

UK National Statement at the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

The United Kingdom welcomes the Thirty-First Regular Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Transnational crime cannot be tackled without cross-border cooperation. We are united in our pursuit and promotion of fair criminal justice systems. It is essential that we maintain an open dialogue and continue working in close partnership on this issue. The Commission plays a vital role in helping foster that co-operation and collaboration, and the UK Government is, and will remain, a committed and active participant in these discussions.

Before I outline some of the UK's key priorities in this space, I would like to comment briefly on the situation in Ukraine. First and foremost, we continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian people. And more broadly, we must remain alert to the potential impact of the crisis on transnational organised crime threats.

Turning to the main agenda, the UK welcomes the Commission's thematic focus on strengthening the use of digital evidence in criminal justice and countering cyber crime.

One of the most pressing challenges facing us all is the fight to prevent the spread of online child sexual abuse.

The UK is at the forefront of addressing this issue, but no country can mount a truly effective response in isolation.

A single instance of abuse can span multiple jurisdictions, and the threat continues to grow and evolve as offenders exploit rising global internet access and new technologies to harm children.

This is why the UK has tabled a resolution for this session on tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and the importance of fostering partnerships with private technology companies. The resolution challenges members to set consistent expectations and standards for technology companies to keep children safe on their platforms and services. The protection of children is among the most fundamental responsibilities for any government. We hope Members will engage constructively in this debate, because the goal we share is a common one: to keep citizens safe and bring the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to justice. The UK will also be hosting a side event on this topic which I would encourage delegations to join.

The UK continues to engage with the UN Cyber Crime Treaty process. We want to develop international cooperation and capacity building as part of our ongoing efforts to prevent online crimes, such as child sexual exploitation

and abuse.

As a major UNODC (UN Office of Drugs and Crime) donor, the UK has several key priorities including drug trafficking, criminal flows from Afghanistan, modern slavery and human trafficking, and anti-corruption. Of course, effective partnerships across borders must be further supported by robust national frameworks. In October last year, the UK and UNODC launched a transnational organised crime strategy toolkit.

This will enable policy-makers to create or enhance their own national strategies to combat transnational organised crime.

Four regional workshops have already taken place and we will continue to work with the UNODC to assist in developing holistic national serious organised crime strategies.

In closing, I'd like to thank the UNODC again for facilitating this event. Given the scale and diversity of the threats we face, it is more important than ever before that we confront them together. Thank you.

[New app to counter malicious approaches online](#)

An innovative app, allowing users of social media and professional networking sites, to better identify the hallmarks of fake profiles used by foreign spies and other malicious actors, and take steps to report and remove them, has been launched today.

In the last year, over 10,000 UK nationals from across society have been targeted on sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The use of fake profiles on social media and professional networking sites is occurring at scale. In the first half of last year alone, LinkedIn stopped 11.6m fake accounts at registration.

The new app is part of the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure's (CPNI) 'Think Before You Link' campaign. It has been developed with behavioural scientists to include features such as a profile reviewer, which will help individuals identify potentially fake profiles and report anything they deem suspicious.

The launch of the app comes as increased espionage by state actors persistently threatens the UK, and is increasingly conducted online.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay, Lead Minister for Cyber Security said:

The online threat via social media is increasing, with fake profiles on sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook being created on an industrial scale.

Many of these profiles are established as an elaborate ruse for eliciting details from either officials or members of the public who may have access to information relating to our national security.

It is therefore crucial that we do all we can to protect ourselves and our information, ensuring those who we connect with online are who they say they are. This new app will be an important tool in that endeavour.

Current and former civil servants can also be attractive targets because of their experience and if their positions are listed on sites such as LinkedIn, with this carrying the risk of fake offers of lucrative consultancy work if they connect with unknown users. This app will therefore boost the support and advice which government staff and particularly those working on sensitive policy, already receive.

New tools, such as the 'Think Before You Link' app, will enable users to conduct their own digital due diligence and aims to increase awareness of the growing threat from digital espionage to UK citizens.

Director General of MI5 Ken McCallum said:

MI5 has seen over 10,000 disguised approaches on professional networking sites from foreign spies to people up and down the UK. Foreign spies are actively working to build relationships with those working in government, in high-tech business and in academia.

The Think Before You Link app helps those who may be receiving disguised approaches, helping them to conduct their own digital due diligence before accepting unknown contacts online.

Vincent Devine, the Government Chief Security Officer said:

Hostile actors can easily use social media to conduct online research into an individual's interests, activities and personal and professional connections. They can then use that information to target the individual online.

The Think Before You Link app is an effective way for government staff and the public to protect themselves against those threats.

