

Russia's hostile information actions are frankly destabilising the international order

Many thanks indeed, Mr. Chair. And, our thanks to you and the bureau for convening this debate, and for all the work that you do to bring us together to discuss this very important issue of information.

Indeed, information and communications are critical – they shape what people know, what people believe, and often how people act. And it's important that we should recognise that. As we marked World Press Freedom Day yesterday, more than ever, we know the importance of verified information, and the reporting of facts, as the fundamental building blocks of free societies.

Indeed, we know that good journalism and freedom to report the news accurately and without fear is critical to good governance, and so in turn, critical to realising the ideals of the Charter. Conversely, we know that the rights and responsibilities set out in the Charter die in States where the truth is obscured by state propaganda and where media freedoms are denied.

Mr. Chairman, we commend the Under-Secretary-General for her leadership and the Department's innovations in response to the complex communications challenges facing us. We had a good discussion on this in our ad hoc seminar recently. We look forward to their stewardship of new initiatives like the Global Code of Conduct and of Integrity in Public Information, two critical projects. The increased engagement reported again this year goes hand in hand with the growing global demand for accurate, impartial and comprehensive information on the world's most pressing issues. People are looking to the UN now more than ever as a source of trusted information.

We also want to support those in this room who have called for effective multilingualism in that work, as so ably demonstrated just now by our Armenian colleague. The UN's communications prove that it can rise to the disinformation and misinformation challenges surrounding both the pandemic and the discourse around climate change, and we salute the work they've done in this area. There is an opportunity and a need to now expand those efforts to combat disinformation on crises and on conflicts.

This Committee has a duty to ensure that our guidance to the Department on Information is ready to challenge disinformation accurately and captures the reality on the ground in 2022. What is at stake is nothing less than the core principles of the Charter.

Yesterday, our Russian colleague, in response to a statement by another colleague in the room, told us that what was happening in Ukraine, and the communications around it, was not the business of this Committee. And in fact, he read to us the language from our mandate, and I just want to read what he said. He said, "I would like to remind delegates, and the colleagues

which support that delegates, that the founding documents of the Committee, which we discussed today, state that its priority goals are to promote establishing a more effective and robust world order in information and communications that will inform the world and international understanding, etc.”

Now, it's no surprise, Mr Chairman, that in reading us that mandate, our Russian colleague omitted a key part of that mandate as he read it to us, because, in fact, it says, 'more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding'. He dropped that phrase, and he dropped it because, as we know, our Russian colleagues like to bend the truth and fit it to their own purposes.

So, Mr Chair, we will raise Russian behaviour and communications around its invasion of Ukraine because we think that its behaviour in this space is indicative of its broader approach in communications and important to the work of this committee, because since launching its illegal war in Ukraine, the Kremlin's propaganda machine has been in overdrive. They have used hostile information operations to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty, to create false pretexts for invasion, to obscure the truth, and to hide war crimes.

And this offensive against the truth has global consequences, because Russian disinformation operations threaten to undermine public trust in both media and in public and international institutions.

Let's look at the facts because Putin wants the truth to be yet another casualty of this conflict. The Russian government said they would not invade Ukraine. They invaded Ukraine. They said they would not target civilian infrastructure. They have remorselessly attacked residential areas, schools, and hospitals – we've seen this with our own eyes. They told us, in the Security Council, that Ukraine had developed bioweapons on bats and birds and lice. The UN told us that there was no evidence for this whatsoever. The Russians said they would not harm civilians. Yet, we are seeing strong evidence of war crimes, including reports of mass graves and heinous atrocities in Bucha. And our Russian counterpart, who spoke today, has even used the Security Council's media stakeout to broadcast across the UN's own channels an accusation that the UN was spreading disinformation about the attack on the maternity hospital in Mariupol. We all know the appalling truth of what happened to that hospital.

