

# Speech: 86th Session of the OPCW Executive Council

Thank you Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom supports the statement made by the Ambassador of Estonia on behalf of the European Union.

We commend your work, Mr Chair, to steer the Executive Council through the selection process for the next Director General, and thank you for your warm welcome yesterday. This organisation is being superbly served by Ahmet Uzumcu. We believe that we have a strong successor in Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain, and hope that the Executive Council will agree his nomination by consensus.

In other positive developments, the successful completion of the verified destruction of the Russian Federation's declared chemical weapons stockpile underscores the global commitment to rid the world of chemical weapons. The UK was pleased to contribute funding and expertise to support Russia's work. We also welcome the progress made by the Iraqi authorities to destroy the final remnants of Saddam Hussein's era chemical weapon stockpile at the Al Muthana complex.

Unfortunately, despite this progress, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the norms that underpin it face significant challenge. In the last year alone this Council has witnessed:

1. regular credible reports of the use of chemical weapons by state actors in Syria, and an attack in Malaysia against a DPRK national;
2. multiple reports of chemical weapons attacks by Daesh linked terrorists in Iraq; and
3. insidious attempts to undermine the credibility of the OPCW, including by attacking the OPCW's technical competence and integrity, and attempts to limit the Conference of States Parties' engagement with civil society;

For more than four years, we have seen the devastating impact of continued chemical weapons use in Syria. Sarin has been used with horrific effect in Ghouta in 2013 and in Khan Sheikhoun in April this year. Sarin has now been found in samples from Al-Lataminah, close to Khan Sheikhoun, following credible reports of an attack there on 30 March. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism confirmed that the Syrian regime used chlorine as a weapon three times in 2014-15, and that Daesh used sulphur mustard on one occasion in 2015. No one has yet been brought to justice for these crimes. All perpetrators must be held to account – however long that takes. We have full confidence in the professionalism and dedication of the JIM and FFM and look forward to their upcoming reports.

Mr Chair,

Use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Yet this is just one of the issues where Syria has failed to comply. The Convention, UN Security Council resolutions and this Executive Council all require Syria to produce a comprehensive declaration of its chemical weapons programme. The Technical Secretariat has worked tirelessly to uncover the truth, in the face of Syrian obstruction contrary to what we have just heard from the Syrian Ambassador. Despite four years of engagement, there has been minimal progress. The Director General reported last week evidence of "potential undeclared chemical weapons activities involving production or weaponisation of chemical agent" in Syria, and that he could not verify that the Syrian Declaration was accurate or complete.

Syria's response to the findings of such respected international bodies is to deny reality and forensic evidence. The Syrian Regime has failed to engage appropriately with the Technical Secretariat to answer the long list of serious questions about gaps, inconsistencies and anomalies in its chemical weapons programme declaration. We've heard this morning further denial of scientific reality from the Syrians, they still refuse to engage meaningfully with the OPCW's findings that show agents present at facilities which have not been declared, and types of chemical warfare agent that Syria has not declared at all. After more than four years, the only conclusion can be that Syria has not declared or destroyed all of its chemical weapons. The Syrian Regime has continued to use chemical weapons against its own people, and continues to pose a significant chemical threat.

Chemical weapons use is not confined to Syria. In Malaysia, an assassination in February using the nerve agent VX shocked the world. We note that court proceedings have started in Malaysia to examine the circumstances that led to the death of a North Korean national at Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2. We thank Malaysia for the helpful update that they provided to this Council yesterday, and encourage Malaysia to continue to inform the Executive Council about their investigation.

It is not just state programmes that demand this Council's attention. All of us must work to ensure that terrorists cannot develop chemical weapons capabilities. We hope that this Council will adopt the draft decision proposed by the US and Germany to combat chemical terrorism.

We remain deeply concerned that Daesh retains the capability and intent to use chemical weapons. We welcome the Technical Secretariat's work with Iraq to deal with the chemical threat that they face, including by supporting Iraqi investigations into chemical weapons use. We encourage both Iraq and the Technical Secretariat to keep the Executive Council informed of their work.

