

Report by the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities: UK response, May 2022

Thank you, Ambassador Hasani, for your presentation, and for the draft work plan and report on recent activities that you have shared.

We welcome the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)'s discussion and coordination of these efforts in the context of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. Economic prosperity and healthy environments are conditions that can help bolster our security. Dialogue and co-operation on these issues are prerequisites for peace, stability and good neighbourly relations. We fully agree with your assessment that resorting to military means over diplomatic ones undermines the very premise on which the founders built this organisation.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is showing how the impact of armed conflict extends beyond immeasurable human suffering and grief to significant damage to both the economy and environment. The Ukrainian economy is set to shrink by almost half, and the environmental consequences of the conflict will be felt for generations to come.

We agree with your assessment that the effects of the conflict extend beyond Ukraine's borders. Neighbouring countries are bearing the environmental and economic consequences of Russia's actions. For example, the Moldovan people have sheltered nearly half a million Ukrainians. Together with other neighbouring countries of Ukraine (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania), the UK is grateful for Moldova's selfless act of kindness since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, together with those other neighbouring countries. We are working with the Government of Moldova and partners to increase our support for Moldova's efforts, including direct humanitarian assistance and assistance for Moldovan customs service and border guards.

We support your decision to focus your Office's activity on the conflict in Ukraine, and your suggestions for how you may be able to support the country once the circumstances on the ground allow it; in particular in two areas.

First, the development of sustainable, climate-conscious post-conflict reconstruction plans. We join you in commending the 2021 Swedish Chair of the OSCE and the participating States for the adoption of the landmark [Ministerial Council Decision on climate change](#), which provides a solid basis for further work by the OSCE and collaboration between participating States on climate security. As well as damaging the planet, conflicts also divert attention and resources away from addressing existential climate challenges, so we look forward to participating in this work, including at the high level conference on climate change, when this again becomes possible.

Second, the proposal to build capacity to counter corruption. The UK and its

partners have actively supported Ukraine's efforts to build its resilience through crucial democratic and rule of law reforms, including the establishment of strong anti-corruption institutions. And we will continue to do so. We welcome your Office's plans to coordinate with other executive structures in order to design and implement joint activities in the areas of anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, and asset recovery.

More broadly, I would like to celebrate efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into your Office's projects and activities. Issues like women's economic empowerment and women's entrepreneurship are inextricably linked to economic development.

We welcome the full set of proposals and agree that the OSCE could assume a leadership role in international assistance in this field, convening international stakeholders and developing joint programmes. We look forward to hearing more about these plans in due course.

And finally, we welcome the work your Office is doing in response to the crisis in Afghanistan, particularly the further assessment of the consequences of the crisis for women. The Afghan people deserve to live in dignity, peace and security, reflecting the last two decades of their political, economic and social achievements. We welcome the OCEEA's partnerships with the Central Asian participating States and the field missions they support in meeting this challenge.

In closing, thank you to you and your Office. You have our full support.

[Dstl shows off its world-leading science to Head of the UK Armed Forces](#)

News story

Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, has made a special visit to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).



Ghost robot dog

He saw first-hand the science and research under development for the future of Defence. Among the science on display was a robotic canine, dubbed Ghost Dog. Dstl is using the US-made technology to carry out research in the area of human-machine teaming. The aim is to develop systems that are relevant to operational requirements, and that can support troops by removing them away from potentially dangerous tasks, including surveillance and reconnaissance.

Dstl experts also shared research on armour and protection capabilities, by displaying the latest novel armour system currently in development for the Challenger 3. This system will save lives by providing improved performance, with more protection. The novel technology comes in a series of armour packs, aiming to optimise the design of side armour by reducing its weight. This saved weight can then be integrated into the rest of the vehicle, improving the overall performance with no additional penalty.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said:

It's been brilliant to be here at Dstl to see the science inside UK defence and security. Dstl's work gives Defence the edge in capability and decision-making, it creates prosperity, and crucially saves lives. I've been impressed by the breadth of activity, the depth of the technology, and the multi-disciplinary approach that ensures the Armed Forces, and importantly, the nation have a winning edge over those who want to do us harm.

Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, operating the Ghost Robot Dog alongside Dstl scientists

As well as the research, design, testing and support to the integration of new armour systems, Dstl scientists have also developed novel methods to capture and analyse information from the battlefield. This information is fed directly back into future armour system development, ensuring systems remain optimised to the changing operational environment. The Scene Capture And Reconstruction (SCAR) tool, developed by the Dstl's Combat Incident Exploitation Team, has recently been deployed with Dstl Scientific Advisers to benefit UK troops on the front line.

Dstl's Chief Executive, Paul Hollinshead, said:

It has been a great honour to have the Chief of the Defence Staff here so he can see, up close and behind the scenes, what Dstl does for the Armed Forces and Homeland Security. We have been able to share with him the impact and benefit of Dstl's work for our Armed Forces, both with our science to support decision-making, deliver capability to our Armed Forces and of course save lives. It has

filled me with huge pride to hear him say thank you to our incredible scientists and show his appreciation for what they do for the nation.

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[Supporting the levelling up agenda](#)

News story

We work with government departments to explore and assess policies against the levelling up agenda. This collaborative approach helps them to design better interventions.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has been working with government departments to explore how policies can be assessed against the levelling up agenda.

The government's high-profile paper [White Paper](#) on the levelling up agenda sets out the principles of spreading opportunity more equally across the country.

Progress will be measured using 12 long-term 'missions' which span multiple government departments and relate to topics such as education, health, and housing.

Mapping the country

GAD works with government departments to assess how policies can best effect the levelling up principles in specific geographical areas. If the policy results in new funding being channelled to more deprived areas, that can provide evidence of support for the levelling up agenda.

An example solution is based on publicly available data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Their series of [deprivation indices](#) can be mapped to many of the long-term missions.

These indices are built up from small geographic areas – Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOA). There are approximately 30,000 in England. Each LSOA is ranked according to its index score, and these rankings are used to split the country into 10 equally sized categories (or deciles).

The diagram provides a visual summary of the levelling up challenge in England. The areas in red are ranked as the most deprived.

Better interventions

This collaborative approach between GAD and other government departments allows departments to assess policies against deprivation. It helps them to design better interventions that support the levelling up agenda.

Project lead Matt Kirkpatrick said: “We’re working closely with clients on this key government policy. We provide support by using our actuarial skills to help them assess the effectiveness of their policies in line with the levelling up agenda”

GAD continues to support government clients on this policy. As a result, we build up intelligence on which policy mechanisms are likely to encourage the distribution of funds to the areas which need them most.

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[Number of ex-offenders in work picks up speed due to turbo-charged push to cut crime](#)

The number of ex-prisoners in work has increased dramatically following the Deputy Prime Minister’s drive to make our streets safer, cut crime and protect the public by getting offenders skilled up while behind bars.

Over the last year, the proportion of ex-offenders in work 6 weeks after release increased by more than half – with tough new targets on employment to be introduced for prison chiefs.

As part of the push, the Deputy Prime Minister was joined by four-time Formula One world champion, Sebastian Vettel, at HMPYOI Feltham, London,

today to open a new car workshop that'll train up young offenders in auto maintenance and repair – helping them make the move from prisons to pistons on release.

Evidence shows that getting prisoners into work while behind bars works, with job waiting for them back in the community on release are significantly less likely to go on to reoffend.

And 9 out of 10 employers who have taken on ex-prisoners say they are 'motivated, reliable, good at their job and trustworthy' – making it a win-win all round.

Deputy Prime Minister, Dominic Raab, said:

Getting prisoners into work is a crucial way to reduce reoffending – which is why game-changing initiatives like the mechanics' workshop at HMYOI Feltham are so important.

Together with abstinence-based drug treatment and facilities to maintain family ties, our prisons are turning offenders away from a life of crime – cutting crime and protecting the public.

Sebastian Vettel said:

I believe teaching useful skills, such as car mechanics, is a great way to help rehabilitate young people who have made mistakes in their past. It should not be the case that teenagers are written off at such a young age.

