

A strong partnership continues: Minister Ford visits Sierra Leone

UK Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Vicky Ford, visited Sierra Leone on 25 to 26 May 2022, building on the strong ties between the UK and Sierra Leone. The visit also demonstrates how the two countries are working together to empower women and girls, including through education and sexual and reproductive health, promoting human rights and democracy, and accelerating sustainable economic development.

This was the first time Minister Ford has visited Sierra Leone since her appointment. While in Sierra Leone, Minister Ford had the opportunity to see firsthand the breadth of the UK-Sierra Leone partnership, including visiting a number of UK Aid funded projects.

Speaking following her visit, Minister for Africa Vicky Ford, MP said:

The UK and Sierra Leone are longstanding partners and our relationship has deep roots, stemming from shared values of liberty and democracy. This is demonstrated in our respective countries' public support to Ukraine and our shared commitment to ensuring girls receive a quality education.

I was delighted to come to Sierra Leone to see first-hand how the UK is working with the Sierra Leonean government to support its ambitious plans to build human capital, empower women and girls and support increased trade and investment for economic growth. I had the opportunity to speak with stakeholders across Sierra Leone to understand both the challenges and opportunities, and how our two countries can work together to address these.

The UK stands ready to support in these vital endeavours.

Empowering women and girls and providing them with the freedom they need to succeed is a priority for the UK's International Development Strategy and the UK's engagement in Sierra Leone. This ranges from support provided towards secondary school education which helps girls stay in school, to ensuring access to family planning and lifesaving maternal healthcare. She also saw how UK Aid investments in sustainable, renewable energy, supporting health services and local economic development.

Minister Ford visited Tomlinson Secondary School in Songo to meet school children and learn how the UK's £68.6 million education support programme works to ensure all children receive a quality education. Since 2016, the UK has improved education for 1.1 million Sierra Leonean children and ensured that double number of girls are remaining in secondary school education.

During the visit Minister Ford also:

- Saw how the UK is strengthening Sierra Leone's health system at a Community Health Clinic – the health programme is supporting over 460,000 individuals in accessing family planning services, almost a third of which are adolescents.
- Witnessed how sustainable solar energy projects are providing power to 95 rural communities and giving over 360,000 people power. These grids accelerate the growth of local businesses, encourage honest, reliable investment and ensure that community health units are provided with power, saving lives.
- Met representatives of the business community, women's rights activists and cultural and economic entrepreneurs hearing about the progress they've seen and how the UK can provide support to continue this.

In the Minister's meeting with President of Sierra Leone, HE Julius Maada Bio and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor David J. Francis, she commended Sierra Leone's recent Human Rights successes including the abolition of the death penalty in 2021. These vital successes all contribute to the Sierra Leonian governments plans to continue to build human capital across the country.

The visit to Sierra Leone was part of a regional visit by Minister Ford and included a visit to Ghana.

[UK Health and Social Care Secretary address at World Health Assembly](#)

We gather here today in a peaceful European city with no need to fear the sound of incoming missiles or artillery or to fear rape and execution at the hands of invading troops.

Just a few months ago, the people of another European city, enjoyed peace and security too.

But now, Mariupol has been completely destroyed by Russian troops, just like many other towns and villages in Ukraine.

As a group of nations we cannot be pro health, pro humanity, without being against such brutal violence.

Not least when at least 200 health facilities and workers have been attacked by Russia – as verified by the WHO.

So it is absolutely right that we vote on a motion condemning President Putin's unjustifiable aggression.

And I welcome the deeply felt concern expressed by the Director General's

opening address about the tragic impact of war.

But we know that speaking words in the comfort of a conference centre is the easy bit.

So I want to pay tribute to all the healthcare workers – including WHO staff who risk their lives in conflicts and crises, like we are witnessing in Ukraine today, some of whom pay the ultimate sacrifice, as we have witnessed in Afghanistan.

As it turns 75 next year, the WHO is more important than ever.

I congratulate Dr Tedros on his nomination for a second term leading this vital institution.

Working together, I know there is much we can achieve – and there is much to do.

Nearly two and a half years since the pandemic began the moment has come where the talk of ‘learning lessons’ must turn to concrete actions.

I’m pleased the intergovernmental negotiating body on a new instrument is in full swing.

