

Speech: “This sickening use of chemical weapons – weapons that Asad agreed in 2013 to destroy – is just the latest in a long list of abhorrent acts.”

Thank you Madam President. And I would also like to thank you Staffan for your briefing, and for your unrelenting efforts to secure a political solution to the conflict in Syria. You have our continued full support.

Despite your efforts and those of this Council, and the international community, the people of Syria have been denied a political solution for more than six years. They have suffered over six years of ever increasing, ever escalating barbarity; over six years of failed ceasefires and false dawns. For over six years, this Council has been held to ransom by Russia’s shameless support for the Asad regime; support which the regime is flaunting. Throughout that time, we have met in this Chamber to discuss atrocity after atrocity. Hoping that Asad had finally reached the depth of his cruelty and would finally see the need for dialogue. And yet every time, without fail, he has plunged to new lows.

Chemical weapons scientists at Porton Down, in the United Kingdom, have analysed samples obtained from Khan Shaykun, and these have tested positive for the nerve agent sarin, or a sarin-like substance. The United Kingdom therefore shares the US assessment that it is highly likely that the regime was responsible for a sarin attack on Khan Shaykun on the 4th of April.

This sickening use of chemical weapons – weapons that Asad agreed in 2013 to destroy – is just the latest in a long list of abhorrent acts. With that attack, he has made clear that he is not committed to a ceasefire, or to the Astana process, ruining Russia’s credibility.

And as we mourn the victims of the chemical attack on Khan Shaykun, we must not forget the 13.5 million people who, thanks to Asad, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, who are in urgent need of a long overdue peace.

It is clear today, as it has been for some time, that there can be no place for Asad in Syria’s future.

But, Madam President, there is a way to end this nightmare that the Syrian people continue to suffer. The Geneva Communiqué of 2012 and our unanimous resolution 2254 charts the way to peace in Syria. We have a Special Representative in you, Staffan, who is rightly determined to keep the political process alive and pursue a renewed UN facilitated effort. We have an opposition prepared to take a pragmatic approach to discussions. And we have millions upon millions of Syrians, inside and outside the country crying

out for long overdue peace.

And yet we are still here in this chamber, with the regime showing no interest in peace, encouraged by Russia's support in this Council to keep dropping bombs, to keep using chemical weapons.

Time and time again Russia has abused its veto to protect the regime and to defend its use of chemical weapons. And what has Russia got in return for its seven vetoes in six years? Let me tell you.

Russia's initiative in 2013 to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons has been exposed as a shambles. Russian pride in the Astana process has been turned to humiliation. And Russia's credibility and reputation across the world have been poisoned by its toxic association with Assad. They have chosen to side with a murderous, barbaric criminal, rather than with their international peers.

They have chosen the wrong side of history.

However, it is not too late for Russia to change course. It is not too late for Russia to fulfil its responsibilities as a permanent member of this Security Council. It is not too late for Russia to use, finally, its influence over the regime to bring this conflict to an end. Those efforts must begin meaningfully with attempts to end the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, real efforts to bring about a ceasefire and real efforts to ensure proper humanitarian access.

In doing so, Russia can create the space needed for a renewed push on the political process; one that leads to that political transition to a government that represents all Syrians.

Should they do so, should they choose that path, we stand ready to work with Russia to preserve Syrian institutions through the political transition. We stand ready to find ways of cooperating with Russia to counter Da'esh and other international terrorist threats. We stand ready to engage with Russia as a constructive partner on this Council. While Assad offers Russia only shame and humiliation; we offer Russia something else; the chance, once again, to work with the international community as a credible member.

Finally, Madam President, the Syrian people have waited for over six years. Hundreds of thousands have died. Countless hospitals, schools and homes have been destroyed. Now, more than ever, the international community must come together to end this senseless conflict.

And that's why we stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States and their decision to take military action against the Shayrat airfield, from where last week's attacks were launched. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our G7 allies and all those who are committed to deter the future use of chemical weapons and, finally, to bring peace to Syria.

Thank you.

Speech: “Haiti in 2017 is a different country to that of 2004, the year that MINUSTAH’s mandate began.”

Thank you Madam President, and thank you to Special Representative Honoré for your briefing just now.

I do want to join others in offering my condolences to Egypt for the terrible terrorist attacks that took place over the weekend on Sunday. Our thoughts and our prayers are with you.

At the outset, I think it’s important to set out the progress that Haiti has made over the last thirteen years. In these sessions we often discuss the most pressing, most recent developments, and that can occasionally mean that we lose sight of the overall trajectory of countries that are on our agenda.

For Haiti, that trajectory is upwards.

We’ve seen the professionalization and reform of the Haiti National Police and we’ve seen the security situation improve. We’ve witnessed credible and fair elections, as you’ve just outlined SRSB, leading to the peaceful transfer of power and a return to constitutional order. We’ve all been shocked as Haiti was struck by natural disasters, but we also saw the resilience of the Haitian people and the process of rebuilding.