This workshop means that these youngsters, when released, will have a chance to take a new direction in life and can make a valuable contribution to society.

The Prisons White Paper – the Deputy Prime Minister's strategy to reduce reoffending and keep the public safe – puts a laser sharp focus in getting prisoners into work both behind bars and on release, with new individual targets for prison governors.

And in March, 20 big-name businesses including Lotus Cars and Sodexo pledged to head up new Employment Advisory Boards in prisons – acting as a link between jails and employers to make sure offenders use their time in jail to gain the skills they need to head straight into work on release.

Over the next 2 years we will also:

- Hire new education, work and skills specialists to improve education and training in prisons on offer to get more offenders into work on release
- Set up a new work innovation fund to support prisons in working with more employers to and meet the needs of local businesses and the economy

and smooth the path from prison to employment

- Overhaul literary education in prisons to improve the reading and writing of all offenders so they are better placed to get a job

Notes to editors

New figures [published today](#) show:

- The proportion of persons released from custody employed at six weeks from their release rose by 6 percentage points to 16% between April 2021 and March 2022. This is an increase of more than half (57%).
- The proportion of persons released from custody employed at six months from their release rose by 9 percentage points to 23% between April 2021 and March 2022. This is an increase of almost two thirds (66%)

Northern Irish start-up beats established competitors to win transformative export contract

Press release

Northern Ireland-based Circular Group used the General Export Facility from UK Export Finance to secure a major £4m competitive contract



- The finance from UK Export Finance and HSBC UK helped them secure a £4m contract beating off competition from larger, more established businesses.
- The Northern Irish start-up is now looking to expand to new markets in North America, Europe and Asia, with exports expected to soar to 75% over the next 36 months.
- Circular Group's wet processing systems are environmentally friendly, maximising natural resources such as natural sand & aggregates – helping to extend reserves of this finite material for future generations

A Northern Irish-based start-up has secured a major recycling contract, on the back of a £2.1m support package from HSBC UK with an 80% guarantee from UK Export Finance (UKEF). The business is now seeking to expand across North America, Europe and Asia and create extra jobs in Northern Ireland and key export markets.

Circular Group designs, manufactures, delivers and installs systems for the sand, aggregates and construction and demolition waste recycling sectors – with the latter re-directing significant volumes of waste from landfill and reprocessing into valuable sand and aggregates for commercial resale. Launching in March 2020, just as the pandemic took hold, Circular Group was given the opportunity to tender for a £4 million contract.

Up against three established companies, Circular Group's innovative approach, coupled with the most advanced technology on the market put them in pole position. As part of the tender process the end customer required advance payment guarantees to form part of the purchase contract. Circular Group quickly approached HSBC and UKEF for support, given the company's limited trading history. Circular Group was able to secure the contract with the support of UKEF's [General Export Facility \(GEF\)](#). The Group is now looking to new global export markets and expects the export portion of its revenue to grow to 75% in the next 36 months.

Sand is the world's second most-used raw material after water – the UN estimates as much as 40 billion tonnes is extracted and consumed globally per year in the construction industry alone. However, sand mining is having a major impact on rivers, and coastal and marine ecosystems. Wet processing construction waste that is currently directed to landfill produces commercial grade sand from construction waste, thus protecting the natural reserves of this resource for future generations.

Liz McCrory, UKEF Export Finance Manager for Northern Ireland said:

Highly advanced, innovative systems like that produced by Circular Group are crucial in protecting our planet's natural reserves for future generations.

The fact that it could stand its ground in a highly competitive market demonstrates the strength of its proposition. With GEF support it's incredible to see this start-up now ready to expand around the world and help more countries in their efforts to drive a more sustainable future.

Eoin Heron, co-owner of Circular Group said:

We are passionate about promoting a circular economy and protecting

our environment for future generations. The support from UKEF and the GEF facility has been a genuine game-changer. By ensuring we could be a serious contender for a major project, it helped our business unlock multi-million-pound contracts, grow exponentially in a relatively short time, and create more jobs in the process.

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