

News story: Hurricane Irma: Overseas Territories Minister visits the Turks and Caicos Islands

Visiting Grand Turk today, the Minister for the Overseas Territories, Lord Ahmad said:

I'm in Grand Turk which is the capital of Turks and Caicos and I'm seeing first-hand, with the Premier, with the Governor, the devastation of Hurricane Irma.

There's parts of Turks and Caicos where it's really heartening to see that the community spirit has kicked in, and already reconstruction has started. But as you can see around me here in the capital, in some of the more challenged parts of Turks and Caicos right here in Grand Turk, there's plenty of work to be done. And that means that the military support we've been giving, and also more importantly the reconstruction effort needs to kick in straight away.

And that's the kind of things I've been seeing, so thank you for all those who are doing what they're doing, the military, the DFID teams, but also the government here in Turks and Caicos and the excellent team around the Governor, but equally it's important that we underline the importance of what's next, the reconstruction of what is the capital of a great island.

Press release: Environment Secretary meets Scottish industry leaders on the future of UK farming and fishing

Environment Secretary Michael Gove met Scottish farming and fishing leaders today to discuss the future of their industries outside the EU.

Representatives from across the Scottish farming and fish processing sectors attended the meetings with the Secretary of State at Aberdeen's James Hutton Institute, a hub for environmental and farming innovation.

The meetings focused on the specific opportunities and challenges facing Scottish farmers and fishing businesses as we prepare to leave the EU.

Farming groups including NFU Scotland, the Scottish Food and Drink Federation

and the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association attended to share their ambitions and expectations for future farming policy.

And in a further meeting, representatives from the Scottish Seafood Association, Associated Seafoods and a wealth of processing companies set out their desires for future trade and the needs of the Scottish supply chain.

The meetings also focused on how Scotland's entrepreneurial farmers and fishermen can make the best use of innovation and new technology to boost productivity.

Speaking after the meetings, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Aberdeen is a city extremely close to my heart and one with proud traditions in both farming and fishing. Both industries are part of the fabric of daily life for so many people in the North East, but they are also vitally important for the local and national economies, together contributing over £10 billion. I'm determined to see them go from strength to strength outside the EU.

Today's discussions were very productive and helpful as we take forward this once in a lifetime opportunity to design a new approach that can deliver a brighter future for Scottish farmers and fishermen.

There are undoubtedly challenges ahead, but if we work together I believe there can be great rewards. I'm committed to working with the Scottish farming and fishing industries to make sure we secure a smooth transition and grasp the opportunities that leaving the EU presents.

The roundtables held today are part of a series of ongoing engagements across all parts of the UK ahead of EU exit.

Speech: Minister for the Constitution announced National Democracy Week 2018

Thank you all for coming today.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the International Day of Democracy by the United Nations General Assembly.

In November 2007, the Assembly resolved that the 15th of September should be marked as an International Day of Democracy, with all member states invited to commemorate the day in an appropriate manner that contributes to raising

public awareness of democracy.

I thought it would be fitting for us to meet here today, not only to share with each other what progress has been made over the past year in promoting democratic engagement and participation across the United Kingdom, but to recognise that the promotion of the importance of democracy cannot be achieved by government alone.

Indeed, the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2007, noted that there was a 'central role' for the 'active involvement of civil society organisations' in celebrating and promoting democracy, equality and freedom.

I recognise too the crucial role that you and your organisations here today play in creating what should be termed as our Democratic Society.

Which is why I have invited Women's Aid and Mencap to share their experience of working with Government to ensure all voices can be heard. I am very pleased that Sian Hawkins from Women's Aid and Matthew Harrison and Ismail Kaji from Mencap are able to join us today to discuss the progress we have made on the anonymous registration process and the steps we are taking to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Speakers:

- Women's Aid – anonymous registration
- Mencap – call for evidence on accessibility to elections

Thank you both, your work is not only valued– it is vitally important that we should continue to work together in partnership, as we continue our pursuit of increased democratic participation. We all know that this work cannot stand still.

It does not begin or end in the run up to and at the end of an electoral cycle. It must be sustained and be seen to be sustainable, if we are to ensure that as a society, our democratic processes are to be safeguarded and confidence in our democracy renewed.

Since I was appointed the Minister for the Constitution over a year ago, I have had the opportunity of not only meeting many of you personally, either at the many ministerial roundtables that I have held in the Cabinet Office, or on my Every Voice Matters tour that has taken me across every region and devolved nation; I have also had the privilege of working with you in our common and shared goal.