This process has the UK’s full support.

Only by working together will we emerge stronger.

Allied to that effort is the 100-day target the mission to make safe and effective vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics available within 100 days of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) being declared.

We must rise to meet future health emergencies by supporting speedy science.

To do that, it’s time for a step change in how we do clinical trials across borders – especially when it comes to sharing data and standards.

We need stronger national clinical trial capabilities, greater collaboration, and sharper prioritisation of health needs.

And I’m proud to present a resolution on Clinical Trials to this World Health Assembly alongside our Co-Chair Argentina.

Because vaccines were a product of clinical trials and selfless volunteers just as much as they were a coalition of industry, science and government.

Clinical trials will also be vital in future health challenges including the ‘silent pandemic’ of antimicrobial resistance, which represents a huge existential threat.

With health threats like this, just as with the global pandemic, we’re all on the same side.

We must draw on expertise and experience wherever we find it.

So in that spirit of One Health, there is clearly no health basis to justify not including Taiwan as an observer to the WHA and to be given meaningful access to all relevant technical meetings not least because of the role they have played in sharing information with the rest of the world since the very beginning of Covid-19.

A strengthened global response to pandemics also requires a strengthened WHO.

At this WHA, the best way we can show our support for the WHO is by approving the financing and reform package on the table.

I call on my fellow health ministers to join me in backing these measures.

And to live up to our values of global peace, cooperation and inclusion.

Thank you.

[Cycle of violence moves us further away from a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians](#)

Thank you, Madam President. I give thanks to the Special Coordinator and to Robi Damelin and Daniel Munayer for their insightful and powerful briefings. Sadly, the world's attention has been drawn repeatedly to the fragile situation in the Middle East this month.

We started with an appalling terror attack on innocent Israeli citizens in Elad as they celebrated their Independence Day. Our thoughts remain with the three victims and their families. We condemn the recent attacks against Israelis in the strongest possible terms, and reaffirm that the UK stands with Israel in the face of terrorism and violence.

We then witnessed the tragic killing of veteran Palestinian-American Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh in Jenin, and the deeply disturbing scenes of the disproportionate use of force by Israeli police at her funeral. We urge a swift, transparent and impartial investigation into these events and meaningful accountability.

The United Kingdom is a strong defender of media freedom. The work of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected when carrying out their critical work.

We also saw the advancement of over 4000 settlement units in the West Bank, and the increased risk of eviction of over 1000 Palestinians in Masafer Yatta. We are clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances,

settlements, demolitions and forced evictions are illegal under International Humanitarian Law. We call on the Israeli government to halt all settlement expansion and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Madam President, this ongoing cycle of violence only moves us further away from the peaceful solution that both Israelis and Palestinians deserve. We urge the parties to return to dialogue and take urgent steps to make progress towards peace.

We saw evidence of the value of dialogue and collaboration at the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, chaired by Norway, in Brussels this month. We were pleased to see commitments from the parties to advance economic cooperation. The United Kingdom is fully supporting these efforts and is ready to support further.

To be clear, we believe momentum on economic issues must be in tandem with political commitment to make progress towards peace. And, we reaffirm, as we did with our partners at the G7 meeting of Foreign Ministers this month, “our commitment to a negotiated Two-State solution, which envisions both Israel and a viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition.”

Thank you.

Putin is waging the war on the Ukrainian people and the foundations of our societies: Foreign Secretary's speech in Sarajevo, May 2022

Minister Podzic, Major General Masovic, ladies and gentlemen. A quarter of a century ago conflict devastated this country. Now Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought war and bloodshed back to our continent. Putin is not just waging the war on the Ukrainian people but the very foundations of our societies: freedom, sovereignty and the rule of law. This aggression must not succeed.

We must learn the lessons of history and the consequences of inaction. The West took too long to act in the 1990s. We were not bold enough to prevent terrible events such as the genocide at Srebrenica. This hesitancy only prolonged the fighting. Sarajevo suffered under siege for 1,425 days. We should have acted sooner. We said never again would we allow such suffering in Europe – Let's show that we meant it. Russia's aggression cannot be appeased. It must be met with strength.

