

Lord Ahmad visits Tunisia: June 2022

Press release

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South and Central Asia, North Africa, UN and the Commonwealth, made his second visit to Tunisia.



Lord Ahmad paid a 2-day visit to Tunisia from 7 to 8 June. He met the President of Tunisia His Excellency Kais Saied, the Head of Government Her Excellency Najla Bouden, Minister of Foreign Affairs His Excellency Othman Jerandi, Minister for Economy and Planning His Excellency Samir Saied, Minister for Industry, Energy and Mines Her Excellency Neila Nouira Gonji, and Minister of Religious Affairs His Excellency Ibrahim Chaybi.

Lord Ahmad signed an agreement between the UK and Tunisian Governments to increase cooperation on sustainable energy and unlock opportunities for private sector trade and investment. He also met senior members of International Financial Institutions, plus representatives of Tunisia's civil society, students and faith leaders.

Speaking following his visit, Lord Ahmad said:

Tunisia's diverse religious sites are testament to this country's rich history of inclusion, and I was delighted to visit Zaytuna Mosque, St Vincent de Paul Cathedral, and the Grand Synagogue of Tunis.

In my meetings with ministers we discussed a broad range of issues including: economic cooperation and reform, the importance of inclusive political participation in the democratic process and the role of civil society and strengthening human rights.

During my visit to Tunis I also met civil society representatives. The UK believes in the importance of including all voices in building resilient and successful democracies.

I look forward to strengthening the UK's friendship and partnership with Tunisia.

Human suffering in temporarily Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair and thank you to Mr. Samoilenko for briefing the Permanent Council today on the devastating consequences of Russia's illegal invasion on Kherson and its people. It is with heavy hearts that we continue to hear of civilians being killed and injured; of children being left without parents, and parents losing their children. We share the sorrow of the Ukrainian people as they watch their once vibrant cities ruthlessly destroyed.

The international community has witnessed Russia's brazen but futile attempts to assert its control of Ukrainian sovereign territory temporarily under the control of the Russian military.

In places such as Kherson, Russia has installed illegitimate pro-Kremlin administrations. These self-appointed proxies of the Kremlin neither represent the brave Ukrainian citizens under their assumed control nor do they act in meeting their basic needs. Instead many civilians are unable to access essential healthcare services, or fundamental necessities including electricity and water. In Mariupol, the WHO have raised the flag on infectious diseases, particularly cholera, being at risk of spreading. In Kherson, residents were left to collect the remnants of those killed from the streets, and in Skadvosk, people had to organise themselves to prevent looting, with many elderly not receiving their pensions.

We have also heard today the horrifying stories of civilians who have suffered directly at the hands of the Russian invaders. The [Moscow Mechanism report of 12 April](#), stated that credible evidence had been discovered to suggest that violations concerning even the most fundamental human rights, namely, the right to life; prohibition of torture; and other inhuman and degrading treatment, had occurred. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine are but two bodies who have documented cases of rape, torture, false imprisonment, forced deportations, forced disappearances, and summary execution in Russian controlled areas.

Russia has embarked on a systematic policy in temporarily controlled areas to erase Ukrainian culture, history and identity. Russia has simplified the process for issuing passports for residents of the southern Ukrainian regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Ukrainians are being denied the right to use their own currency, with the forcible attempted replacement of the hryvnia

with the Russian rouble. Teachers have been brought in from Russia to impose the Russian curriculum on schoolchildren in Kherson. This systematic attempt is not new, and follows a pattern. We know in illegally annexed Crimea, Russia forced Ukrainians to assume Russian citizenship or lose their properties, their access to health care, and their jobs.

Furthermore, Russia has implemented a severe crackdown on free speech and media freedom in these areas. Their aim is clear – to completely control the media space. In Kherson, access to Ukrainian television channels is being blocked; internet service providers are being replaced with Russian ones; and Kherson's residents are being urged to listen to pro-Russian radio stations for their news. Disinformation is being spread through these channels. And this policy by the Russian government is being accompanied by one which sees the disappearance, detention and abduction of Ukrainian journalists or their relatives for daring to tell and expose the truth of Russia's shameful invasion of its sovereign, democratic neighbour.