That endeavour, simply expressed, has been to ensure that, regardless of background, gender, disability or race, we all want the maximum number of citizens who are eligible to vote, to register to do so and to have their say at the ballot box.

And I have been grateful to charities and civil society organisations such as Bite the Ballot, Patchwork Foundation, the Citizenship Foundation, Voices 4 Change here today – to name but a few, who have not only given their time and

effort to attend the several roundtable discussions that I have held in the Cabinet Office, helping to shape our plans for what more can be done to improve and increase democratic engagement, but have also worked hard to demonstrate what can be done, and what new approaches can be taken, to reach out to those groups in society who are under-registered, and do not participate in our elections.

All of you have done so much to give a voice to the voiceless; your passion and energy for what you do and have achieved has been clearly evident to me, and I hope that we continue to work together in our shared activity of ensuring that we have a democracy that works for everyone.

Next year, we will celebrate the centenary of women getting the right to vote, with the passing of the Representation of the People Act on 6 February 1918.

Not an equal right to vote—importantly, that would only come ten years later, when in July 1928, the Equal Franchise Act was passed. Even so, this milestone in our democratic history increased the proportion of adults qualified to vote from 28% to 78% and opened the door to the modern democratic age.

Whilst we can talk of our democratic system being one of the oldest in the world, revere our institution of Parliament and traditions of freedom enshrined in documents such as Magna Carta, the fact that we will be celebrating the fact that the equal franchise was created only 90 years ago, highlights that our modern democracy is in fact a very new one.

The Government has already confirmed that it intends to mark the Suffrage Centenary with the significant investment of £5 million, announced by the Chancellor at the last budget. Cabinet Office are proud to be collaborating with the Government Equalities Office who are leading on this work, and I know that further announcements will be made in due course on how the government intends to both commemorate and celebrate the achievement of women getting the right to vote.

It is an achievement we must never forget, for their struggle against the burning injustice of their situation demonstrates how fortunate we are in a modern democracy to live with the democratic freedoms that are ours today. Many in the world still do not, and it is right that the International Day of Democracy today gives all democracies in the world the opportunity to reflect upon the importance of our values, often taken for granted.

For myself, the legacy of the past, of the achievements of those women who fought tirelessly for the vote and to have their say, must also be reflected in our commitment to the future.

A commitment to future generations, to ensure that the importance of the vote and each individual voice is never eroded; a commitment to those vulnerable groups and people who find that there are still barriers that prevent them from participating in our democracy; and a commitment to ensuring that as a democratic society, though we recognise our differences are part of a healthy democracy, that should not prevent us from coming together to promote a

democracy where every voice matters.

That is why I am delighted that you have been able to join me as I announce today that next year, in the 90th anniversary year of the establishment of the Equal Franchise, the Government intends to establish a new National Democracy Week.

I aim to establish this as an annual event of national significance, with the inaugural week taking place from 2-6 July 2018, in commemoration of the passing of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act on 2 July. In its first year National Democracy Week will complement the Suffrage Centenary Programme, expanding on the themes of inclusion and representation that underpinned women's struggle for their right to vote.

My ambition is for National Democracy Week to increase the number of people who understand and take part in our democratic process. This includes those who feel excluded from the democratic debate, face barriers to participation and are less likely to be registered to vote.

Many of our partners have told us a focused week of activity is needed to help amplify their messages and build on the momentum of democratic participation in our most recent electoral events.

There will be many opportunities for organisations from all sectors to take part and I am confident that the creativity, enthusiasm and experience of our partners will be vital in helping achieve our shared objective of a democracy that works for everyone. That is why I believe that stakeholders should have a key role in National Democracy Week and we will announce in due course our plans for formal involvement.

In the meantime I welcome your ideas for making National Democracy Week 2018 a success and look forward to discussing these with you. We can make a start today: please take a moment if you can to share your first thoughts using the board behind you.

As we plan ahead, I hope to obtain cross party support for National Democracy Week. I have spoken with the shadow spokesperson on voter engagement, who is happy to support the event in principle, while I am also delighted that the Speaker for the House of Commons has also given his backing. I hope that all MPs, indeed all elected representatives, regardless of their political party, will feel able to get involved in National Democracy Week, and I will be actively encouraging them to do so.

It is vital that we recognise that when it comes to our democracy and increasing democratic participation, while we as politicians and political parties may disagree on details of policy, we do, in the words of Jo Cox, have more in common than that which divides us. It is in the spirit of those words that I hope everyone who is part of our Democratic Society, regardless of their political allegiance, will embrace National Democracy Week.

Thank you.