Mr. Chairman, the Russian statement today was typical of its broader communications technique. It was laced with innuendo, but free of facts. Now, we all need to push back against this. And this week, the UK-funded research, has exposed a large scale Russian disinformation operation using a so called 'troll factory' that is paid to spread lies on social media and in comment sections on news websites and social media platforms including Telegram, Twitter, Facebook, and Tik Tok. Targets included audiences in the UK, but also in South Africa, and India, and the social media accounts of various world leaders. We've alerted the social media platforms and international partners to this.

Our Russian colleague complains about these social media platforms. Well, there's a reason that they don't get to broadcast on these platforms. It's because they have standards. For the same reason, in the UK, our organisation that looks after communications, independent to government, withdrew the broadcasting licence for RT. It's not because we don't like what RT says, it's because their standards of truth fall below an acceptable standard. And, I think anyone who's seen the broadcast news in the UK knows that our tolerance levels are pretty high. So, the troll factory is just one example, one example of many.

Russia's hostile information actions are frankly destabilising the international order, particularly when it comes to media, and when it comes to information. We must take steps to counter this. This matters because if they succeed, then we will fail.

So, it's our aim, Chairman, that through the work of this Committee, the leadership of DG Comms and collaboration with partners and the major platforms, we can mount a robust international response to disinformation and preserve the space for impartial and accurate reporting of the real threats and shared challenges that the UN was founded to address.

Mr. Chairman, anything less risks the very integrity of this organisation.

Thank you.

[Health and Social Care Secretary meets with Nottingham maternity review families](#)

- Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid met today with families involved in the Independent Thematic Review into Nottingham University Hospitals (NUH) maternity services
- He listened to and expressed understanding about their concerns about the review, and remains committed to driving improvements in care for women and babies
- NHS England confirms Julie Dent CBE has stepped down as Chair and is carefully considering next steps following engagement with families

The Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid today met with some of the families involved in the review of maternity care at Nottingham University Hospitals to listen to and understand their concerns.

All affected families have now been informed that Julie Dent has, for personal reasons, stepped down as Chair of the review.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with NHS England to put in place the right leadership to deliver an independent review to urgently bring about real change so that no families have to go through the same pain in the future.

Building on the discussions the Secretary of State had with some families today and on the feedback received so far, all affected families will be contacted by the NHS setting out next steps.

The NHS recognises there is more to do to improve the engagement and communication with families, and this is a priority as a new review process is established.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Today, I met with families to listen and understand their concerns about the review into maternity services at Nottingham University Hospitals. My sympathies remain with all those tragically affected by these harrowing failures and I acknowledge the courage and strength shown by all.

It is crucial that the best possible leadership is in place to deliver an independent review that leads to real change, and I am working with the NHS to deliver on this and ensure no families have to go through the same pain again.

The NHS remains committed to ensuring that the experiences of families, any themes identified across maternity safety incidents, and concerns raised, all drive rapid improvements in care for women and babies in Nottingham.

Maternal patient safety failings are taken extremely seriously, and this is why the NHS is investing £127 million in maternity services to help increase the workforce and improve neonatal care, on top of £95 million to recruit 1,200 midwives and 100 consultant obstetricians.

Funding of £500,000 is also being invested in innovative NHS maternity leadership training. This will run alongside a new core curriculum for professionals working in maternity and neonatal services is being developed by the Maternity Transformation Programme in partnership with professional organisations, clinicians and service users to address variations in skills and safety training across England. This will help the workforce to bring a consistent set of updated safety skills as they move between services and Trusts.

In addition, the Health and Social Care Secretary and NHS have accepted Donna Ockenden's recommendations from the independent review of maternity services at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, and the NHS is now considering how to implement them at both a national and local level.

Trade Ministers' Meeting on Economic and Trade Support for Ukraine

News story

A statement by the Right Honourable Anne Marie Trevelyan MP, Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade, in her capacity as Chair of the 4 May 2022 Ukraine Economic & Trade Support Trade Ministers' Meeting, on behalf of the United Kingdom and its partners.



Chair's Statement

1. The United Kingdom convened a virtual Trade Ministers' meeting on 4 May 2022, chaired by the Rt. Hon. Anne Marie Trevelyan MP, Secretary of State for International Trade. The United Kingdom called on international allies and partners to work together to support Ukraine's fight against Putin's brutal and unprovoked invasion and help ensure the long-term security and prosperity of Ukraine.
2. Today's meeting brought together a broad coalition of countries to demonstrate their support for Ukraine and explore options to help Ukraine, in particular its trade and economy. Countries who attended were Ukraine, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
3. Ukraine's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, Yulia Svyrydenko, provided an update on the present situation, outlined Ukraine's immediate and future needs, and explained how best the international community can support Ukraine's trade and economy.

4. There was a comprehensive exchange of views on key measures to support Ukraine's trade, economy, and recovery. Ideas and measures focussed on, but were not limited to, logistical and financial support, reconstruction, improving market access and the liberalisation of tariffs, support to Ukrainian businesses and trade associations. Partners also discussed the range of humanitarian measures they are taking, including the provision of support for refugees.
5. Trade is a vital tool available to the international community to assist Ukraine. The United Kingdom was pleased to provide a forum in which to exchange views on economic and trade support options for Ukraine both in the immediate term and in longer-term reconstruction efforts.
6. Countries agreed to work cooperatively on further measures and to reconvene as soon as possible.

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[Orlando Fraser's inaugural speech](#)

Thank you (Tania) for that kind introduction and thank you all for welcoming me to close your conference.

As a Chancery barrister, I am particularly delighted that my very first speaking engagement as Chair of the Commission is with a large body of trustees. You are the legal core of any charity, and as such you rank particularly highly in my own legal estimation.

What I am going to do, as briefly as I can, is speak a bit about myself and my journey here, a bit about my priorities for the Commission, and a bit about the Commission's future relationship with you as trustees.

Some of you will know that I have been a Chancery barrister for the past 28 years, and a Queen's Counsel since 2014. I have already had a nearly 5-year stint as a Board member at the Commission under William Shawcross. And I have nearly 30 years of volunteering under my belt, beginning with running aid to Bosnian Muslims in the Yugoslavian Civil War in 1992, and following that with being:

- on the Management Committee of Westside Housing
- a Governor of Ilfracombe CC
- a fellow of the Centre of Social Justice
- on the Advisory Board of NCVO
- a volunteer at the Rugby Portobello Trust charity during the Grenfell

tragedy

It will therefore come as no surprise to you to learn that not only do I have great pride in the work of the Charity Commission itself, but I am also highly positive about the role the sector itself plays in society.

I know from personal experience that it is often only the work that charities do that provides any hope or light when we have a disaster on our hands, whether it is tragedies like Grenfell, or the COVID pandemic. Put another way, charities are the outpourings of a thousand acts of kindness, compassion, and love every day – and we need that as a society.

The breadth of charities' work is incredible, and you really do make our countries more hopeful, more loving, and more cohesive places, so thank you for that.

And, of course, whilst charity may begin at home, many of our charities do unbelievable work abroad in very challenging areas, including Oxfam's water tanks saving lives in Africa and Save the Children's mission to alleviate the awful suffering of children in Ukraine.

Indeed, the over £300m raised by the UK's DEC from generous British donors for the Ukraine is an example to the world, and is even now being used to good effect in that awful and unnecessary situation.

We truly have a great voluntary sector, and it will therefore be both an honour, and a pleasure, to be leading its regulator over the next few years – picking up a baton held with distinction by previous Chairs such as Suzi Leather, William Shawcross, Tina Stowell, and of course most recently our stoic interim Chair Ian Karet.

As to my own priorities for the Commission, my intention is to lead an expert regulator that is fair, balanced and independent.

In practice, this means as follows:

As a barrister, and a QC, I value excellence in work, and that translates into a desire to lead an expert Commission – that is, a regulator full of the brightest and the best, whose judgment can be relied on by you trustees as authoritative. We must aim to excel in all aspects, and take pride in that excellence.

This must, and will, also embrace the opportunities given to us by automation, digital, and artificial intelligence, to be a truly effective and pro-active regulator.

Common to all three is the gathering and effective use of data – data is the currency of effective, proactive regulation. Good data helps us identify sparks in the sector or parts of the sector before they become wildfires. It ensures we can more quickly identify wrongdoing and respond robustly. Data also helps us reach individual trustees with information at a time and in a format that is directly relevant to them.

And, of course, the sensible sharing of data helps us, as a society, better understand the work that charities do, how they do it, and where.

We are already making significant progress in this data area, especially in our Digital and Intelligence teams – there will be more on this in our business plan for 2022-23 when it is published very shortly – and it will be a material part of my aim to lead an expert regulator.

Expertise by itself is not however enough, and I want the work of the Commission I lead to be informed by 3 key values – fairness, balance and independence.

The first of these, and one close to my own legal heart, is fairness, one of the founding concepts of justice across the world. Fairness in legal terms is easily understood, and it means making sure we offer a fair legal process to all. We will do that.

The second is balance. This refers principally to our compliance function, and means striking the right balance between a number of competing factors, and, over time, between being robust and being benign.

In terms of robustness, the Commission's role requires us to act as enforcer where needed, holding charities to account for meeting basic standards. We are there to ensure those numerous acts of kindness and love in the sector can thrive in a secure environment, and sometimes we have to be robust to do so.

We have to investigate where there are concerns about a charity, and we have to take action where there is proven misconduct or mismanagement.

As wrongdoing in one charity can undermine trust in charities more widely, there will be times when the Commission will need to be very robust both to protect charities from abuse, and maintain public trust and confidence in the sector.

You can therefore expect that the Commission, under me, will deal commensurately, and, if needed, severely, with the intentional wrongdoers, the fraudsters, the extremists, the aggressors, and the grossly negligent – all of whom, in their own way, are poisoning charitable status for everyone else.

But equally, there are other occasions when problems are innocent or not material, when we have to remember that we are mostly dealing with volunteers trying overall to do great things, and we can be more benign.

After all, the Commission is not regulating a for-profit sector, but a sector which is by and large a place where wonderful loving things are being done every day, and where honest mistakes can happen in the process.

No matter how successful the charitable endeavour, we all know that the best laid plans of mice and men go astray sometimes, even with the most professional risk analysis that you can find. I've seen it happen with aid convoys, charitable fundraisers, and disaster responses – the key is not the

error, but how you recover from it.

So, rather than criticise an otherwise successful charity excessively for honest and reasonable mistakes, I will be keen for the Commission to focus on supporting trustees in getting it right, when things don't go exactly to plan – as they often don't.

So, there will be occasions when the Commission will be very robust, but equally you will see a supportive side to us – it is a question of achieving the right overall balance over time between challenge and encouragement, and it is something to which I want the Commission to pay attention.

The third and final Commission value I will place great store by is independence.

By this I mean that we must act without fear or favour from any other entity, whether it be Government, party politicians, beneficiaries or indeed the sector.

All of these are important stakeholders of course, and we will listen to all their concerns with the respect they deserve – but, in the end, while we will report to Parliament, we will be beholden to no-one in applying the law, but the law itself.

So, in summary, my intention is to lead an expert Commission that is fair, balanced and independent.

That is the way I think we can ensure that the Commission has the respect of all its diverse stakeholders, and ultimately, regulate more effectively.

Turning to trustees, you are of course central to the national charitable effort through our charities. You, and your fellow trustees up and down the country, are the guardians of charity.

Trusteeship is a public service, and one that is perhaps not acknowledged or understood as it should be. Trusteeship requires personal sacrifices. It means giving time and energy you might otherwise dedicate to your careers, or your family, in serving your charity and the people it helps.

We are all in your debt.

For you today, I have one promise, and two asks.

I fear that the months and years ahead will be challenging for charities, as they will be for many households.

It is certain that more people will turn to charities among other sources of help.

And greater numbers of charities in turn may find their resources are stretched by pressures on donations and this increase in demand.

This presents a challenge not just for charities individually, but for all

involved in supporting the sector.

The Commission as regulator cannot ease these difficulties directly. But we must be mindful of the challenges that trustees face in the months ahead.

I promise that the Commission will keep increasing its efforts to improve the service we provide to trustees.

I know great effort has gone into this in recent years, thanks not least to the work of my predecessors, and I commend that.