Mr Chair – we stand with all the Ukrainian people who have bravely demonstrated their sovereign will to resist and remain part of Ukraine. It is the Ukrainian people's right – and the Ukrainian people's right alone – to determine their own future. It is not President Putin's right. And it is increasingly clear that the Russian government and the Russian military cannot break or subjugate Ukraine. Ukraine has shown the most immense resolve, bravery and valiance over the past 106 days. Ukraine has shown the world that it will prevail in its battle for freedom. And we must be steadfast in providing international support that Ukraine both needs and deserves. The UK will be resolute and unwavering in our support – to ensure Ukraine wins its battle for self-determination and Russian forces withdraw. We will do all we can to ensure Ukraine succeeds.

Marjorie Ngwenya appointed to the Prudential Regulation Committee

News story

The Chancellor has today (9 June) appointed Marjorie Ngwenya as an external member of the Prudential Regulation Committee (PRC).



- Marjorie Ngwenya has been appointed as an external member of the Prudential Regulation Committee.
- Ms Ngwenya previously served as President of the UK Institute and Faculty Actuaries, having served on its Council for eight years.
- She will succeed Norval Bryson, serving a three-year term starting on 5 September 2022.

Ms Ngwenya will join the PRC on 5 September 2022, commencing a three-year term, replacing Norval Bryson as an external member.

Marjorie previously served as President of the UK Institute and Faculty Actuaries, having served on its council for eight years.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Marjorie's experience in international financial services will add valuable insight and expertise to the Prudential Regulation Committee.

I would also like to thank Norval Bryson for his contributions to the Committee.

Governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, said:

I am delighted to welcome Marjorie to the Prudential Regulation Committee. She brings a wealth of experience on the insurance side and will make a valuable contribution to the work of the Committee.

Her senior leadership experience, including from her role as President of the IFoA, will be invaluable for our work on the Solvency II reforms and the future regulatory framework. I look forward to working with her in the coming years.

External member of the PRC, Marjorie Ngwenya, said:

I am delighted to be appointed as an external member of the Prudential Regulation Committee as it considers a number of important issues, including the Future Regulatory Framework Review

and Solvency II reforms. I look forward to contributing my international financial services experience in support of the work of the Committee.

About Marjorie Ngwenya

Marjorie serves as an independent non-executive director at Tangerine Life (Nigeria) and its holding company Tangerine Financial. She is the chairperson of the Canon Collins Trust (UK) and a trustee of the Legal Resources Centre (South Africa).

Marjorie is a past President of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) and served on the IFoA's governing council for eight years.

In her executive career, she was a member of the Group Executive Committee of Liberty Group in South Africa, serving as Chief Strategist. Prior to that, she was Chief Risk Officer for Old Mutual's African Operations.

Marjorie is also an actuary and holds a Sloan MSc in Leadership and Strategy from the London Business School. She is also an executive coach and an advocate for diversity, equality and inclusion.

Further information

- The Prudential Regulation Authority supervises banks, insurers and major investment firms.
- The PRA's most important decisions are taken by the Prudential Regulation Committee (PRC), chaired by the Governor of the Bank of England. Five members of the PRC are Bank staff, including the Governor and four Deputy Governors. The PRC has a majority of external members, including the Chief Executive of the Financial Conduct Authority.

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[Change of British High Commissioner to Malawi: Fiona Ritchie](#)

Press release

Ms Fiona Ritchie has been appointed British High Commissioner to the Republic of Malawi in succession to Mr David Beer.



Ms Fiona Ritchie has been appointed British High Commissioner to the Republic of Malawi in succession to Mr David Beer. Ms Ritchie will take up her appointment during July 2022.

Curriculum vitae

Full name: Fiona Eileen Ritchie

Year	Role
2021 to present	Malawi, British High Commission, Development Director
2020	FCDO, Deputy Director, Review of Independent Commission for Aid Impact
2020	Department for International Development (DFID), Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for International Development
2019 to 2020	FCO/DFID, Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Africa
2018	DFID, Chief of Staff, Office of the Director for West and Southern Africa
2017 to 2018	DFID South Sudan, Deputy Head and Team Leader Humanitarian and Resilience
2015 to 2017	DFID South Sudan, Team Leader, Governance, Peacebuilding and Economic Development
2012 to 2015	New York, First Secretary Development and Human Rights, UK Permanent Representation to the United Nations
2009 to 2012	DFID, Whitehall Policy Manager & Deputy Group Head, Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department
2002 to 2009	DFID, various roles including supporting development programmes in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Assistant Private Secretary to the Permanent Secretary

Further information

All the latest news is available on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office page of the gov.uk website at: www.gov.uk/fcdo

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UK Government orders network operators to improve storm responses

- Network operators required to review their severe weather escalation plans, improve their communications systems, and strengthen their compensation payment mechanisms
- follows government's review into the electricity industry response to Storm Arwen in November 2021, which saw around one million households experience power outages
- Business and Energy Secretary gives network operators deadlines to complete next steps that will ensure better preparedness for future storms and improve outcomes for consumers
- this follows Ofgem's review today announcing network operators have paid over £34 million in direct compensation and have agreed to pay a further £10 million in redress payments

The UK Government has today (9 June 2022) set out a range of actions to improve the resilience of Great Britain's electricity networks for future extreme weather events.