[News story: Hurricane Irma: UK government response in numbers, 15 September 2017](#)

From:

[Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#), [Department for International Development](#), [Home Office](#), [Ministry of Defence](#), and [Public Health England](#)

Part of:

[British nationals overseas](#), [UK Overseas Territories](#), [Humanitarian emergencies](#), [Anguilla](#), [Barbados](#)

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Facts and figures on the UK government's relief work in the Caribbean and the British Overseas Territories in response to Hurricane Irma.

Military

Naval

- RFA Mounts Bay, pre-stationed in the region, provided initial assistance to Anguilla to clear the runway. It then continued to British Virgin Islands to establish security of supplies, and fix basic infrastructure and shelter to people. After travelling to US Virgin Islands to resupply, she returned to Anguilla to deliver reconstruction materials and arrived in the British Virgin Islands on Tuesday with further supplies and delivered humanitarian aid and disaster relief on Wednesday.
- On Tuesday night, HMS Ocean embarked on the 10-day journey to the Caribbean to provide further support to those affected by the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma. She is carrying 60 pallets of emergency relief stores to assist with the longer term recovery effort, including plywood, timber and construction equipment, as well as 200 pallets of Department for International Development (DFID) aid. This includes 5,000 hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and a torch, 10,000 buckets and 504,000 aquatabs.

Aircraft

- Over 200 personnel arrived on Tuesday 12 September, including stabilisation advisers, medical support and military.
- Over 200 military personnel arrived in Barbados on Wednesday 13 September
- We have 1 Wildcat Helicopter with Mounts Bay and 2 RAF Puma aircraft currently operating in the region.
- A third Puma helicopter has arrived in the Caribbean ready to assist in transporting personnel and aid, as well as a Voyager plane which transported 80 personnel from the Lead Commando Group.
- A C-130J and A400M has been making shuttles from Barbados to required destinations across the region to deliver key support, including British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Anguilla.
- One Antonov cargo plane with supplies arrived on Tuesday 12 September.
- The UK continues to work closely alongside international partners. Following a request for assistance from French President Emmanuel Macron, an RAF C-17 arrived in France to provide heavy-lift support to French aid efforts in the Caribbean. Equipment and vehicles including a tipper truck, digger and a specialist bulldozer were loaded aboard for transportation to Guadeloupe, and the aircraft arrived yesterday

Personnel

- There are now over 1,100 UK military personnel in the Caribbean region.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) staff and consular expertise

- FCO Rapid Deployment Teams (including Red Cross support) are in the region in 8 locations (British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos Islands, Curacao, Puerto Rico, St Maarten, Guadalupe, Barbados).
- Consular staff have been deployed to Curacao and Guadeloupe to help British nationals evacuated there and we now have a Rapid Deployment Team in Sint Maarten to provide further assistance.
- Consular teams in Cuba and the US are working closely with tour operators and local authorities to ensure British nationals are getting the support they need.
- The dedicated crisis hotline has so far taken almost 2,700 calls.
- Public Health England is sending 3 specialist staff to work with the Chief Medical Officers of the territories to help assess the risks to public health from the damaged infrastructure and disruption to health and social services.
- Lord Ahmad, Minister for the Caribbean, Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth, arrived in the Turks and Caicos Islands on Thursday 14 September. He met the Governor, Premier, and Deputy Premier.
- On Thursday 14 September the Foreign Secretary hosted discussions with the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the French Deputy Foreign Minister Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne on the response to Hurricane Irma.
- The Foreign and Development Secretaries will be leading an event at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Monday to discuss the impact

of Hurricane Irma on the Caribbean, the response, and to discuss present and future support.

- Throughout we are working closely with the governments in the Overseas Territories, who are leading most areas of restoration. We are working closely with commercial partners in seeking local and regional solutions.

Police

- Over 60 UK police deployed to the region, in addition to 16 Caymanian police and 6 Bermudian Police

