

UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: UK statement

The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to look back at the sum of our collective efforts to advance Agenda 2030. In this 'Decade of Action', progress has never been more critical – especially as we have heard that the region is on track to achieve only one quarter of SDG targets by 2030.

So it is with heavy hearts that we meet today. The attainment of peace, and of societies free from fear and violence, is a central pillar of the 2030 Agenda. Russia's attack on Ukraine is an attack on our shared vision for a safe, prosperous and sustainable world. It shows contempt for international peace and security, and the UN Charter.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine has set out starkly the impact of the conflict on Ukraine's sustainable development. The cost to human lives will be profound. The destruction of essential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, cannot be ignored.

The United Kingdom stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and condemns Russian actions in the strongest terms.

Chair, while we face this tragedy and outrage, we must also maintain momentum on tackling the other key challenges facing our region. Over the past year, the UK has strived for accelerated progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, notably through our presidencies of the G7 and COP26.

Nearly 200 countries signed the Glasgow Climate Pact, which completes the Paris Rulebook and keeps alive the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

The Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use has now been signed by over 140 countries, covering over 90% of the world's forests. Through the Global Forest Finance Pledge, countries announced that they will provide USD12 billion of public climate finance between 2021-2025.

Our ambitions for SDG5, Gender Equality, are higher in 2022 than ever. We are taking action to educate girls, empower women, and end violence against women and girls. At the Human Rights Council, the UK is leading the charge to ensure that every girl has the right to 12 years of quality education.

We are working to shatter the culture of impunity around sexual violence in conflict, and to champion sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our women and girls strategy launching this year will place gender equality at the heart of our foreign and development policy.

Finally, SDG17 reminds us that partnerships are vital to achieving the goals. Under the UK's Presidency in 2021, G7 members agreed to deliver a step change in their approach to infrastructure finance.

British Investment Partnerships represents the UK's commitment to build stronger, more transparent economic partnerships, facilitating high-quality investment in Low and Middle Income Countries. We aim to mobilise up to £8bn pounds of UK-backed financing a year by 2025, partnering with capital markets and Sovereign Wealth Funds to provide scale.

UNECE and its membership have a responsibility to foster peace and sustainable development within our region. In so doing, we also have an opportunity – to lead global efforts towards a green, fairer, more sustainable global economy that leaves no one behind.

Thank you chair.

Russia's war in Ukraine is also an attack on the security and freedom of Europe: UK statement to the OSCE, 6 April 2022

Thank you Mr Chair. Usually, the Closing session of a Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) is a time for reflection. A time to consider our work as a forum for security cooperation, our discussions, our challenges but also our progress. Unfortunately that is not possible today.

Ambassador, when we met for the Opening Session, we recognised that you assumed the FSC Chair at a critical time for Euro-Atlantic Security. As we watched Russia amass the large concentration of military force along Ukraine's borders and in illegally annexed Crimea we feared the worst and the worst came true. Russia's unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack on Ukraine and its peaceful civilians has horrified the world.

Ukraine has taken up the fight to defend their homeland and shown the world the meaning of bravery and courage. An out-manoeuvred and out-classed Russian military has taken its frustrations out on civilians, unleashing horrendous amounts of violence. In recent days we have watched in horror as reports have emerged of men, women and children killed and mutilated. This is a great moral stain upon the Russian military, and one which will never be forgotten.

Mr Chair, the Russian government's attempt to redraw the map of Europe in blood, and conquer an independent and democratic state by force of arms is an attack on the security and freedom of Europe. It is also an attack on the Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture that was designed to increase security and stability in the region and, through trust, help prevent such appalling acts.

For their part, our Russian colleagues have “weaponised” the OSCE confidence and security building mechanisms which underpin this organisation and have lied to this forum, and indeed continue to lie to this forum. They have shattered the trust and the belief that all of us in this room seek a secure and stable region in respect of one and other – that we work in good faith for a mutual goal.

