

## [News story: Programme: EU-UK Article 50 negotiations](#)

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## [News story: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Yemen](#)



Michael Aron has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Yemen in succession to Simon Shercliff, who has been appointed Director of National Security at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Mr Aron will take up his appointment in February 2018.

Commenting on the appointment, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK is working tirelessly to support the people of Yemen through these difficult times in their history. We are clear that a political solution to the conflict and an end to the humanitarian suffering is the only way forward if we are to see the stable and prosperous future that the people of Yemen deserve.

Michael has extensive experience serving the UK as ambassador, most recently to Sudan and Libya. I look forward to working together with him to help establish a peaceful and stable future for Yemen.

Mr Aron said:

I am honoured to be the new British Ambassador to Yemen. The UK is leading international efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and support UN efforts to achieve political solution to the conflict. I look forward to working with Yemenis, regional and international partners and all parties to the conflict, in support of a peaceful, stable and secure Yemen

## **Michael Aron – CV**

2015 – 2018 Sudan, Her Majesty's Ambassador  
2012 – 2015 Tripoli, Her Majesty's Ambassador  
2011 – 2012 Baghdad, Her Majesty's Ambassador  
2010 – 2011 FCO, Head of Middle East Department  
2008 – 2009 Kuwait, Her Majesty's Ambassador  
2006 – 2008 Brussels, EU Director and Head of Scottish Government EU Office  
2002 – 2006 UKRep Brussels, Political Counsellor  
1999 – 2002 Amman, Deputy Head of Mission  
1997 – 1999 FCO, Head of Comprehensive Spending Review Team and then Head of Management Consultancy Services  
1996 – 1997 FCO, Deputy Head of Middle East Department  
1993 – 1996 UK Mission New York, First Secretary Middle East and Cyprus  
1991 – 1993 FCO, Desk Officer, Middle East Peace Process, Near East and North Africa Department  
1988 – 1991 Brasilia, First Secretary Commercial and Economic  
1986 – 1988 FCO, Desk Officer European Community Department  
1986 Secondment to European Commission  
1985 UK Mission New York, Conference Support Officer 1985 General Assembly  
1984 – 1985 FCO, Assistant Desk Officer for Iran, Middle East Department

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**[Press release: 'Flood and Coast' conference to tackle the big questions facing flood and coastal erosion](#)**

# management

Now in its third year, the annual event brings together experts from across the globe to share ideas and opportunities to work together to tackle the risk of flooding and coastal erosion.

Flood & Coast takes place at the Telford International Centre from 20-22 March and registration is live on the event's website: [www.floodandcoast.com](http://www.floodandcoast.com)

Other topics including infrastructure resilience, partnership working, community collaboration and incident response will also be debated at the 3 day event.

Speakers this year include the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, Sir James Bevan, the Chief Executive of the Met Office, Rob Varley, and Baroness Brown of Cambridge, Chair of the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change.

Other speakers include Jeff Lindner, a Director and meteorologist with the Harris County Flood Control District in Houston, Texas, who will share his experiences from Hurricane Harvey last August. Clare Dinnis, Deputy Director of the Environment Agency, said:

Climate change is one of the biggest global threats we face. Intense storms are becoming more frequent and climate change will also raise sea levels. So this year we're focussing on how partnerships between attendees can help us be better prepared to respond to future challenges like climate change.

Experts from the UK and across the globe will discuss their experiences so we can learn from each other and improve how we manage flood risk and coastal erosion in the UK.

Paul Cobbing, Chief Executive of the National Flood Forum charity, said:

The Flood & Coast Conference is a great chance to network – bringing together a rich concentration of flooding and coastal erosion experts with a diverse mix of backgrounds – commercial companies, product manufacturers, public organisations, community representatives and academics.

Bringing these people together in a shared space provides a fantastic opportunity to explore how we can work together to reduce flood risk and manage coastal erosion more effectively in the UK.

More than 200 speakers will talk at the event, and 80 exhibitors will showcase the latest in flood risk management technology and innovation.

The full conference programme is now available on the website:  
[www.floodandcoast.com](http://www.floodandcoast.com)

Notes to editors

- Delegates include representatives from the Environment Agency, local authorities, risk management authorities, water companies, research academics, businesses, manufacturers and communities at risk of flooding.
- The winners of this year's Environment Agency Project Excellence Awards will be announced during the conference. The awards celebrate best practice in project areas such as programme and project delivery, partnership working, asset management, innovation, value for money, sustainability and community leadership.
- Flood & Coast's association partners include the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the National Flood Forum, the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) and the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA).
- Flood & Coast is kindly sponsored by Van Oord, Black & Veatch, Jacobs, Flood Modeller, AECOM and VolkerStevin, Boskalis Westminster and Atkins (VBA).

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## **Speech: Call to Stop the Devastation Facing the People of Eastern Ghouta**

Thank you Mr President, and thank you also to Under Secretary General Lowcock for your very detailed and clear briefing today. It was very powerful to hear through you the voices of the people of Eastern Ghouta.

Mr President,

Russia called this meeting today to allow us to present our understanding of the situation on the ground and to come up with ways of getting out of this situation. Well, we've heard very clearly from Under Secretary General Lowcock today and from the Secretary General yesterday about the situation on the ground.

This is hell on earth.

The scale of the human suffering and destruction is unbearable.

