

News story: Female engineers play a vital role in Britain's transport industry

Transport Minister John Hayes met with female engineers at Waterloo Station to mark International Women in Engineering Day and to discuss their vital role in Britain's transport industry.

The minister met 7 engineers working across a number of Network Rail projects to find out about their work and their experiences in the industry.

Today (23 June 2017) is International Women in Engineering Day, which aims to raise the profile of women in engineering around the world and focus attention on the exciting career opportunities available to women in the industry.

Transport Minister John Hayes said:

At a time when we need more skills to make our transport infrastructure the best in the world, just 12% of people in the UK engineering industry are women. This is unacceptable and means we are missing so much talent and so much potential in this crucial field.

So to meet women who are so enthusiastic about their careers in the transport industry is as inspiring as it is meaningful. Female engineers can and will play a vital role as we deliver unprecedented investment in transport infrastructure over the coming years.

I am determined to draw on female talent in the transport sector because it is right to attract the best and brightest people. We need more high calibre women to join, and I encourage young women to rise to this challenge; to choose an exciting career in engineering. They will build Britain's future.

Charlotte Cove, Engineer at Network Rail said:

I got into engineering because my dad encouraged me. I went to an all girl's school and didn't have much support when it came to considering the right GCSE and A level choices to become an engineer – I was very lucky to have my dad and his engineering contacts.

I know that there is a perception among girls that engineers get dirty and wield spanners and screwdrivers all day – that's not what

I do, I'm more likely to have a pen and calculator in my hand.

I would strongly recommend engineering as a profession to all girls, simply because it's such a fulfilling career; it's stable, well-paid and you get so much respect from your colleagues. It fulfils your creative side as well.

The minister discussed the upcoming Year of Engineering campaign, which begins next year and will showcase the breadth of careers available to young people in engineering, as well as highlight the government's focus on encouraging more girls to become engineers.

The Network Rail engineers spoke with the minister about their paths into the transport sector; including what inspired them to pursue careers in engineering and their experiences at school and university. They advocated the diverse range of work, and the daily opportunities to be creative and problem-solve. They also discussed what could be done across the sector to encourage more women to pursue engineering roles, such as increasing liaison with schools to raise the profile of engineering with girls at a young age.

Speech: "Questions on the British Indian Ocean Territory have long been a bilateral matter between the UK and Mauritius. "

Thank you Mr President.

Last September, Mr President, you asked the United Kingdom and Mauritius to engage in bilateral talks about the Chagos Archipelago, which the United Kingdom administers as the British Indian Ocean Territory. We have done that in good faith. Only this week, our new Minister for the United Nations, Lord Ahmad, flew to New York to continue the bilateral dialogue and to meet the Minister Mentor of Mauritius, whose eloquent speech we have just heard.

You were right, Mr President, to ask us to talk bilaterally – we should, as a rule, talk bilaterally to try to settle bilateral differences, and questions on the British Indian Ocean Territory have long been a bilateral matter between the UK and Mauritius. And we firmly hold that these questions should remain a bilateral matter.

So I regret that this issue has come to the General Assembly. It saddens us that a dispute between two UN members, two Commonwealth partners, should have reached this Chamber in this way. A more constructive path is still available

and I call for the withdrawal of this draft resolution to keep that path open.

Despite the terms of the draft resolution, this is not a matter of decolonisation. Mauritius became independent in 1968, through mutual agreement between the Council of Ministers of Mauritius and the UK Government. In separate talks with the Council of Ministers, Mauritius had earlier accepted the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago: an agreement that Mauritius continued to respect until the 1980s. The General Assembly has not discussed this matter for decades.

And yet, here we are today, returning to this issue. Just think: how many other bilateral disputes left over from history could be brought before the General Assembly in this way? The present draft resolution could set a precedent that many of you in this hall could come to regret.

We do not doubt the right of the General Assembly to ask the ICJ for an advisory opinion on any legal question. But the fact that the General Assembly has not concerned itself with this matter for decades shows that today's debate has been called for other reasons.

Put simply, Mr President, the request for an advisory opinion is an attempt by the Government of Mauritius to circumvent a vital principle: the principle that a State is not obliged to have its bilateral disputes submitted for judicial settlement without its consent. And let me be clear: we do not and we would not give that consent, because we are clear about what was agreed with Mauritius.

If the draft resolution were passed, the Court would, of course, have to decide whether it could properly respond to the request. Our view is that it could not do so, as it concerns a bilateral dispute between two member states.

Many of you here today have told us privately that you too see this as bilateral business and have urged us to use bilateral means to resolve it. So in turn, let me urge all of you who have told us this – and not only you – to vote against the draft resolution today. In particular, any of you planning to abstain because this is bilateral, please vote no precisely because this is bilateral.