Trust is a hard thing to rebuild. It is clear that normal business cannot resume whilst President Putin wages his horrific and barbaric war of choice on our Ukrainian friends. Our primary focus must remain to work together – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is restored. The UK stands with and will continue to support the Ukrainian people in their fight for their homeland.

Against all of this, we must do our utmost to ensure the integrity of this Forum, such that it is able to fulfil its mandate. In this regard we trust it will continue to be stewarded in a professional and proper manner.

May I conclude by thanking you Ambassador and your team for your forbearance as Chair of the FSC in these unprecedented times. We also thank our Austrian colleagues who leave the troika and welcome our Belgium ones.

Slava Ukraini!

Thank you. And I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Council fined for undertaking work without a marine licence

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council appeared in court charged with carrying out a licensable marine activity other than in accordance with a marine licence granted by the Marine Management Organisation.

The court heard how the offence took place at Hilbre Island, located in the mouth of the Dee Estuary, off the coast of the Wirral peninsula. It is an environmentally sensitive area and part of a local nature reserve.

Following a partial cliff collapse in 2016, Wirral MBC commissioned a report to investigate the stability of the area. The report set out several options to prevent further collapsing and the council chose the option of infilling a cave in the cliffside. The report noted at this time that a marine licence would be required for these works.

On 24 July 2019 contractors, under the instruction of Wirral MBC, began a

construction project to shore-up the cave. The project involved the infilling of the cave with a combination of polyurethane slabs and polyurethane expanding foam.

On 17 August 2019 a storm hit the island. The resultant action of the sea washed parts of the foam away over several days and a quantity of this entered the marine environment. On 23 August 2019 the contractors reapplied expanding foam. The foam then caught fire and burned for three days until the entire contents of the cave filling (polyurethane slabs and foam) were burnt out. A quantity of this entered the marine environment. Clean-up efforts were made by the Council, the contractors, and local volunteers.

The works associated with the cave infilling were not carried out under a marine licence, in that neither the Council nor the contractors applied to the MMO for a marine licence. This is contrary to Section 65 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The foam used was not designated safe to use in the marine environment.

In sentencing, District Judge (Magistrates' Court) Clark found the actions of the Council to have been negligent.

A representative from the council pleaded guilty to the charge. They were fined £8,000, ordered to pay £3,894.22 in costs and a £150 victim surcharge. The District Judge gave the council credit for an early guilty plea, noted the council had been cooperative with the MMO's investigation, had taken steps to rectify the damage that had been caused and said he recognised imposing a larger fine would negatively impact the service the Council provides for the public.

An MMO spokesperson said:

This case shows the importance of applying for a marine licence before works are undertaken. Had marine experts been able to look at the proposals before works were undertaken these substances would not have been approved for use and would not have entered the marine environment.

In cases like these, MMO will always take proportionate and appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure the marine environment is protected.

[New partnership reaffirms Dstl's](#)

commitment to inclusion

Press release

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has teamed up with Women in Data as part of ongoing work to address the gender imbalance in science and technology.



It will also help ensure recruitment opportunities reach groups currently underrepresented in science and technology.

Gender Equality champion and Chief of Mathematical Sciences Dr Philippa Spencer said:

Dstl is dedicated to creating an inclusive workplace in which people can flourish.

We have recognised there is a gender imbalance across STEM and, with others, are working to address this problem but, of course, more needs to be done.

Our partnership with Women in Data is an important part of these ongoing efforts, the statistics show that teams with mixed genders do produce better results.

[Philippa](#) is marking her 20th year with Dstl and her accolades includes a 2019 Women in Defence award for Outstanding Contribution to Defence. Last year she was made an OBE for her work in the fight against COVID-19.

[Women in Data](#) aims to encourage more females into data-related jobs and promotes roles on its online board from relevant organisations.

It holds events and profiles role model women working in data science, statistics and other related disciplines.

Executive Gender Equality Champion and Chief Technical Officer Andy Bell said:

Women work at all levels across Dstl and have been responsible for incredible achievements and scientific breakthroughs which have benefitted our armed forces and the UK.