The suffering of the Syrian people, while primarily the responsibility of the Syrian regime, brings shame on all of us in this Council.

Let us be very clear about the main cause of this hell on earth. It's the direct result of an escalation by the Syrian regime of its aerial bombardment

of civilian areas using cluster bombs, alleged chemical weapons use and systematically killing hundreds of its own civilians.

As others in this chamber have said today, these are breaches of international humanitarian law and are war crimes.

The UK will be unrelenting in our campaign to ensure accountability and justice for these crimes using all mechanisms at our disposal.

Mr President,

We owe it to the people of Eastern Ghouta to highlight the utter devastation facing them and then to take measures to stop it.

According to the Syrian American Medical Society, in the first 48 hours of this week, 250 civilians have been killed and 460 injured. Those that survived these attacks have been further targeted by the regime whilst trying to get help for their injuries. There have been 22 separate attacks on 20 different hospitals in the three days since Monday. We applaud the incredible work of the brave doctors on the ground who risk their own lives to save others. And like the Netherlands, we salute the heroes of the White Helmets who have demonstrated incredible bravery, courage and resilience to save the lives of thousands of Syrians from all sides of this conflict.

From the start of this conflict the Assad regime has peddled the myth that all of those opposing Assad are terrorists. This is manifestly not the case. The people of Eastern Ghouta are not terrorists. Jabhat al-Nusra have only a small presence in Eastern Ghouta; their fighters numbering less than a quarter of one percent of the population of that area. Nothing can justify the barbaric bombardment we've seen in recent days, or the blocking of humanitarian aid, or the denial of medical evacuations.

We also condemn the mortar shelling from Eastern Ghouta of civilian areas of Damascus and attacks against the Russian Embassy in Damascus.

Mr President,

This Council has failed to uphold its responsibilities in Syria. We all know why this is. But we have all agreed that there can be no military solution to the conflict, only a political one. The actions of the Assad regime in recent weeks, the military escalation in an area guaranteed by Russia and Iran as a "de-escalation zone" shows cynical disregard by the regime for every member of this Council and for our resolution. So it is vital that we all send a clear and unified message in response.

The solution to this situation is not difficult. We need to see an immediate cessation of hostilities, including an immediate end to the aerial bombing of Eastern Ghouta. If everyone in this chamber were to commit to this unequivocally today, it could have an impact on the ground. It could save the lives of thousands of innocent men, women and children who are being killed as we speak here today in this chamber. We therefore welcome the resolution put forward into blue by you, Mr President, and by Sweden, and we look forward to a vote later today.

To conclude Mr President,

Yesterday, we discussed the principles of the UN Charter which our predecessors drafted in the name of the peoples of the world to help save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It's clear we have fallen woefully short of this aim. We have failed the people of Eastern Ghouta. But let us reverse this trend today. Let us adopt your draft resolution and take the concrete actions needed to ease the suffering in this zone of death and destruction.

Thank you.

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## [News story: Peatlands to be restored in the North West](#)

Work is underway to restore peatlands to their natural state across Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire after £160,000 of funding was secured through the Department Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Environment Agency will be working with a number of partners including Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Warrington Borough Council and United Utilities at six sites.

The funding will be used to restore upland and lowland peatlands to their natural state by increasing their capacity to prevent carbon entering the atmosphere, reduce flood risk by slowing the flow of rain water and creating habitats for vulnerable wildlife.

Natural England has been advising the partners about the best design for the schemes, and approving methods used on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

By blocking drainage ditches, building peat bunds and working with the local topography, the work will help keep water on the sites, encouraging the typical bog plant species and discouraging the dry-loving grasses and birch.

### **They provide 70% of our drinking water**

Peatlands cover 11% of England's landscape and they provide a great habitat for a wide range of wildlife and birds including merlin, dunlin and golden plover. They also provide 70% of our drinking water and reduce greenhouse gases by locking away at least 3.2 billion tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>.

There are six projects across the Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire that have secured this funding, part of a Defra peatlands restoration pot of £500,000, with further projects around the country.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Well-maintained peatlands are an iconic aspect of the English landscape and are a vital part of the natural ecosystem. They provide key habitats for wildlife, supply us with clean water and reduce carbon emissions.

This scheme will help fulfil our ambition to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state while returning thousands of hectares of peatland to their natural state.

Lisa Whelan, Environment Programme Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Peatlands are a fantastic resource and these restoration projects have multiple benefits to the environment. Work at the sites will include creating fire breaks and peat bunds, introduce new plant species, block ditches along with further initiatives to restore the peatlands.

Some projects will also serve as study sites for trials of innovative new restoration techniques. As well as having > a huge environmental benefit such as reducing greenhouse gases it will enhance habitats for wildlife.

Work is underway at six sites across Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire

Risley Moss, Cheshire – working with Warrington Borough Council (funding of £20,000) Danes Moss, Cheshire – working with Cheshire Wildlife Trust (funding of £15,000) Holcroft Moss, Cheshire – working with Cheshire Wildlife Trust (funding of £46,000) Goyt's Moss Bridge, Peak District – working with United Utilities (funding of £16,000) Peak Naze and Sykes Moor, Peak District – working with United Utilities (funding of £36,300) Crompton Moor, Greater Manchester – working with City of Trees (funding of £30,000)

Total funding is £163,300