This follows a comprehensive government review into the industry response to Storm Arwen and will ensure better outcomes for consumers by setting deadlines for operators to take action.

In November 2021 Storm Arwen brought severe weather disruption to the UK, with around one million households experiencing power cuts, nearly 75,000 of whom were without power for over 48 hours and over 3,700 for a week or more.

As the government made clear at the time, it was unacceptable that thousands of homes were left without power for so long, which is why the Business and Energy Secretary commissioned a review into how network operators responded to the Storm, to identify lessons and ensure suppliers step up to prevent the scale of the issues happening again.

Recommendations from the review include measures to improve the resilience of the electricity system from future storms and improvements to ensure customers quickly receive compensation payments, with network operators given deadlines to implement the changes.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Storm Arwen was one of the most extreme weather events in decades, and I'm grateful to all those engineers, Armed Forces personnel and volunteers who worked night and day to get people reconnected to power.

However, it's clear that thousands of customers were badly let down by electricity network companies, which is why I launched this review to identify and address any failings.

This action plan will ensure better preparedness for future storms, boosting the security of our electricity system and protecting families.

Areas worst affected were North East England and Scotland, with both the Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng and Energy Minister Greg Hands visiting local communities to see work taking place on the ground to get households reconnected to power.

The review has been a joint endeavour between government, industry and Ofgem – with the energy regulator also publishing their own report into the Storm Arwen response today, looking at how each network operator performed against their legal obligations. Ofgem's review acknowledged the hard work of front-line staff in challenging circumstances, but found thousands of customers were provided with an unacceptable service. Network operators have paid over £34 million in direct compensation to affected customers, and following Ofgem's review, have agreed to pay a further £10 million in redress payments to the affected communities.

The Government's Final Report recommends actions across the three areas of the review – System Resilience, Consumer Protection, and Additional Support – with the Business and Energy Secretary setting deadlines for the next steps to be completed.

System Resilience:

- The review found that existing network standards did not provide adequate resilience to Storm Arwen's unusual northerly winds.
- A new 'outcomes-focused physical resilience standard' will be developed, which will define resilience standards in terms of the outcomes for consumers, as opposed to the current standards, which are solely defined as measures to be implemented.
- Each Distribution Network Operator (DNO) has been ordered to review their severe weather escalation plans, to ensure all relevant factors that can influence the scale of impacts, such as wind direction, are considered.
- The government will update industry best practice to ensure network operators can quickly identify faults and safely assess the extent of network damage earlier in a storm, exploring how smart meter data and technology can help with this.

Customer Communication:

- One of the biggest issues faced by those impacted was the poor service customers received when trying to contact their network operator. The review found all impacted DNOs had excessive abandoned calls and maximum wait times.

- DNOs have been ordered to ensure that communication systems are adequate to meet demand, and introduce telephone systems and websites capable of handling increased traffic during a storm. This includes considering any additional resourcing or processes to avoid call centres being overwhelmed, such as hiring more staff and sharing call handlers between organisations where necessary.

Compensation:

- There will be changes to the compensation payment system so customers are more aware of what they are entitled to, and so compensation is paid out faster.
- Although nearly 90% of those affected received compensation payments by 24 January 2022, following the Business Secretary calling for customers to promptly receive payments, the review recommends DNOs should develop more robust payment mechanisms.
- This will ensure they can deliver payments at scale and continue their development customer accounts that allow customers to directly update their contact details to their DNOs, so compensation can be paid more swiftly.
- The Energy Networks Association will lead on developing more publicity for compensation entitlement in the event of a power cut.
- The energy regulator Ofgem will commission a review into the compensation payment structure, looking at whether a compensation cap is still appropriate, developing alternative options to the system, and improving the accuracy of customer data

The outcomes from this review will be taken forward to improve resilience of the system, building on previous efforts and investment from both government and industry, to ensure a better outcome for consumers.

Notes to Editors: