed deadline but even with just a few days to go, if progress can be made then we absolutely urge the Syrian authorities and their supporters to take it. But when all is said and done, the United Nations can only join a process that is balanced. That is the fundamental tenet on which the United Nations assists governments and assists the international community. And we will support the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General to the hilt in upholding that very central tenet.

I think it was the French representative who made the point that the Astana guarantors had submitted at the moment an unbalanced and unworkable list, and we would absolutely agree with him. Again even in these last few days, if there can be a genuine consultation process then there should be one in order to achieve a meaningful reconciliation.

But I'd also like to say Mr President that we we meet almost on the third anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 2254 and it remains the best agreement we have made and the closest we have come to managing to work to an end to this crisis. It is a huge failure of the international community – not of the United Nations – but of the international community that collectively we have not been able to advance this more. But above all Mr President and

very obviously, it is a huge failure of the Syrian government to protect their people that has led us to this position and the Syrian government's refusal to work towards implementation of Resolution 2254 is at the absolute heart of all the horrors and all the awful things that have been inflicted on Syria and her people.

Mr President, the central problem in the whole Syria conflict has always been the Syrian authorities' refusal to address the legitimate grievances of the Syrian people. That's how the conflict came about in the first place. It remains a central tenet, an essential element of what has to be done if anything is ever to move forward. The Special Envoy has often come to this Council but been unable to record any positive movement by the regime in this direction.

And I just want to stress again Mr President, without movement in that direction whatever happens militarily; Syria will not see reconstruction. She will not see rehabilitation into the international community. Her people will not see representative government and whatever interim arrangement comes into force in Syria, it will not help the Syrian authorities hold their territory and it will not help them govern that territory and it certainly won't do anything to address the aspirations, the legitimate aspirations of all of Syria's people from whichever religious or ethnic community they come. That's such a central point. Rehabilitation means being able to stop a reversion to the tensions and the situation that existed before the conflict without addressing those aspirations of all of Syria's people. Without genuine representative government, there will never be an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. And I really think that the Council should look ahead and focus, keep that question of what will most help the Syrian people in the future right at the forefront of its of its plans and of its thinking.

Finally Mr President if I may I'd like to say a word about Da'esh. The United Kingdom has been a leading member of the Global Coalition. We're proud of our role alongside other partners in the fight against Da'esh since military operations began. The Coalition and its partners in Syria and Iraq have captured the vast majority of Da'esh territory and important advances have been made even in recent days. In the last area of eastern Syria which Daish has occupied the Royal Air Force of the United Kingdom was active just in the last 24 hours. Much remains to be done in the global campaign Mr President but we must not lose sight of the threat that Da'esh continue to pose even when they continue no longer to hold territory.

Thank you Mr. President.

[Press release: UK and Poland join](#)

forces to curb hostile state activity across Europe

The two countries' Prime Ministers and senior ministerial teams agreed key areas of progress at the third annual UK-Poland Inter-Governmental Consultations and celebrated an historic relationship that has delivered so much for the people of both countries.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The UK and Poland's relationship continues to go from strength to strength, and Poland is a vital partner as negotiations on our withdrawal from the EU continue.

Today we have agreed progress in a number of key areas, including the beginning of joint consultations on cyber and Russia early next year, and a mutual desire to push ever harder for the reforms necessary to make NATO an effective deterrent against these challenges.

Together, this marks one of the first and most significant international partnerships aimed at curbing Russian malign activity across the continent.

Domestically, we already confront serious organised crime together and we have reduced Polish victims of modern slavery in the UK by a third, but we all know this progress must continue.

We are committed to deepening our partnership in the realms of security and prosperity, and a real flourishing of the links between our populations beyond Brexit.

Today's Consultations came as the UK and Poland prepared to mark 100 years since our countries re-established diplomatic relations and began building the broad, vibrant and diverse partnership that we enjoy today.

Following meetings at Downing Street and Lancaster House, the two countries agreed:

- To strengthen our cyber partnership to ensure strong responses to hostile state activity. Consultations on cyber will begin early next year and focus on prevention, attribution and consequential sanctions.
- Wider UK-Poland consultations on Russia, beginning early next summer, to share information and improve insight into developments in the region, resulting in a more effective international response to Russian malign activity and greater resilience to hostile state activity in Eastern Partnership countries.
- Joint support for NATO reforms to ensure it has the right capabilities

to deal with the growing number of threats and challenges we all face. This means collectively helping to ensure NATO remains relevant in the evolving security context, and encouraging all allies to follow through with decisions taken at this year's NATO Summit for which the UK and Poland are fully aligned.