We have made every constructive effort to engage and encourage the Government of Mauritius not to proceed with this plenary meeting today. Precisely because it is a bilateral matter, we entered into bilateral talks in good faith, determined to make them work.

Since September, we have had three substantive rounds of talks, and as I said we held discussions with Mauritius at Ministerial level here in New York this week. Despite every effort by the UK, we have not yet succeeded in bridging the differences between us. I regret this, but we remain committed to bilateral discussion.

This Assembly should also know that we have made significant offers to

Mauritius. In 1965, we made a binding commitment to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, when the archipelago is no longer needed for defence purposes. In the recent bilateral talks, our offers to Mauritius signalled very clearly that we acknowledge Mauritius's long-term interest in the archipelago. And we used the talks to try to increase mutual confidence between us, on those very matters that divide us.

So we offered, without prejudice to our sovereignty, a framework for the joint management, in environment and scientific study, of all the islands of the territory except for Diego Garcia. And we offered strategic and tactical forms of bilateral security co-operation. These offers were relevant to the dispute and were seriously made. I regret that Mauritius did not engage on them, because they could have made a big difference to our mutual confidence, and they would give Mauritius a more tangible and direct stake in the archipelago than it has ever had.

It was a surprise to us, Mr President, to see that the draft Resolution links the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago, the Chagossians, with our sovereignty. It's a surprise, because Mauritius has not made more than a passing reference to the cause of Chagossians during all our bilateral talks. The Mauritian focus throughout the talks was its demand for a transfer of sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the welfare of Chagossians is an extremely important matter and a real concern to us, and I want to be clear about my Government's position.

Like successive Governments before it, the present UK Government has expressed sincere regret about the manner in which Chagossians were removed from the British Indian Ocean Territory in the late 1960s and early 1970s. And we have shown that regret through practical action and support for the Chagossians ever since. In 1973, the then British Government gave funds directly to the Government of Mauritius to assist with their resettlement. In 1982, a further payment was made through a trust fund.

More recently, we have considered very closely the matter of resettlement. We commissioned an independent feasibility study and undertook a public consultation. These found that there is an aspiration among some Chagossian communities for resettlement, but demand appears to fall substantially when those consulted understand more about the likely conditions of civilian life on what are very remote and low-lying islands.

The Government has considered all the available information and has decided against resettlement on the grounds of feasibility; cost; and defence and security interests. While we have ruled out resettlement, we are determined to address the Chagossians' desire for better lives; their desire for connections with the territory. So, we are implementing a 50 million US dollar support package, which is being designed to improve Chagossian livelihoods in the communities where they now live: in Mauritius, the Seychelles and the UK.

We have already consulted Chagossian groups in all three countries and will continue to do so.

As I say, Mr President, the Mauritian focus throughout the talks has not been the Chagossians, but Mauritius's claim for sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. The Government of Mauritius has repeatedly pressed us to specify a date for the transfer of sovereignty. We have explained to them why we cannot do this. We made an agreement in 1965 and the UK is standing by that agreement.

We created the British Indian Ocean Territory for defence purposes, and in 1966, concluded an agreement with the United States of America for joint defence use of the territory. The extensive facilities that have since been established, are primarily used as a forward operating location for aircraft and ships, and they make an essential contribution to regional and global security and stability. Moreover, they contribute to guaranteeing the security of the Indian Ocean itself, from which all neighbouring states benefit, including Mauritius. The facilities play a critical role in combating some of the most difficult and urgent problems of the 21st century, such as terrorism, international criminality, piracy and instability in its many forms.

Our current agreement with the United States lasts until 2036. We cannot, 19 years away, predict exactly what our defence purposes will require beyond that date. We should not and will not make arbitrary, or ill-informed, or premature decisions. We cannot gamble with the future of regional and global security. Mauritius's attempted assurances on the base's future lack credibility. In contrast, the UK stands by its commitment. When we no longer need the territory for defence purposes, sovereignty will pass. That, by the way, is exactly what we did in relation to the very similar agreement reached with the Seychelles in 1965. We ceded sovereignty of islands to the Seychelles when we no longer needed them for defence purposes.

In our dealings with Mauritius, we have tried to set out bilateral relations on a positive, future path, rather than focus on the past. But we should be clear about the past. The simple fact is that we negotiated the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago with the elected representatives of Mauritius – the same people with whom we were, separately, negotiating the independence of Mauritius. The representatives of the Mauritian people had authority to negotiate with us in both negotiations, and in both cases they reached agreements with us.