Finally, we have all acknowledged that to enhance the global fight against chemical weapons we need to engage a wide range of stakeholders, from industry to civil society. The UK welcomed the 2013 Review Conference decision to open the annual Conference of States Parties to civil society groups. We share the concerns voiced yesterday by Canada, Switzerland and the Netherlands that a number of NGOs have been refused accreditation to attend this year's CSP, based purely on the objections of one or two states. No

reasons have been given for the decision to refuse accreditation. In our view, the exclusion of ECOSOC accredited NGOs from the Conference of States Parties harms the reputation of states and the OPCW. We should be at the forefront of transparency as an International Organisation, not a backmarker. Our work is too important to hide.

Thank you Mr Chair

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## [News story: Royal Air Force squadrons recognised for gallantry](#)

The Battle Honours have been awarded to commemorate notable battles, actions, or engagements in which squadron aircrew or RAF Regiment personnel played a memorable part.

Battle Honours were approved for 27 operational flying squadrons and eight Royal Air Force Regiment squadrons for their service during Operation TELIC in Iraq. Five operational flying squadrons and three Royal Air Force Regiment squadrons have been awarded the highest honour of 'Battle Honour with Emblazonment'.

For Operation DEFERENCE and Operation ELLAMY in Libya, Battle Honours were approved for 13 operational flying squadrons with three being awarded the highest honour of Battle Honour with Emblazonment.

There are two levels of Battle Honour within the Royal Air Force, the first is entitlement, signifying that a squadron took part in the campaign. The second, higher level, gives the right to emblazon the Battle Honour on the Squadron Standard itself. This highest level has been awarded to squadrons who were involved in direct confrontation with the enemy, and who have demonstrated gallantry and spirit under fire.

The RAF's Deputy Commander for Operations, Air Marshal Stuart Atha said:

Whilst individuals are often recognised for bravery and courage, the award of a Battle Honour to a unit is rare, so I am delighted to hear that the fighting spirit of Royal Air Force squadrons has been recognised at the highest level by their award today. Those Air Mobility, Rotary, Fast Jet, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance squadrons, and RAF Regiment units, whose people have contributed so much to these operations in the air and on the ground, should be hugely proud of this important addition to their legacies.

The honours will be awarded for participation in Operation TELIC, which took place between 1 May 2003 and 22 May 2011, Operation DEFERENCE, which took place from 22 February 2011 to 27 February 2011, and Operation ELLAMY, which took place from 19 March 2011 to 31 October 2011.

To mark the awards, the MOD is releasing a number of examples of outstanding service during these campaigns:

## **FIRST UK LAUNCHED STRIKES SINCE WW2**

Royal Air Force Squadrons II (Two) and IX (Nine) are two of three units to be awarded the honour of emblazoning the battle honour "Libya 2011" on their standards.

On 19 March 2011, under strict secrecy and in the dark of night, four Tornado fast jets from IX (Bomber) Squadron, Royal Air Force Marham, roared into the Norfolk night sky to deliver long-range airstrikes against Libyan Regime targets.

Storm Shadow, the Tornado's highly capable stand-off cruise missile, which is currently seeing service in Iraq and Syria, was used as the weapon of choice against heavily defended and hardened targets in a gruelling 3000-mile round trip. For the missions, RAF Marham operated as a cohesive team. II (Army Cooperation) Squadron personnel worked tirelessly to plan this complex mission and prepare the aircraft, while aircrew from IX (Bomber) Squadron flew and delivered successful mission.

This historic event was the first direct delivery of airborne weapons launched from Royal Air Force aircraft based in the United Kingdom since World War Two and demonstrated the Royal Air Force's ability to conduct highly effective surprise airstrikes at great distance. The missions were ably supported by RAF Voyager in-flight refuelling aircraft, which were used four times during the eight-hour sortie.

Following these strikes, IX (Bomber) Squadron deployed to Italian Air Force Base Gioia Del Colle and mounted an intensive bombing, close air support and armed reconnaissance campaign against the Libyan Regime's mobile military forces. The unit was relieved by II (Army Cooperation) Squadron one month later.

At this point, the campaign had grown significantly, requiring II Squadron to undertake complex strike missions by day and night using Paveway precision guided bombs and Brimstone missiles.

## **PUMAS PROVIDE IMPORTANT SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS IN IRAQ**

Number 33 Squadron, based at RAF Benson, Oxfordshire, was one of seven RAF units to earn the right to emblazon the battle honour 'Iraq 2003-2011' on its standard.

