

UK provides additional emergency support to Madagascar

On 17 March 2022, UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford has announced a further £500,000 of UK aid for Madagascar following a series of extreme weather events.

The new UK support will allow UNICEF to provide safe water, emergency sanitation and hygiene services for 13,500 people and to help monitor for outbreaks of water borne diseases.

This is in addition to the [£500,000 the UK contributed](#) to the Red Cross emergency appeal earlier this month.

UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford said:

Cyclone Emnati is the fourth extreme weather event to hit Madagascar in the last month. They have impacted hundreds of thousands of people, causing widespread flooding, displacement and destroying livelihoods.

This additional £500,000 will bring the level of UK support to a total of £1 million, providing immediate assistance to vulnerable communities through partners on the ground and helping Madagascar to recover.

UNICEF Representative in Madagascar, Jean-François Basse said:

This support from the United Kingdom comes at a crucial time as UNICEF and partners are on the ground working to assist those impacted by these cyclones and tropical storms. By urgently addressing the water and sanitation needs of these communities we can keep a bad situation from getting worse.

Tropical Cyclone Emnati hit Madagascar on 22 February, following Cyclone Batsirai and Storm Dumako in early February and Storm Ana in January.

These extreme weather events have affected up to half a million people with widespread flooding and destruction of property, schools and health centres.

When these natural disasters strike, the UNICEF team is at the forefront of deploying key responses and providing assistance to victims. The main activities are related to the installation of water storage and treatment tanks, the construction of emergency latrines and vector control, and the distribution of hygiene kits that include household water treatment

tablets/solutions, sanitary napkins, soap bars, a bucket with a lid, a plastic cup, hydroalcoholic gel, and hand washing devices.

The UK continues to work with local authorities and partners to monitor the situation closely.

UK aid

- more details on the Red Cross appeal is on the [Red Cross website](#)
- in addition, the UK is a donor to African Risk Capacity (ARC), Africa's regional insurance pool and the first risk pool in the world that links pay-outs following a disaster to pre-approved contingency plans. Tropical Cyclone BATSIRAI has triggered a US\$10.7 million payment from the African Risk Capacity Group (ARC) to help the government of Madagascar and its people build back better
- the UK is a significant contributor to the Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), which has allocated funding of CHF 750,000 (approx. £600,000)
- the UK is also a contributor to the Start Network, a multilateral humanitarian fund, which has already set aside nearly £635,000 of assistance for those most in need

UNICEF

- UNICEF has worked closely with the government's National Risk and Disaster management office throughout the responses to facilitate coordination
- UNICEF's pre-positioned response team and supplies in key cities and town throughout the affected areas
- UNICEF supported the preparation and coordination of the response, working with government and NGO partners, particularly in the areas of water and sanitation, health, and education

Commonwealth Day celebrated in Ashgabat

World news story

Ambassadors of the UK, Pakistan and Malaysia in Ashgabat planted a jubilee plane tree in the garden of the British Ambassador's residence to mark the day.



Ambassadors of the UK, Pakistan and Malaysia in Ashgabat plant a jubilee plane tree

On 14 March 2022, Commonwealth Day, the Ambassadors of the UK, Pakistan and Malaysia in Ashgabat joined together to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, and the 70th anniversary of her role as Head of the Commonwealth. The representatives planted a jubilee plane tree and unveiled a commemorative plaque in the garden of the UK Ambassador's residence.

People across the United Kingdom and British diplomatic missions overseas have been planting trees to support the Queen's Green Canopy, which is a unique tree planting initiative created to mark the 70 years of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2022.

With a focus on planting sustainably, this green initiative seeks to create a legacy in honour of The Queen's leadership of the Nation, which will benefit future generations.

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[Request for proposals: addressing the drivers of serious and organised crime \(SOC\) in Kukes](#)

News story

The FCDO and Home Office launch an initiative for not-for-profit organisations to address the drivers of SOC in Kukes.



The FCDO and Home Office, supported by the British Embassy in Tirana, will support not-for-profit organisations to create innovative solutions to a complex societal challenge: serious and organised crime (SOC).

The Embassy is seeking an organisation or consortia that will deliver real change on the ground and can pilot a development approach to addressing the drivers and enablers of SOC. The 'Addressing Drivers and Enablers of SOC' project will run for 4 years (May 2022 to March 2026) and the maximum budget is £8.7million, including all fees.

Background

This project is funded by the UK Government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. It is part of the SOC Programme managed by the Home Office. The project will be overseen and supported by British Embassy staff in Tirana, Albania.

Expressions of interest

- sign-up for the 'Early Market Engagement' event on 31 March 2022 by sending an email to British.embassytirana@fcdo.gov.uk. Write 'Kukes Project' as the subject line of your email
- you will receive details in details prior to the event

How to apply

Send full proposals to british.embassytirana@fcdo.gov.uk by 15 April 2022. Read the following guidance in the [Specification of Requirements](#) (ODT, 84.2 KB) before you send your application.

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Helicopter services deal raises competition concerns

Press release

The CMA has provisionally found that CHC's purchase of Babcock's oil and gas offshore helicopter transportation services business raises competition concerns.



Following an in-depth Phase 2 investigation of this completed acquisition, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has provisionally found that the merger would lead to a significant loss of competition in the market.

CHC and the acquired businesses both provide offshore transportation in the oil and gas sector, including taking workers to and from rigs in the North Sea.