Notes to editors:

- The app is freely available to download on the Google Play or Apple store from today.
 - New research released today by the University of Portsmouth suggests that around 16.8m LinkedIn users in the UK may have accepted unknown contacts and that awareness of the potential threat from state actors using fake profiles is lower than other potential online threats. When asked specifically about fake profiles and the motives of perpetrators more generally, users of LinkedIn and Facebook were most likely to think of trolling (80%), fraud (80%) and fake news (79%), rather than economic espionage (64%). Over half of users (53%) could not name a state that posts fake profiles. And yet, three quarters say they have knowingly received link requests from suspicious profiles.
 - The University of Portsmouth's research was carried out by Professor Mark Button and Dr David Shepherd of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Portsmouth. It involved a survey of 1,000 UK professionals who use either LinkedIn or Facebook for professional networking. The survey data was collected in April 2022. For a copy of the report contact the University of Portsmouth press office: glenn.harris@port.ac.uk; for an interview with Professor Mark Button contact mark.button@port.ac.uk mobile: 07968 911405; work: 023 9284 3923.
 - Click [here](#) for further information on the LinkedIn report.
-

[Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to outline way forward to address the legacy of the Troubles](#)

The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill will put in place an effective investigations and information recovery process, underpinned by robust and independent investigations, to provide answers for families, deliver on commitments to those who served in Northern Ireland, and help society to look forward.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP said:

“The years of the Troubles were an awful period in our history with tragic loss of life across communities. After the signing of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, challenging compromises were rightly made in support of the peace process – addressing the legacy of the Troubles comprehensively and fairly is another such step forward.

“The current system is failing; it is delivering neither truth nor justice for the vast majority of families. It is letting down victims and veterans alike.

“Every family who lost a loved one, no matter who they were, will be provided with more information than ever before about the circumstances of their death.

“A robust and independent investigations process will be at the heart of this approach, supported by an ambitious and comprehensive oral history programme that will allow people to tell their stories and share their experiences.

“And there will not be any automatic access to immunity; it is right that those involved in an investigation cannot obtain ‘something for nothing.’ Immunity will be provided to individuals who cooperate, which provides the best route to give victims and their families answers they have sought for years as well as giving our veterans the certainty they deserve.”

Following an extensive period of engagement, the Government has amended previous proposals set out in a Command Paper last year to ensure they better meet the needs of those most impacted by the Troubles.

The legislation will ensure that legacy issues are addressed comprehensively and fairly, and in a way that supports information recovery and reconciliation, complies fully with international human rights obligations and responds to the needs of victims and survivors, and society as a whole.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has also announced the UK Government’s intention to commission an Official History relating to the Troubles. Conducted by independent historians, and underpinned by unprecedented access to the UK documentary record, this will provide an authoritative and in-depth examination of the UK Government’s policy towards Northern Ireland during the conflict.

The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill will include the following provisions:

- For victims and survivors, a new independent body – the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) – will conduct investigations, consistent with our international obligations, to provide answers for those who want them, in a process supported by full state disclosure and with the power to compel witnesses.
- The ICRIR will grant immunity from prosecution, based on an individual’s cooperation with the body’s inquiries. Those who do not cooperate with the independent body will not be granted immunity, and will remain liable to prosecution should sufficient evidence exist, or come to light.
- Alongside producing reports on cases it has investigated, the body will

also produce a historical record of what is known in relation to all other deaths that occurred during the Troubles.

- A package of memorialisation measures centred on an ambitious, expert-led oral history initiative that will encourage people from all backgrounds to share their experiences and perspectives of the Troubles, and to listen to those of others.

Notes to editors:

As a result of the engagement process conducted following the publication of the Government's Command Paper last year, the legislation also contains the following provisions that further strengthen the legacy package:

- The establishment, management and operations of the ICRIR will be the responsibility of a Panel of Commissioners. This will include a Chief Commissioner of high judicial standing, and a Commissioner for Investigations, who will have the necessary skills and experience to run the Commission's investigative functions. All three will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- Inquests that have reached the stage of substantive hearing by the date 12 months after the date of introduction or the date by which the ICRIR is operational (whichever comes first) will be allowed to continue.
- Civil claims that already existed on or before the day of the Bill's introduction will be allowed to continue, but new cases will be barred from this date.

The Government is also taking forward a range of non-legislative measures that will help us to develop a clearer understanding of what happened during the Troubles, and will be supported by a major digitisation project, making official archives more accessible to the public.

Cabinet drive to make streets safer: **17 May 2022**

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet will meet today to drive forward their mission to cut crime and make our streets safer.

In a meeting of Cabinet today, the Prime Minister will reinforce that the critical role of any government is to protect the public before Ministers update on the progress being made to tackle crime and restore confidence in our justice system.

Since the Prime Minister came into office, there are now over 13,500 more police officers across England and Wales. This growing police force has helped roll up over 1,500 county lines and through Project ADDER, disrupt over 700 organised crime groups.

Today's meeting comes as Ministers prepare to announce a package of additional measures to crack down on crime across the country this week, including empowering the police to take more knives our streets and stepping up action on drug use to tackle the crimes they fuel.

Speaking ahead of the Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

While neighbourhood crime and serious violence is falling, the sad reality is that too many people are still growing up in communities blighted by criminals. That is why this government is determined to crack down on violence and restore confidence in our justice system, in order to truly level up the country.