On the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago, they negotiated first, compensation, which we paid; second, various rights for Mauritius; and third, this long-term commitment to cede the islands to Mauritius, when no longer needed for our defence purposes.

Our promise to cede sovereignty of the islands to Mauritius, when they are no longer needed for defence purposes, is not a sign that we lack confidence in our sovereignty. On the contrary, we were and we remain confident about our sovereignty. In its recent Arbitral Award, the UNCLOS Tribunal found that it had no jurisdiction to rule on Mauritius's sovereignty claim – contrary to what Mauritius has sought to imply in its notes to members of this Assembly.

In 1965, we undertook to cede the territory in due course because we were

setting it up for a specific purpose but could envisage a future situation in which the territory might no longer make a useful contribution to defence purposes. That moment has not yet come. The base is playing a vital role.

Until the moment does come and subsequently, we want to enjoy positive, and friendly, and constructive relations with the people and with the Government of Mauritius. We have much in common and many reasons to work together. For our part, we are always willing to sit down and talk to our partners about contentious, bilateral matters that divide us. Although our efforts so far have not been successful, I repeat that offer now to the Government of Mauritius. This is a bilateral matter for bilateral talks. It is not a matter for an advisory opinion to be given to the General Assembly.

The United Kingdom has always been and continues to be a strong upholder of international law. We are not opposing this Resolution because we have changed our principles, nor because we believe the rule of law does not apply in this case, rather we oppose this Resolution because referring a bilateral dispute to the ICJ is not the appropriate course of action.

So in conclusion, Mr President, for all of these reasons, we strongly oppose the draft Resolution. A request for an advisory opinion would be a distraction and, I fear, an obstacle to the path of bilateral talks, which is our preferred course of action. And it would set a terrible precedent, both for this Assembly and for the Court. If Mauritius will not withdraw it, I urge members to vote against the resolution.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: “Take the risk and have the drive to innovate”

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will call on businesses to take the risk and have the drive to innovate as he joins the leading lights of the Welsh electronics and software technologies industry at the Wales Technology Awards 2017 (22 June).

Delivering a keynote speech at the gala celebration at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay, Mr Cairns will say that there is “no easy path to prosperity” but that the “innovation and determination” of the Welsh tech sector can “deliver opportunities for economic growth of which we can all be proud.”

Speaking 24 hours after the State Opening of Parliament, Mr Cairns will reiterate the UK Government’s commitment to “creating and supporting the right conditions for industry so that the economy continues to grow.”

He will highlight the aims of the Modern Industrial Strategy and the work of the Government's innovation agency Innovate UK, which has awarded over £4million of grant funding to companies in the running for the Wales Technology Awards.

He will also underline the opportunities for Welsh businesses as Britain prepares to exit the European Union, and reaffirm his commitment to working with the Welsh Government to address the issues that matter most to people within the tech sector in Wales. He will say "whether devolved or non-devolved, I am determined that we should deliver for the people of Wales."

The Wales Technology Awards is the flagship event of the Wales Festival of Innovation (19-30 June), and celebrates excellence in the electronic and software technologies industry in Wales. It is an industry that employs approximately 39,000 people in over 3,000 companies that collectively generate a turnover of over £8.5billion.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The UK has a world-wide reputation for innovation, invention, research and development. It's one of our biggest strengths and one of the biggest drivers of growth. Not only can it revolutionise the way we live our lives, it can bring real opportunities for businesses to tap into and grow.

I want Wales to be at the centre of the new innovations that change the way we do business, the way we live and at the forefront of developing the solutions for tomorrow.

Innovate UK is the UK Government's innovation agency working with people, companies and partner organisations to help them do just that. I'm delighted to see them playing such an integral part in the Welsh Festival of Innovation.

I applaud the achievements of all those nominated this evening. I hope their success will inspire the innovators of the future to unleash their own ideas and deliver exciting opportunities across Wales, the UK and the world.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Innovate UK is the UK Government's innovation agency, working with people, companies and partner organisations to find and drive the science and technology innovations that will grow the UK economy.
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News story: Foreign Secretary statement on the appointment of a new UN SRSG for Libya

I welcome the appointment of Ghassan Salamé to the role of Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) for Libya and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Mr Salamé brings a wealth of experience from three decades in public service and academia, specialising in international relations and conflict resolution.

I would like to thank Martin Kobler for his hard work and dedication in the role of SRSG since November 2015, working tirelessly towards a better future for all Libyans.

The UK is at the forefront of international efforts to help bring the peace, stability and security that all Libyans deserve, which can only be achieved through an inclusive political deal within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement. Mr Salamé and his UN team will be central in achieving progress and I call on all Libyans and members of the international community to continue their full support for this important work.