33 Squadron operated Puma helicopters during the Iraq campaign. Working in close cooperation with UK and allied land forces, their role was to move equipment and soldiers around the battlefield, as well as provide convoy escort, reconnaissance and resupply of Forward Operating Bases (FOB). They also transported the wounded quickly away from the front line for emergency medical care.

Aircraft often flew at 50 feet above the ground, to try and avoid ground fire due to the level of the insurgent threat. Working in the highly unstable area around central Iraq, the Pumas operated at a furious pace, often at the limits of their performance. Nevertheless the helicopters proved to be highly reliable; a testament to the superb efforts of the squadron's engineers based at FOB Kalsu.

In November 2004, a formation of one 33 Squadron Puma and one Lynx helicopter operated in support of the Black Watch (now Scottish Regiment) Battle Group. Working from Camp Dogwood which was in an area locally dubbed 'the Triangle of Death', the two aircraft came under heavy mortar fire within minutes of landing. Later, due to the volume of enemy ground fire, both the Puma and the Lynx were hit by enemy rounds with the Lynx pilot suffering injury.

Flight Sergeant Andy Leys, a crewman on the Puma said:

On arrival back at base after operations, the sense of satisfaction and achievement was immense. This period was the busiest and most intense operational tasking I have completed in my 19 year flying career. All of our tasking was completed safely and professionally with crews returning to base wiser and more experienced aviators – something that can never be too highly valued.

## **Recognised squadrons:**

### **With the Right to Emblazon 'IRAQ 2003- 2011' on Squadron Standards**

- No 7 Squadron RAF
- No XXIV Squadron RAF
- No 33 Squadron RAF
- No 47 Squadron RAF
- No 230 Squadron RAF
- No 1 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 26 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 34 Squadron RAF Regiment.

### **Without the Right to Emblazon 'IRAQ 2003- 2011' on Squadron Standards**

- No II (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No IX (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No 10 Squadron RAF

- No 12 (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No XIII Squadron RAF
- No 14 Squadron RAF
- No 18 Squadron RAF
- No 27 Squadron RAF
- No XXVIII (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No 30 Squadron RAF
- No 31 Squadron RAF
- No 32 (The Royal) Squadron RAF
- No 39 (Photographic Reconnaissance) Squadron RAF
- No 51 Squadron RAF
- No LXX Squadron RAF
- No 99 Squadron RAF
- No 101 Squadron RAF
- No 120 Squadron RAF
- No 201 Squadron RAF
- No 206 Squadron RAF
- No 216 Squadron RAF
- No 617 Squadron RAF
- No II Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 3 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 15 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 51 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 63 Squadron RAF Regiment.

#### **With the Right to Emblazon 'LIBYA 2011' on Squadron Standards**

- No II (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No IX (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No 47 Squadron RAF.

#### **Without the Right to Emblazon 'LIBYA 2011' on Squadron Standards**

- No 3 (Fighter) Squadron RAF
- No V (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No VIII Squadron RAF
- No XI Squadron RAF
- No 30 Squadron RAF
- No 32 (The Royal) Squadron RAF
- No 51 Squadron RAF
- No 99 Squadron RAF
- No 101 Squadron RAF
- No 216 Squadron RAF

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**[Press release: Property scam companies](#)**

## wound up after taking in £7.8 million

Thirteen companies have been wound up by the High Court in the public interest following investigations by Company Investigations of the Insolvency Service.

The companies all traded from an address in Stroud and were all set up by husband and wife team Matthew and Charlotte Roberts, who are both bankrupt. They had targeted high net worth individuals and 'sophisticated investors' for two projects and succeeded in raising at least £7.8 million. Insolvency Service investigators are now seeking to track down funds and assets but have warned a significant amount of the money may not be recoverable.

David Hill, chief investigator with the Insolvency Service, said,

I am very pleased to see that the Court has called a halt to the unscrupulous activities of these companies. The Insolvency Service will continue to investigate and bring to a halt the activities of companies harming or about to harm the public by operating in this way.

The companies have shown no regard for the law.