Through our Beating Crime Plan, we are putting thousands more police on our streets, getting tougher on violent criminals and cracking down on county lines drugs gangs – so that everyone can have the security and stability that comes from having safer streets.

Today's Cabinet meeting comes as the Government continues to back police with the tools and resources they need to protect the public and make our streets safe.

Yesterday, the Home Secretary lifted restrictions on the police using stop and search in areas where they expect serious violence to happen. These restrictions, which have been in place since 2014, have limited when officers could use the vital power and hindered their ability to rid the streets of dangerous weapons. By making it easier for the police to seize more weapons, the government is backing forces to drive down knife crime and save more lives.

Later today, in a speech to the Police Federation, the Home Secretary will announce that Special Constables will be given powers to use Taser, if Chief Officers authorise it and they receive Taser training. This is the latest example of this Government ensuring they have the tools, power and resources they need to keep us safe and protect themselves.

These announcements coincide with this year's Operation Sceptre – a week of intensive action from every police force in England and Wales to combat knife crime up and down the country.

On Thursday, Policing Minister Kit Malthouse will host a National Drug Summit to tackle drug use and the crimes it fuels. On Friday, Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Secretary Dominic Raab will outline new investment to get young offenders back on track, and reduce reoffending.

During the meeting, the Cabinet will also get an update on the action that has already been taken to make our streets safer.

This includes recruiting over 13,500 police officers to date – putting us well on our way towards meeting the manifesto commitment of putting 20,000 officers on our streets by 2023 – and recruiting more rape specialists to the CPS with a 20% increase in CPS Rape and Serious Sexual Offences staff.

Cabinet will also discuss how the recently passed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act will give the police and courts the tools they need to keep people safe, overhaul the justice system to restore confidence and make sure punishments fit the severity of the crime.

Together, these initiatives are a crucial step but there is more to do, and Ministers will be urged to ensure all departments support this mission and do everything they can to cut crime and keep the public safe.

As well as cutting crime, this Government's priorities over the coming months are doing all we can to end Putin's onslaught in Ukraine, growing the economy to address the cost of living, funding the NHS to clear the covid backlogs and providing the leadership needed in challenging times.

['Wonder Weevil' released in fight against invasive floating pennywort](#)

In a world-first, South American weevils have been released in England to fight against the invasive non-native species floating pennywort, as part of Invasive Species Week.

An ornamental pond plant originating from North America, floating pennywort has the ability to grow up to 20 centimetres each day, forming dense rafts over our rivers that harm native plant, fish and invertebrate species, through competition and cutting oxygen levels in water. Floating pennywort impedes navigation routes, disrupts recreational activities like fishing and canoeing and exacerbates flood risk.

Since 2011, the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), with Defra funding, has been investigating the potential use of a biocontrol agent for floating pennywort. Following a decade of safety and efficacy testing, South American weevils, *Listronotus elongatus*, have been released to manage the plant and minimise its impact on watercourses for those who use them and the wildlife that rely on them. Adult weevils feed on the leaves of floating pennywort and females lay eggs into their stalks. The larvae then eat into the stems of the plant, reducing its ability to grow and spread further.

This is the first use of a biocontrol for floating pennywort across the globe, and only the fourth agent ever released in the UK to tackle non-native plants. The releases were carried out over the winter, with more scheduled for this summer, working alongside the typical approach to managing the plant, which involves physically cutting and extracting it from our waterways.

Minister for Biosecurity Lord Benyon said:

It is important that we tackle invasive non-native species to protect our native plants and animals and safeguard our environment, economy and health.

We all have a role to play in stopping the destruction caused by floating pennywort – and the release of the South American weevil will boost our efforts to eradicate this pest from our waterways once and for all.

Trevor Renals, Senior Technical Advisor on Invasive Species at the Environment Agency, said:

Releasing South American weevils offer us a safe and self-sustaining management option for floating pennywort without the cost and damage associated with herbicide treatment and mechanical removal. It's a natural solution to a problem that we anticipate could get much worse as our winters get milder due to climate change. We need to act now.

Djami Djeddour, Senior Scientific Officer, CABI, said:

Following years of extensive research into the potential biocontrol of floating pennywort, we are pleased and excited to have released the weevil into the wild. Field studies by CABI scientists and collaborators in South America found this weevil to be the most promising agent and after comprehensive screening in CABI's quarantine facility in the UK, it was confirmed to be highly specialised, only feeding and developing on this damaging weed.

Further releases will begin later this year, supported by a range of sponsors, and the weevil's impact, establishment and spread will be closely monitored.

Today's announcement comes as we mark Invasive Species Week 2022, which will culminate with a weekend of volunteer activity to tackle the spread of floating pennywort. This includes a large removal event on the River Wey – organised by British Canoeing and the Angling Trust – where volunteers will

cut down and remove floating pennywort from the water. All waterway users are reminded to [Check, Clean, Dry](#) after leaving the water to help prevent the spread of invasive species.