News story: First ever memorial to African and Caribbean Service Personnel unveiled in Brixton.

Today (22nd June 2017) the first ever memorial to African and Caribbean servicemen and women was unveiled in a ceremony attended by Defence Secretary Michael Fallon and Mayor of London Sadiq Khan.

Speaking ahead of the event at Windrush Square, Brixton, where a new permanent memorial was unveiled, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The UK is indebted to all those servicemen and women from Africa and the Caribbean who volunteered to serve with Britain during the First and Second World Wars. It is thanks to their bravery and sacrifice that we are able to enjoy our freedoms today. We should also congratulate those who have worked tirelessly to place this memorial in the heart of Brixton.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The brave men and women commemorated today came from all walks of life but were bound together by their immense courage and determination.

Serving thousands of miles from home, they fought and fell with British soldiers to defend the freedoms we enjoy today, despite the majority never having visited this country.

We owe them all a tremendous debt of gratitude for their sacrifice and for the substantial contributions so many >veterans have made to enrich British life.

The Government has supported the monument by providing £80,000 worth of funding through the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Black Britons volunteered at recruitment centres to serve in the Army and Navy soon after Britain joined the First World War in August 1914. As the war pulled in volunteers from all four corners of the world, they were soon joined by volunteers from the Caribbean, many of whom paid for their own passage to fight for the "Mother Country". The West Indies not only contributed men to the war effort but people from the islands made significant donations despite significant economic hardship.

The British West Indies Regiment was enacted by Army Order in 1916, with the first battalion formed in Seaford, East Sussex. By the end of the war 11 battalions comprising over 15,000 soldiers – 66 % of whom came from Jamaica – had seen action, particularly in Palestine and Jordan. However, many men also fought in the European battlefields of France, Belgium and Italy, as well as in Egypt, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and East Africa. Altogether 2,500 were killed or wounded.

During the war servicemen from the unit received 81 medals for bravery, with 49 servicemen were mentioned in despatches.

55,000 men from Africa were recruited for military service and hundreds of thousands of others carried out vital roles, fundamental to sustaining the war effort as carriers or auxiliaries as part of the Labour Corps. They came from Nigeria, the Gambia, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), South Africa, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Nyasaland (now Malawi), Kenya and the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

While African troops did not see active service on the battlefields of Europe, they did fight in the Middle East and on the African continent. It is estimated that 10,000 Africans were killed with 166 receiving awards for bravery.

Jak Beula, CEO of the Nubian Jak Trust said:

More than 2 million African and Caribbean Military Servicemen and

Servicewomen's participated in WWI and WWII but have not been recognized for their contribution. The unveiling of this memorial is to correct this historical omission and to ensure young people of African and Caribbean descent are aware of the valuable input their forefathers had in the two world wars.

During the Second World War, forces from the British Commonwealth of Nations were active in all the major theatres of war. Some 16,000 men and women from the Caribbean left their families and homes to volunteer for the British Armed Forces.

Around 6,000 served with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force working as fighter pilots, technicians, air gunners and ground staff.

In addition thousands of West Indian seamen also served in the Merchant Navy, transporting cargo and people. This proved to be one of the most dangerous services during the Second World War with almost one third of all merchant seamen dying at sea.

West Indian women also served in Britain with the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), with 80 choosing to serve in the WAAF while around 30 joined the ATS. 236 Caribbean volunteers were killed or reported missing during the Second World War, 265 were wounded. Caribbean air force personnel received 103 awards for bravery.

Paul Reid, Director of the Black Cultural Archives said:

The histories of World Wars often overlook the significant contributions made by African and Caribbean soldiers. However, today we can proudly mark the recognition of their bravery and sacrifice to the struggles of independence.

As the national heritage centre dedicated to the preservation of Black history, we will continue to tell the stories of their service and to ensure their contributions and the legacy of this historical narrative becomes part of a more inclusive British history, and remains accessible to all through our archive collection.

Notes to Editors

1. June 22 is Windrush Day which marks the anniversary of the arrival into Tilbury Docks, Essex of the MV Empire Windrush and the first wave of post-war immigration, 69 years ago.
2. The memorial was devised by the Nubian Jak Community Trust (NJCT). The Trust runs a commemorative plaque and sculpture scheme to highlight the historic contributions of Black and minority ethnic people in Britain

and has led the three year campaign to honour servicemen and women from the First and Second World Wars.

3. The memorial comprises two obelisks in Scottish whinstone, resting on a 12 foot pyramid shaped plinth of Ancaster Limestone, weighing just over 5 tonnes.