- A Clean Growth Partnership, working together on initiatives to decrease emissions and increase economic growth, including a second Business, Trade and Investment Forum focused on Clean Growth. Together we will build on our joint "Driving Change Together" initiative launched during COP24 in Katowice, exploring ways to tackle global green issues such as climate change.
- A Tech Partnership, including holding a 'Start-up Games' in Warsaw to bring start-up talent and potential investors together. The winners will participate in an intensive programme of business development, with introductions to business accelerators, to help internationalise their business.
- And through the existing strength of business links, a pilot UK-Polish tech hub programme will be established as a platform dedicated to forming innovation partnerships between start-up businesses in both countries, scouting for entrepreneurial talent, forging links with corporates and boosting trade, investment and productivity to the benefit of both our economies.

View the [joint communique](#), agreed by both Prime Ministers.

Press release: Joint Communiqué between the Prime Ministers of the UK and Poland

We, the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Poland, chaired the third round of our Inter-Governmental Consultations in London today.

The UK and Poland are key strategic allies and have a relationship that is broad, vibrant and diverse. This year, we have witnessed that relationship deliver on our shared priorities. We took note of our achievements across three broad areas: security; prosperity; and people and ideas. We have made good progress – implementing the Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty signed at our last consultations; agreeing jointly funded strategic communication projects in Eastern Partnership Countries worth £5m; and working together internationally including in NATO and the UN Security Council. We brought together over 150 UK and Polish companies for the first UK-Poland Business Trade and Investment Forum and supported closer collaboration between innovators and academics through the 2018 Year of Entrepreneurship Science and Innovation.

Together, we have today set the course for even closer and deeper collaboration in these areas in the coming year and beyond.

To protect our shared security we have agreed to:

- continue to work side by side in countering aggression and malign activity, while strengthening our strategic communications and our collaboration on sanctions policy and cyber security: our work to combat hostile state activity will include new annual cross-government consultations on Russia.
- strengthen collaboration in NATO, the bedrock of our security, with our respective forces continuing to operate side by side – in particular on the Eastern flank; underline our shared leadership on burden-sharing in NATO by continuing to meet NATO's Defence Investment Pledge; and maintain the momentum of defence cooperation activities under the 2017 Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty;
- foster EU/NATO cooperation in accordance with the Joint Declarations made in 2016 and 2018;
- continue to build a more stable and secure European Neighbourhood, with the UK passing the baton to Poland to organise the next Western Balkans Summit in Poznań in July 2019, working together to address the region's pressing priorities;
- enhance our operational cooperation to enable us to fight modern slavery and serious and organised crime more effectively through closer working between our respective police and prosecutors, and improving the effectiveness of interdiction at emerging UK and Polish ports.

To build our shared prosperity, we have agreed to establish:

- a UK/Poland Tech Partnership, including a pilot tech hub programme, supported by the Prosperity Fund, as a platform dedicated to forming innovation partnerships between start-ups in both countries, scouting for entrepreneurial talent, forging links with corporates and boosting trade, investment and productivity;
- a Clean Growth Partnership, supporting economic growth while reducing emissions, including a second UK/Poland Business Trade and Investment Forum focused on Clean Growth and implementing our joint UK-Poland Driving Change Together initiative from COP24 in Katowice.

Under the people and ideas pillar we have agreed to organise:

- an exhibition in the UK and Poland about our political, economic and cultural links, celebrating the centenary of re-establishing diplomatic relations;
- a second UK/Poland Science Forum in 2019, focused on women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Today we have met representatives of the Polish community in the UK and celebrated their immense contribution to the UK's economic and social development, particularly in the public sector. These strong people-to-people links are the cornerstone of our bilateral partnership.

Today's Intergovernmental Consultations have demonstrated the depth and breadth of that relationship. As we celebrate the centenary of Poland re-gaining independence, we believe that the close ties between our two governments will serve as a model for what is possible after the UK has left the European Union. Ours is a partnership that stands on the strongest possible foundations and on which we are determined to build further in the coming year.

Further information

[Speech: Ending drug trafficking in West Africa](#)

Thank you Mr President and may I say at the outset how much we welcome this initiative by Cote d'Ivoire to bring this issue back to the Council's agenda, which I think we last considered in 2013, so it's a timely moment to look at this.

May I also welcome UNODC Executive Director Fedotov's briefing and thank UNODC for their efforts in this area, including of course through their regional programme for West Africa.

Mr President, conflict, corruption and ungoverned spaces all allow criminality to flourish. This can take many forms. It includes of course the trafficking of drugs, but not only drugs. It includes the trafficking of people and it includes the trafficking of weapons. Organised criminal networks can also support and facilitate the emergence and operations of terrorist groups. Indeed it's quite frequent and common that in their early stages, terrorists groups rely upon income from organised crime.

Sadly, West Africa has been affected by these issues over recent years and we have seen that it is marginalised groups who often suffer the most, whether

that's children, whether that's women, whether that's children, whether that's minority ethnic groups.