But there is work ahead still.

We must continue improving our online guidance, ensuring it is easy to find, straightforward to follow.

We must keep working to try and ensure our online services are intuitive and efficient, and not a source of unnecessary frustration and delay.

And we must be available, and responsive when trustees get in touch for advice and guidance.

By offering guidance and services that are accessible, feel smooth, and that respond to the needs of the time, the Commission can do its bit to ease pressures on busy trustees.

Having outlined our promise of what we will do for you, I would briefly like to turn all President Kennedy on you, and ask you in return to consider two areas where you could do something yet more for your charity.

The first concerns your legal duty of prudence as trustees, or as you may know it, managing your charity's resources responsibly.

Please think on this carefully and consistently, as your charity prepares to navigate the choppy waters ahead of the cost of living crisis, and other as yet unnamed crises.

As you know well, you are not in charge of your own property, but custodians of property for the purposes of your charity, which means the law requires you to be particularly careful in what you do with it.

This element of obligatory caution is of course what has saved many a charity from disaster over the years and it is in line with what the public would expect in the stewarding of charitable funds. I would urge you to think how you will put this into practice in the years ahead.

The second concerns the ongoing recruitment of trustees for the sector. As you will know from the research, you are statistically the most likely people to be able to recruit more trustees for your own charity. So please don't lose sight of this special trustee superpower: advocate for your organisation, for the endorphins of volunteering, and the good work that you do.

And, when recruiting new trustees, please work to make any recruitment drive as inclusive and diverse as possible, thus ensuring the continued excellence of the sector.

I will of course have more to say in the coming months and years as I grow into my new role, and reach out across the sector.

But I hope what you have heard from me gives you at least a flavour of what an expert Charity Commission will be like under my leadership: fair, balanced, and independent.

Thank you.

[DASA seeks ways in which human augmentation can benefit defence and security](#)

News story

DASA has launched a new Innovation Focus Area to find Generation-After-Next (GAN) human augmentation technologies for use in defence and security



- DASA has launched a new Innovation Focus Area: Human Augmentation (HA)
- Funding provided by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) HA Science and Technology (S&T) project
- Funding proposals to a value around £70,000 for innovative Generation-After-Next (GAN) human augmentation solutions

The [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) (DASA) is pleased to launch a new Innovation Focus Area (IFA) called [Human Augmentation](#). This IFA is seeking proposals which present GAN solutions to operational challenges for UK Defence and Security, where the human performance is the limiting factor for delivering operational effect.

This IFA is run on behalf of the [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory](#) (Dstl) HA Science and Technology (S&T) project.

Funding

DASA expects to fund proposals to a value around £70K which provide a proof of concept within a 6 month contract

[Do you have an innovation which could augment human performance?](#)

Human augmentation technologies in defence

HA is the use of Science and Technology (S&T) to temporarily or permanently modify human performance. As the battlefield becomes more complex and more advanced technologies become available, the operational demands and technical challenges on our defence and security personnel will increase. It is vital to explore if human augmentation technologies can be harnessed safely, legally and ethically to develop enhanced levels of operator (and system) performance in military and security capability.

We are interested in GAN technologies that deliver a competitive advantage to UK Defence and Security by:

- optimising physical and/or psychological performance
- enhancing physical and/or psychological performance
- enabling an individual to work for longer at a desired level (baseline)of performance
- supporting performance restoration

Examples of candidate HA technologies include, but are not limited to: * wearable assistive devices (e.g. exoskeletons and technologies to enhance senses) * sensory enhancement technologies * nutritional supplements * pharmacological interventions * manipulation of the microbiomes * neurotechnologies * novel materials * implantable devices * synthetic biology * cross reality * robotics * artificial intelligence

Submit a proposal

Do you have a solution or novel approach that may help contribute to the portfolio of human augmentation capabilities and promote UK Government's understanding of their appropriate (potential) use? Submit an idea and help DASA and Dstl accelerate the development of human augmentation technologies for defence and delivering military effect.

[Read the full competition document to learn more and submit a proposal.](#)

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