Now, clearly this is not a story of uninterrupted progress. There is much more to be done, especially on protecting human rights, empowering women, widening access to justice and, of course, on long-term development.

Alongside many others in this Chamber today, the United Kingdom is gravely concerned about the continued presence of cholera in the country. We have contributed over 600,000 dollars to the UN Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund. I urge others to step up and make what contributions they can, so that together we can rid Haiti of this horrific disease once and for all.

But despite these challenges, Haiti in 2017 is a different country to that of 2004, the year that MINUSTAH’s mandate began. As President Moïse said in his inauguration speech in February, it is time for MINUSTAH to go.

A great deal has been achieved by the mission in those 13 years and on behalf of the United Kingdom I want to offer our thanks to everyone involved in MINUSTAH and in the UN Country Team for their hard work in securing this outcome. I want to particularly express my thanks to you Sandra, for your service as Special Representative for almost four years.

We want to see a phased withdrawal over the next six months – and a successor mission to continue some of MINUSTAH's work.

To be effective, that mission must have access to the most appropriate personnel and equipment. It should be underpinned by high quality training and skilled leadership, alongside clear accountability for underperformance and misconduct.

The successor to MINUSTAH, like all peace operations mandated by this Council, must have a clear exit strategy. This exit strategy should be established at the start of the mission – not at its end – and include clear benchmarks over a two year period. Joint analysis and planning with the UN country team is critical, as is the gradual but steady handover of responsibilities to Haiti's government and national institutions.

A two-year exit strategy should safeguard Haiti from the risk of a sudden and hastily planned withdraw or, quite differently, the quagmire of a mission that never ends.

This does not signify the end to the UN's commitment to Haiti. And it is not an end of the United Kingdom's commitment either.

Even with the leadership and resilience of its people, Haiti will still require development support from the international community for peace to be sustained.

The decisions we make in this Council are critical to this goal. We need to select the right UN tools to provide the right support – and we need to show the courage and discipline to let Haiti stand on her own two feet.

Thank you.

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the UNSC vote on Syria

Last week in Syria, a barbaric attack was committed.

Today, British scientists have completed an analysis of samples obtained from the site of the attack and concluded that sarin, or a sarin-like substance, was used. Our assessment, like that of the US, is that it is highly likely the Asad regime was responsible.

This afternoon in New York, the international community sought to make clear that any use of chemical weapons by anyone anywhere is unacceptable and that those responsible will face consequences.

So I am dismayed that Russia has once again blocked the UN Security Council

and in so doing refused to condemn the use of chemical weapons or support a full UN investigation into the attack.

This puts Russia on the wrong side of the argument. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Today, Rex Tillerson has been in Moscow with a clear and unanimous message from the G7 that we stand ready to work with Russia to bring an end to violence and to find a political solution. As part of this political solution, the G7 is unanimous that Asad has no long term future in Syria. I agree with Rex Tillerson when he says that the Asad family's reign in Syria is coming to an end.

So Russia faces a choice: it can continue acting as a lifeline for Asad's murderous regime, or it could live up to its responsibilities as a global power, and use its influence over the regime to bring six long years of failed ceasefires and false dawns to an end.

We stand ready to work together and I will be talking to my G7 partners in the coming days about how we can continue to strive for a political solution that brings an end to the suffering of the Syrian people.

[Press release: FC0 Minister visits Iraq](#)

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood visited Baghdad and Erbil to underline continued support in the fight against Daesh

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood met with political leaders in Baghdad and Erbil to reaffirm the UK's commitment to defeating Daesh and support efforts to bring unity to Iraq.

In Baghdad, Minister Ellwood met with Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, and Speaker of Parliament Salim Al-Jibouri, to emphasise the UK's continued commitment to post-Daesh stabilisation efforts, including the training of Iraqi Security Forces. Mr Ellwood also discussed social justice initiatives with a group of nine female MPs from Ninewa.

In Erbil, Minister Ellwood met with members of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) including President Barzani to recognise the KRG's military success in the Mosul campaign.

Speaking after the visit Mr Ellwood said:

I was delighted to visit Iraq and underline the UK's commitment in

the fight against Daesh.

I commend the substantial progress made by Iraqi forces, particularly as the campaign in Mosul enters a decisive phase. While this is a fight that will take time, we stand shoulder to shoulder with Iraq in its quest to bring peace to those living under Daesh rule.

The UK, as part of the Global Coalition, is playing a leading role in providing military, humanitarian and stabilisation support to the government of Iraq. I'm proud that we are supporting Iraq and the UN to put in place critical supplies of life-saving assistance, such as shelters, medical services and food.