The CMA's investigation analysed a wide range of evidence, including data on bidding for previous contracts and hundreds of internal documents that show how the merging businesses assess competition in the sector. The CMA has also engaged with customers, competitors and other industry players to inform its provisional findings.

The evidence gathered by the CMA shows that the UK arm of the acquired businesses remains an effective competitor, and the loss of this competition would significantly reduce rivalry between an already limited number of suppliers. The merger would reduce the number of suppliers from 4 to 3 and the CMA does not believe that new players are likely to enter the market.

Kip Meek, Chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

We're concerned that this merger will reduce competition in a market which currently only has 4 competitors and that is vital to the smooth running of the North Sea oil and gas industry.

Our findings are provisional at this stage, and we welcome further responses from CHC and Babcock, as well as from other interested

parties.

The CMA welcomes responses from interested parties to its provisional findings by 7 April 2022 and its notice of possible remedies, which sets out potential options for addressing its provisional concerns, by 31 March 2022. These will be considered ahead of the CMA issuing its final decision, which is due by 15 May 2022.

For more information, visit [the CHC / Babcock merger inquiry page](#).

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. CHC Group LLC (CHC) purchased the entire issued share capital of Offshore Helicopter Services UK Limited (Babcock Offshore UK), Offshore Services Australasia Pty Ltd (Babcock Offshore Australia) and Offshore Helicopter Services Denmark A/S (Babcock Offshore Denmark).
3. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a reference to Phase 2 if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a relevant merger situation has been created, or arrangements are in progress or contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition with any markets or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.

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[Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine: UK OSCE statement, 17 March 2022](#)

Thank you Mr Chair. I'm grateful to the UN Assistant High Commissioner for Operations for briefing us today. As he has just said, this week we passed a terrible milestone – 3 million people have been forced to flee Ukraine. Forced to flee due to President Putin's war of choice. We are grateful to Poland and other neighbouring countries for the generosity and the compassion that they have shown to fleeing Ukrainians.

Hundreds of thousands of people have also left their homes within Ukraine seeking places of safety elsewhere in the country.

We are grateful to UNHCR for their work to support those who have fled their homes.

Sadly, the numbers of those displaced is only likely to rise as we see Russia increasing the number of Ukrainian towns and cities that it targets with shelling. Last week there were attacks reported on Lutsk in north western Ukraine and Ivano-Frankivsk.

As Martin Griffiths told us last week, it is vital that civilians are afforded safe passage to leave areas of active hostilities in the direction of their choosing. While we welcome reports that some civilians were able to depart from Mariupol on Tuesday, we continue to be concerned by evidence that Russia has targeted evacuation corridors. Russia's continued attempts to force civilians to flee via Russia and Belarus are cynical and unacceptable.

Meanwhile 12.7 million people are stranded in conflict affected areas as the Russian government resorts to ever more barbaric tactics. Russia is using cluster munitions and thermobaric rockets, weapons designed to inflict maximum damage wherever they are deployed.

For those civilians who have been unable to leave encircled cities like Mariupol and Volnovakha the situation is life-threatening. Not only have they been facing shelling daily, but hundreds of thousands of people are facing critical shortages of food, water and life-saving medicines. We are shocked by multiple reports that Russian forces shelled a theatre and a swimming pool in Mariupol where we understand people were sheltering. Mr Chair, who can hear the harrowing testimonies coming from civilians in Mariupol and not be moved? Moved by anger at the Russian government's actions and moved by determination to bring those responsible for atrocities to justice.

Likewise, Mr Chair who can not be moved by the bravery demonstrated by Ukrainians? Ukrainians protesting Russian military control in Kherson, Berdyansk and Melitopol. We are deeply concerned at reports of arrests of protestors being made by Russian forces in those cities, as well as reported abductions and abuse of Ukrainian activists, human rights defenders, volunteers, journalists, health-care workers and government representatives in the areas of Ukraine under control of the Russian army. Russia must immediately release all illegally-detained persons in Ukraine.

Sadly, as the esteemed US Ambassador rightly pointed out last week, we know all too well the results of Russia's efforts to stamp out opposition to their presence in Ukraine. This week we mark eight years since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, which they attempted to seal with a sham referendum and enforce with brutal oppression. Our thoughts remain with all Ukrainians wrongfully detained simply for expressing the truth – that Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine.

Russia's attempts to subvert Ukrainian democracy is an unacceptable abuse of OSCE principles and commitments.

In the face of these appalling violations of fundamental freedoms by Russia, the work of human rights organisations is more important than ever. We welcome [the appointment of three eminent experts to conduct an independent fact finding mission under the Moscow Mechanism](#); a mission that is supported by Ukraine and 45 participating States.

This is important because, Mr Chair, facts matter. Even the Russian government knows that facts matter – otherwise they would not be going to such lengths to conceal them from the Russian people. [As the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media has highlighted](#), Russia has blocked access to several media websites and introduced a law on the spread of so-called “fake” information about the brutal actions of the Russian Armed Forces. Several Russian media representatives have resigned in the face of overwhelming editorial interference. Those who, like Marina Ovsyannikova, dare to defend the truth, those individuals face arrest.

Mr Chair, we will not stand by as President Putin wages his campaign against the Ukrainian people. We will hold him accountable for his crimes. We will work with prosecutors at the International Criminal Court (ICC) to help them get the information they need. And we will not relent in our mission to see justice done. This hideous and barbaric venture must end in failure. However long it takes, that will be the steadfast and unflinching goal of the United Kingdom.

I ask Mr Chair that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.