The 13 companies purported to be involved in two projects. 11 were concerned with a project to acquire and convert a former convent in Woodchester, near Stroud in Gloucester, into a hotel and music venue. The remaining two companies were involved in a second project to acquire and develop a property in Norway to create an 'eco resort'.

The Matthews raised at least £7.8 million from private investors who were told their investments would be fully asset backed with the companies in which they purchased shares acquiring ownership of various land and buildings at the two sites. In fact none of the land, or buildings was found to be owned by the companies in which investors had invested.

Investors were invited to buy preference shares in a number of companies with a particular purpose in defined project on the promise of annual returns from 10% and guaranteed buybacks up to 150% depending on the length of the investment term which could be between one, three or five years. They were then told that their investment was high risk and having certified themselves as either 'high net worth individuals' or 'sophisticated investors', they would have no access to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

### **Notes to editors**

Both Matthew Roberts and Charlotte Roberts are bankrupt. The former has been bankrupt since 3 September 2014 and his discharge has been suspended. The

latter was made bankrupt on 25 August 2016 and her discharge is also currently suspended

**In respect of the UK project (“The Convent Hotel & Spa”):**

- the Court heard that the site of the former convent had been acquired by the Roberts and/or HH Property 4 Limited, a company under their control, in May and June 2013, through the use of bridging loans secured against the properties.
- In the first phase of fund raising investors were encouraged to buy shares in Special Purpose Vehicle (“SPV”) companies, again controlled by the Roberts and which each owned a single share in BBH Property 1 Limited. In subsequent fund raising phases investors purchased shares directly in BBH Property 2 Limited, Crowdseed3 Limited and Crowdseed4 Limited. In total some £5.8 million was raised from investors in the UK project.
- Investors were told their funds would be used to enable the purchase by those four companies of various buildings at the Convent site thus providing security for investors by shared ownership of the companies that owned the buildings free from debt. The investment companies would then lease the buildings to hotel operating companies and receive a dividend based on the rent received by the companies plus a guaranteed buy back of their shares at 125% of investment after 3 years or 150% after five years.
- Investors were given comfort that their monies would be paid into solicitor client accounts and held in escrow and only released when adequate security was in place. This did not happen and funds were released by solicitors on the directions of the Roberts and large sums were applied for other purposes, or purposes that the investigators could not identify.
- The Court saw evidence that, save for one set of buildings known as The Barns, none of the properties were ever transferred to the investment companies as purported would happen in the brochures and other documents provided to investors. The Barns, which the investigators found to be derelict outbuildings, were subsequently transferred by BBH Property 1 Limited to Thornley Property Stroud Limited without the investors’ knowledge leaving the investors without any security at all. Thornley Property Stroud, which was used by Mrs Roberts as a personal management company and latterly as the hotel operating company, is recorded as having paid £300,000 for the purchase of the Barns from BBH Property 1. However; the investigators found no evidence that any such consideration was ever paid by Thornley Property Stroud for The Barns.
- The Court also found that investors monies were not used for the purposes for which investors had been led to believe they would be and that significant sums were paid to the Roberts, Frazer Fearnhead (a former director of BBH Property 1 and BBH Property 2), or companies which they controlled.

BBH Property 1 Limited was incorporated on 11 December 2014, registration number 08675992. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.



BBH Property 1 Limited was incorporated on 11 December 2014, registration number 09012571. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Crowdseed3 Limited was incorporated on 15 September 2014, registration number 09217756. The registered office of the company is at 54 Mallorie Park Drive, Ripon, N Yorkshire, HG4 2QF.

Crowdseed4 Limited was incorporated on 30 January 2015, registration number 09415203. The registered office of the company is at 54 Mallorie Park Drive, Ripon, N Yorkshire, HG4 2QF.