- The UK's total commitment for humanitarian support in Iraq now stands at £169.5m since June 2014, including £90m in 2016, a significant amount of which was for Mosul. The UK is also providing over £15m of support for UN stabilisation efforts in Iraq.

Further information

[Speech: Liam Fox speech to International FinTech Conference](#)

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to say a few words at the end of this incredibly successful inaugural International FinTech Conference.

It is clear that we stand at a key moment for FinTech in this country.

Never before have prospects been so great.

Never before has investment in the industry been so attractive.

In a world of rapid change, before we all know it, today's innovators will be tomorrow's mainstream.

Today's disruptors will be tomorrow's conventional wisdom.

And today's financial revolutionaries will be tomorrow's financial establishment.

This conference has been a showcase and a celebration of an industry that has done so much to contribute to this country's knowledge, skills and expertise, enhancing the UK's status as a global financial centre.

The focus of the conference has been wide-ranging, but what has been most clearly highlighted is the uniquely strong position that the industry enjoys.

We have heard the impressive headline figures.

61,000 people are employed by an industry that generates over £6.6 billion in revenue every year.

We have also heard from the government and the regulator about the policies that have promoted the industry, and made the UK a global powerhouse of financial technology.

The industry is still a comparatively young one.

This will, of course, mean challenges in the future.

But the so-called disruptive technologies are the ways in which we produce change and innovation, taking on the orthodoxies of the industry to produce the evolution that the sector and the UK economy requires.

And the exciting developments here at home will create vast opportunities for the sector across the rest of the world.

We should meet the future with confidence.

As Secretary of State for International Trade, I have had the privilege to see first-hand how highly UK FinTech is valued around the world.

Last January, for example, I visited Hong Kong alongside a delegation of British businesses, discussing the strengths of the UK industry with a group of investors.

They were keen to invest in the UK FinTech industry, citing not only the rapid growth that the sector has enjoyed in just a few years, but also this country's vast pool of talent and experience.

Investors across the world are eager to catch the wave of innovation that the UK has produced, such as the licences granted to Challenger Banks who are continuing to grow and expand their services.

It is no wonder that the UK is ranked number one globally for the strength of our FinTech ecosystem, outpacing rival centres in Singapore and Silicon Valley.

The industry has been bolstered by London's position as the world's leading financial centre.

Our Capital attracts more international companies from the financial services, technology and creative industries than any other city in Europe.

The success of FinTech is spreading across the United Kingdom, as commercial centres from Edinburgh to Manchester attract leading incubators and accelerators, helping start-ups across the UK and the world gain access to

our FinTech industry.

For all the great strengths of the industry, it is vital that it enjoys the full practical support of the UK government, if we are to capitalise on the opportunities of the future and retain our global pre-eminence.

My own Department for International Trade has a key role to play here.

As a department of government, we work to maintain and improve Britain's commercial ecosystem, providing the conditions in which UK firms can thrive.

We boost Britain's exports by championing our industries abroad, working with our international partners to match businesses to projects overseas and encouraging the world to buy British.

Moreover, we offer practical and financial support to any UK business that is looking to start exporting, or expand their overseas operations.

Finally, we also work to attract foreign investment to the UK, promoting our country, and British businesses, as the ideal partners in future growth and prosperity.

After all, we are a nation with a proven track record of strong returns.

The UK is uniquely well placed to attract investment, combining robust government and regulatory support with a world-class business environment.

Last year, over \$9.5 billion of private equity and venture capital was invested into UK tech firms, and corporate investment activity rose by 35%, far outpacing Europe and the USA.

Our country has always maintained a strong focus on leading edge technologies.

We are globally renowned for the quality of our academic and research facilities, a tradition that creates and maintains a highly skilled workforce.

Our research and development prowess is unrivalled, not only in technology but also in science and medicine.

Tech companies that began as small UK start-ups have grown into global household names such as Transferwise, FanDuel, Skyscanner and Shazam to name but a few.

It is no wonder that the UK is a hotbed of investment of every kind, from large multinationals expanding their operations, to venture capital hoping to capitalise on the UK's reputation for producing successful start-ups.

There is no country better suited to FinTech than the UK.

We are known for having the best regulatory and policy environment to support growth and innovation, underlying our firm commitment to maintaining and

enhancing our world leading status.

Our world-leading financial services industry employs over 1.2 million people in every corner of our country.

We have an almost limitless capacity for research and development.

And we have a government that is committed to maintaining this environment, supporting new businesses and facilitating global market access for British companies.

These factors combine to make the UK the natural home for financial technology.

This industry is one of huge ambition, but also of almost limitless potential.

Britain stands ready to help the industry realise every opportunity to expand and grow.

There is no better place on earth to start, or expand, a financial technology business.

The FinTech industry stands on the verge of an exciting future.

The UK is its natural home, and from here, there is nothing it cannot achieve.

Thank you.