Aid

- £32 million already announced for disaster relief with a further £25million committed.
 - The government has made £2.5 million available to the Pan American Health Organisation to ensure critical health services are provided in the region, and to reduce the risk of disease spreading. This is part of the initial £32 million pledged.
- UK government will aid match public donations to the Red Cross appeal up to £3 million, and so far the British public have helped raise £1.3million, with the UK government matching the £650,000 of private donations.
- DFID Field Teams have been sent to British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, Antigua, Barbados and the Dominican Republic.
- Over 60 metric tonnes of DFID aid has now arrived and is being distributed across the region, including nearly 3,000 shelter kits, which can provide shelter for over 13,000 people and 4,990 solar lanterns (which can provide light and power for over 20,000 people), and over 8,000 buckets.
- HMS Ocean has been loaded with 5,000 hygiene kits, 10,000 buckets and 500,000 Aquatabs, all UK aid funded.
- 9 tonnes of food and water procured locally on Monday 11 September for onward delivery. Thousands more shelter kits and buckets are on the way from UK shortly.
- The UK has helped to distribute water bottles to 700 of the most vulnerable households affected by Hurricane Irma on the British Virgin Islands.
- The UK government is being supported by companies in the private sector, including:
 - Thomson and Thomas Cook who have delivered over 8,000 buckets on commercial flights
 - Virgin, who offered free transport to dispatch relief items including nearly 2,000 shelter kits, to Antigua on Tuesday.

Assisted departure

- The UK is working hard to provide support in every way it can. We are now making urgent arrangements to help the most vulnerable people

affected in this crisis to leave the islands of British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Anguilla and St Martin as soon as possible. FCO staff both in London and in the region are working with the governments of the territories and putting every effort into identifying and locating vulnerable people, both British and foreign nationals.

- We have arranged military-assisted departures for a number of eligible persons from the British Virgin Islands and are planning military-assisted departures for further vulnerable eligible persons in the other affected Overseas Territories.
- Military flights will then transfer these people to Barbados from where they will be able to access urgent medical treatment, if needed, and make arrangements for onward travel. To help those most vulnerable people, we are exceptionally waiving the fees for replacing emergency travel documents.
- We continue to identify and contact the most vulnerable affected persons, ahead of military flights from Grand Turk, Providenciales, Tortola, and St Martin on 15 September

Breakdown by Islands

British Virgin Islands

Military

- Royal Marines from RFA Mounts Bay have got the airfield operating so we can get more aid and personnel in.
- Over 200 troops are on the ground – including engineers, medics and marines who are working with the local police to provide security

Police

- 16 Caymanian police and 6 Bermudian deployed to assist with security.
- There are currently 54 UK police officers on BVI to support law and order.
- An operation run by British Virgin Island and Cayman Island police officers, alongside the British Royal Marines and police, resulted in the capture of over 100 escaped criminals from Balsam Ghut prison.

Aid

- 5 tonnes of food and water has been transferred to the British Virgin Islands. A flight carrying 3 tonnes of food and water arrived in the British Virgin Islands. This much-needed aid has already been distributed on Tortola alongside 40 shelters in Road Town.
- 640 shelter kits are in transit via the RAF

FCO and consular support

- The UK is assisting the British Virgin Islands government in providing support to affected people of all nationalities.
- FCO media officer on the ground to support the Governor's office. Additional 4 consular officers and 1 IT support officer have been

deployed.

Anguilla

Military

- RFA Mounts Bay delivered 6 tonnes of emergency aid; rebuilt and secured the Emergency Operations Centre; restored power to the hospital. Over 70 military personnel and 4 police officers are on the ground. Aid
- We have delivered an initial 9 tonnes of relief aid, food and water.
- We have procured a generator to restore the water treatment plant and further generators are being procured to return power to public buildings.
- DFID has deployed a team that includes 2 humanitarian advisors to support relief efforts, working alongside 3 FCO officers.

Consular support

- Anguilla has not requested UK consular support. The local government is leading on this. One IT support officer on the ground.
- Cayman Islands government is arranging a 736-100 aircraft to deliver personnel and equipment (including medical equipment) to Anguilla.

Turks and Caicos

Military

- Over 120 military personnel are on the ground.
- 30 troops from the Bermudian regiment will arrive by Saturday.

Aid

- DFID has deployed a field team to support relief efforts. Two humanitarian advisors are already on the island.
- On Thursday 15 September a flight carrying aid reached Turks and Caicos Islands delivering over 150 shelter kits and 720 litres of water

Consular support

St Martin

Consular support

- We have over 60 British nationals on both Dutch and French St Maarten including some requiring urgent medical attention. Over 50 British nationals have been assisted to leave.

USA

Consular support

- We are regularly updating our travel advice.
- The Foreign Secretary has spoken to Governor of Florida Rick Scott.

Document information

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[Press release: PM call with US President Trump: 15 September 2017](#)

A Downing Street Spokesperson said:

President Trump called the Prime Minister earlier today to offer his condolences over this morning's cowardly attack in London.

They also discussed North Korea's latest missile test, agreeing it was a reckless provocation and that China must now use all its leverage to bring pressure to bear on the North Korean regime to ensure they change course and end these illegal tests.