Now Mr President, the impact of this criminality is not only felt by individuals but its felt in communities and its felt by States. It undermines the rule of law, human rights and the ability of states to provide services, and pursue the 2030 Agenda for all of their citizens. Cross-border criminal networks, smuggling and trafficking goods and people across states' jurisdictions can also constitute a threat to international peace and security. Drug trafficking is one form of this challenge but we saw the same argument convincingly made in this Council's Resolutions 2331 and 2388 on trafficking of people.

Now as we've heard today, this has unfortunately been the case in the West African region, where, as UNODC has outlined, the region has become a significant consumption and transit zone for heroin and cocaine, enabling flows towards destination markets. The money and the violence that accompanies this trade has devastating consequences.

Drug trafficking as I've said can be both a means by which armed groups raise funds but also a source of conflict in themselves. Criminal gangs can corrupt and weaken a state at just the time that a strong state with strong institutions is needed to prevent conflict. I agree very much with those around the table who have talked about the importance of considering this issue holistically within the prevention and peace building setting.

Mr President, we should note and welcome the efforts in the region, particularly the work of the G5 Sahel, for greater stability and in tackling terrorism. We need to support ECOWAS, SRSG Chambas and UNOWAS' excellent efforts as well as those initiatives that address the drivers of instability, including of course climate change, poverty, marginalisation and corruption.

The UK is playing its part. We are increasing our staffing and expertise on tackling organised crime in the region and we're working with our partners in the region to counter trafficking, strengthen the rule of law and border security as well as supporting development and provisional services.

Mr President, there is no silver bullet to ending drug trafficking and organised crime in West Africa or indeed anywhere else. It will take a comprehensive approach by the states in the region, supported by the United Nations family holistically and its international partners. We welcome the renewed focus on criminality brought by you today by you in calling this meeting and stand ready to assist those countries suffering from this insidious threat as we ourselves suffer as well.

Thank you Mr President.

News story: Government makes women's mental health a top priority

The [Women's Mental Health Taskforce final report](#) sets out its principles for better gender- and trauma-informed care.

The Women's Mental Health Taskforce was set up in 2017 in response to evidence of deteriorating mental health among women and poor outcomes for those using support services.

The taskforce's report draws on women's own lived experience of mental ill health. It encourages commissioners, providers and practitioners to promote best practice in their organisations, while considering women's individual, gender-specific needs.

The report looks at:

- the influence of women's roles as mothers and carers on their needs, which is rarely considered in the care they receive
- the trauma experienced by many women in inpatient facilities when they have been victims of violence and abuse in the past

It also considers other issues that often affect women and girls more than men and boys.

For example, eating disorders are more common among women and girls than men and boys. Young women and girls are also more at risk of self-harm.

The report outlines a series of recommendations to be led by the Department of Health and Social Care and its arm's length bodies.

The recommendations include:

- clearly considering women's needs in all future mental health policy development
- improving trauma-informed care
- supporting routine enquiry about violence and abuse in future policy development
- using the principles of the taskforce to inform service design and delivery for women's mental health
- recognising that women's identities, and often their roles as mothers and carers, are important in individual treatment and in-service planning
- ensuring the safety of women in residential mental health care by ending breaches of single-sex wards, and improving practice and reporting processes around sexual harassment and sexual violence

The taskforce was chaired by the Minister for Mental Health, Inequalities and Suicide Prevention Jackie Doyle-Price and Katharine Sacks-Jones, the Chief Executive of women's charity Agenda.

Health Minister Jackie Doyle-Price said:

Women are more likely to experience common mental health conditions than men – this is particularly stark among young women, who are 3 times more likely than young men to experience a common mental disorder, such as anxiety or depression.

Yet, too often, we hear stories of women who describe feeling powerless when it comes to their mental health treatment, those who feel neglected by inadequate aftercare or, more alarmingly, those who feel at risk in inpatient services, whether that's because of breaches in single-sex wards or the fear of restraint or observations by male staff members.

This just isn't good enough. I'm determined that this report will take an important first step towards our aim of tackling the injustices facing women, while ensuring that no vulnerable woman slips through the net. I appeal to partners across the health, justice and social care systems to work together to drive forward our ethos and ensure that women receive the high-quality care they deserve.

Mental health is a top priority for this government and will be a key part of the upcoming long-term plan for the NHS, which will help us drive the outcomes of this report forward.

Chief Executive of Agenda Katharine Sacks-Jones said:

The Women's Mental Health Taskforce was set up in light of rising rates of mental health problems among women and girls. The taskforce heard how many women struggled to get appropriate support from mental health services and were sometimes left further traumatised by the treatment they had received. This is not good enough.

The taskforce identified an urgent need for support that better responds to the realities of women's lives including their experiences of abuse and trauma and their roles as mothers and carers.

We call upon government and leaders across the health service to heed the findings of this report and use the principles it sets out to improve the response to women's mental health, so that all women get the help they need when they need it.