HH Property 4 Limited was incorporated on 02 April 2012, registration number 08016267. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Convent (Stroud) Limited was incorporated on 15 September 2015, registration number 09778052. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Roomco Limited was incorporated on 03 September 2014, registration number 09200891. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Convent Live Limited was incorporated on 15 September 2014, registration number 09218722. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Thornley Property (Stroud) Limited was incorporated on 25 April 2014, registration number 09011046. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Netgiglive Limited was incorporated on 20 November 2012, registration number 08300688. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

Music Show Limited was incorporated on 21 November 2016, registration number 10489610. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

**In respect of the Norway Project (“The Convent in the Hills Investment”):**

- Convent in the Hills Limited and Covent in the Hills 2 Limited were companies used to raise investment to purchase and develop land in Norway to create an eco resort.
- There were two elements to the development the first was a proposal to build a central hotel and 224 houses on a plot of land. Funds were raised by The Convent in the Hills Limited and were used to purchase five plots of land in Mr and Mrs Roberts’s names, only one of which had planning permission and was subsequently transferred into the ownership of a subsidiary company of The Convent in the Hills being Convent in the Hills AS
- Convent in the Hills AS is a Norwegian company and is currently subject

to an insolvency process in that country.

- The plot was purchased from Mr and Mrs Roberts for NOK 5 million (Norwegian Krona), being the same price that they had paid for all five plots in the previous year. The Court accepted the evidence that a significant proportion of the monies raised was paid to Mrs Roberts, or to companies, or individuals with whom she was connected, including paying expenditure apparently unconnected with the Norwegian Project.

The Convent In The Hills Limited was incorporated on 3 June 2014, registration number 09068955. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

The Convent In The Hills2 Limited was incorporated on 23 July 2014, registration number 09144068. The registered office of the company is at The Convent, Convent Lane, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5HS.

The winding-up petitions were presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986. The Official Receiver was appointed as provisional liquidator of the companies on 10 August 2017 by Mr Justice Roth, a Judge of the Chancery Division of the High Court.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

## **Contact Press Office**

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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**[Press release: Government confirms up](#)**

# to £557 million for new renewable energy projects

- Last auction saw cost of offshore wind halved and secured enough renewable capacity to power 3.6 million homes.
- UK decarbonising faster than any other G20 nation

Energy Minister Richard Harrington confirmed today (11 October 2017) that up to £557 million will be made available for less established renewable electricity projects as part of the government's Clean Growth Strategy, to drive economic growth and clean up the energy system.

Since 1990 the UK's emissions are down by more than a third while the economy has grown by two-thirds. Low carbon generation provided more than half (52%) our electricity this summer, according to National Grid, while PwC analysis shows the UK decarbonising faster than any other G20 nation.

The Clean Growth Strategy, which will be published this week, will build on this success and ensure Britain remains a global leader in the move towards a low carbon economy. It will ensure the whole country can benefit from new technologies, jobs and businesses that are good for consumers, the environment and the economy.

As part of the strategy, developers will compete for up to £557 million of funding in Contracts for Difference auctions which drive down energy costs for consumers and increase business confidence. The latest auction saw the cost of new offshore wind fall by 50% compared to the first auction held in 2015 and resulted in over 3GW of new generation which could power 3.6 million homes.

Energy Minister Richard Harrington said:

The government's Clean Growth Strategy will set out how the whole of the UK can benefit from the global move to a low carbon economy.

We've shown beyond doubt that renewable energy projects are an effective way to cut our emissions, while creating thousands of good jobs and attracting billions of pounds worth of investment.

The Clean Growth Strategy will look across the whole of the economy and the country. It includes ambitious proposals on housing, business, transport and the environment, as well as the power sector. It will also show how actions taken to tackle emissions have helped to reduce energy bills for households.

The next Contracts for Difference auction is planned for spring 2019.

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## Press release: Welsh Secretary confident ahead of talks with First Minister

The First Secretary of State Damian Green and the Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will meet the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones for discussions on arrangements under the EU (Withdrawal) Bill for distributing powers returned from the European Union.

The people of Wales want to make Brexit a success and both the Welsh Government and UK Government want the same thing – we want Wales to prosper and we want an agreement for the whole of the UK with the European Union.

The Welsh economy is fundamentally integrated with the rest of the UK so we must bring together the assets of all parts of the UK to win deals and secure trade agreements. Exiting the EU is a time when the nation needs to come together to secure the best deal for every part of the UK.

It is in nobody's interest for there to be gaps in the law at the point where the UK departs the EU. Neither is it in anybody's interest to create any new obstacles or costs inside the UK as we leave the EU. That means that there will be a need for a common UK approach in a number of areas. We have had constructive talks already and will keep talking – I am confident we can reach an agreement that works for all parts of the UK.