And we cannot allow a prolonged and increasingly painful conflict to develop in Ukraine. That means backing Ukraine in their brave defence of their country. We must be relentless in delivering military aid and sanctions. Ukraine must prevail. We can't take our foot off the accelerator now. We stood side-by-side with Bosnia and Herzegovina at the UN condemning the invasion. I urge Bosnia and Herzegovina to join us in imposing sanctions on Russia – cutting off funding for Putin's war machine. We must guard against backsliding. Nobody should be pushing Ukraine to negotiate under duress. We must support Ukraine to drive Russia out of Ukraine.

And we must also counter Russia's malign influence here in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia is already seeking to undermine reforms that are taking place in this country, and undermine your Euro-Atlantic ambitions. They are fuelling secessionists, threatening Bosnia and Herzegovina's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. This cannot be tolerated. We will do everything we can to drive out this malign influence and protect peace, prosperity and stability in the region. That is why the UK is increasing our support in 3 ways:

Firstly, we are working to protect the hard-won Dayton Peace Agreement. That's why [we have sanctioned 2 politicians for their unacceptable nationalist rhetoric and denial of the genocide](#). We will support Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and we will back High Rep Christian Schmidt.

Secondly, we are investing to boost your economic security. We are extending our offer of honest and reliable infrastructure investment, through British International Investment, to the Western Balkans. We aim to mobilise \$100 million of UK-backed investment by 2025, and we are also putting in £2 billion worth of UK export financing for this country. This will help ensure the resilience and capabilities to counter the threat of malign influences. Russian interference. It will also help your country boost your energy independence – a strategic asset.

Thirdly, we are boosting your ability to counter security threats and malign influences. Our commitment to this country is enduring. In the 1990s British soldiers were here in the darkest days of the conflict. We were here to maintain the fragile peace that followed, and to help build the country's single, unified Armed Forces that we see here today. Fifty nine British soldiers gave their lives in that effort. We will never forget their sacrifice. Our defence relationship continues to grow today. We are training your talented young cadets in world-class British military academies, like Sandhurst. Some of them are here this afternoon.

History tells us we must meet aggression with action and with strength. Our support for Bosnia and Herzegovina – like our support Ukraine – is about our belief in a simple principle: the right of people to decide their democratic future and to protect themselves. This country's future lies on this path, and in greater partnership with NATO and countries like the UK. I am calling on all of our friends across Europe to match our ambition. Let's work together to strengthen freedom, sovereignty and the rule of law, to the benefit of us all.

Courts hand out hefty fine to angler fishing without a licence on Lake Windermere

Press release

An Accrington man who was caught illegally fishing by the Environment Agency on Lake Windermere has been heavily fined by the courts.



Joshua Tyrie took a fishing trip to the popular spot on the 5th September 2021. However, after being approached by an Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer, it was found that Mr Tyrie was fishing without a licence.

Mr Tyrie was then told to appear at Carlisle Magistrates Court on Thursday 18th May. Tyrie of Holins Lane, Accrington, did not appear in court. In his absence, magistrates found him guilty of all charges and Tyrie was ordered to pay £1,736.

The total included a fine of £660 for fishing without a licence, with costs of £1,010 and a victim surcharge of £66. An annual fishing licence would have cost him just £30 a year.

Following the verdict, Darren Wilson, Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer, said:

This penalty for one angler is amongst the highest I've seen and shows how seriously the courts take these offences. We hope the high penalty will act as a deterrent to any angler who is thinking of fishing without a licence.

All anglers need a valid Environment Agency rod licence. The money raised through the sales of rod licences is re-invested back into

the sport and illegal fishing undermines the Environment Agency's efforts to make fishing sustainable. Anyone found fishing illegally may face prosecution and a fine of up to £2,500.

The Environment Agency carries out enforcement work all year round and is supported by partners including the police and the Angling Trust. Fisheries enforcement work is intelligence-led, targeting known hot-spots and where illegal fishing is reported.

Any angler aged 13 or over, fishing on a river, canal or still water needs a licence. A 1-day licence costs from just £6 and an annual licence costs from just £30 (concessions available). Junior licences are free for 13 – 16-year-olds. Licences are available from www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence or by calling the Environment Agency on 0344 800 5386 between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Anyone with information about illegal fishing activities can contact the Environment Agency incident hotline 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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