We hope this new partnership will help show that Dstl is a fantastic place to work and will encourage more women, who may never have thought about working in Defence, to consider our great opportunities.

There has never been a more exciting time to work for Dstl as we work towards the UK's goal of becoming a science superpower.

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UK launches review of steel tariff quotas for imports from Russia and Belarus

[The Trade Remedies Authority \(TRA\)](#) has today (Wednesday 6 April) initiated a [Tariff Rate Quota \(TRQ\) review of steel imports](#) that are part of the UK's safeguard trade remedy measure. The TRA will assess whether the tariff rate quotas for Russia and Belarus should be re-allocated to avoid a potential shortage of steel in the UK.

UK to consider adjusting tariff rate quotas to ensure a steady supply of steel

As with any safeguard measure, the UK has given all importing countries a quota to import a certain amount of steel at a basic tariff rate into the UK. Once their quota is exhausted, they have to pay a higher rate. Exporters from Russia and Belarus may not be able to fulfil their quotas because the UK has imposed sanctions on some imports from these countries, including steel. Reallocating the Russian and Belarus quotas could help ensure a regular supply of steel needed for construction, engineering, the automotive industries and other uses.

The TRA's proposed course of action will be to redistribute the country-specific TRQs for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to other exporting countries. For more detail of this proposal, view the initiation documents for this review on the [TRA's public file](#).

A trade remedy framework which adapts to changing circumstances

Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) are part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework. They specify how much of a product can be imported from a country before its imports are subject to higher tariffs. The UK's trade remedies system follows WTO rules and is designed to make sure UK industries are not damaged by unfair trade practices or unexpected surges in imports. The TRA manages the UK's trade remedy measures and has extended a safeguard measure countering steel imports which the UK inherited from the EU system when it left the European Union. The UK has the power to review its Tariff Rate Quotas on imports covered by safeguard measures if circumstances change after the measure is set. This TRQ Review is an economic adjustment to respond to a change of circumstances. TRQs are also reviewed regularly and liberalised progressively.

What this means for importers and users of steel in the UK

The TRA will review steel Tariff Rate Quotas for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus that are part of the UK's steel safeguard measure and decide if the tariff rate quotas held by Russia and Belarus should be reallocated. The two product categories which may be affected are category 1 (non-alloy and other alloy hot rolled sheets and strips, used in yellow goods, construction, tube-making and the production of downstream steel products) and category 13 (rebars, which are used in construction, the automotive industry, engineering and white goods manufacture).

Oliver Griffiths, TRA Chief Executive, said:

The TRA has the discretion to act quickly when there's a change of circumstances which affects the UK economy. This review looks to address the risk of a shortage of steel into the UK as a result of sanctions on Russia and Belarus. Reallocating quotas should help keep steel prices down for construction and other domestic industries.

Register your interest in this TRQ review

Businesses which think they may be affected by a change in the quotas (for instance, importers of steel and businesses which use imported steel) can visit the [TRA's public file to find more information](#). You can also [register your interest in the review on the TRA's online case platform](#) and submit any comments to the TRA by Tuesday 12 April.

Background information/Notes to editors

- Safeguard measures are one of the three types of trade remedies – along

with anti-dumping measures which counter goods being dumped in countries at prices below their normal price in their country of origin and countervailing measures against countervailable subsidies – that are allowed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU.
- The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK body that now investigates whether trade remedies measures are needed.
- Forty-four EU trade remedies measures that were of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA needs to review each one to check if it is suitable for UK needs.
- As part of this process, the TRA reviewed a safeguard measure on certain steel products, reporting its recommendation in June 2021. The TRA recommended that measures should be extended on some steel products but removed on others, where they were not needed. The TRA has since been asked to reconsider this decision and this process is under way. The reconsideration has been 'called in' by the Secretary of State for International Trade and the TRA will complete the reconsideration under her direction.
- The UK regularly reviews its tariff rate quotas (TRQs) to make sure its safeguard measures remain up to date and useful. This is not part of the reconsideration process.