

UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the Item 3 General Debate

The UK has condemned Russia's unprovoked and barbaric invasion of Ukraine in the strongest terms.

Abuses and violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law are escalating dramatically. Russian air strikes and artillery have been used indiscriminately, damaging civilian infrastructure, and leaving hundreds dead. As my Prime Minister has said, "There are few things more depraved than targeting the vulnerable and defenceless". The UK is one of 41 countries that have referred Russian atrocities in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court. Those committing war crimes will be held to account.

Russia is matching its aggression abroad by drastically escalating repression at home. Since the invasion began, Russian authorities have arrested nearly 15,000 anti-war protestors. New legislation criminalises the dissemination of information about the Russian armed forces that the authorities deem to be 'fake'. Those found guilty could face 15 years in prison. Furthermore, the independent radio station Echo Moskvy has been shut down.

This new wave of repression is only the latest chapter in a long-standing campaign designed to silence dissenting voices, to curtail freedom of expression and to erode other rights and freedoms in Russia.

Russian civil society organisations have been threatened and harassed. Two of Russia's oldest NGOs, International Memorial and Memorial Human Rights Centre have been closed. The absence of these organisations will be sorely felt by people throughout Russian society whose rights and freedoms are increasingly under attack.

Political opponents face equally grave threats. Opposition figure Alexey Navalny remains arbitrarily detained on the basis of politically motivated charges, and in contravention of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights. He must be released immediately.

Religious minorities and LGBT+ persons face repression across the country. In Chechnya, there are ongoing reports of arrest, torture and extrajudicial killing of LGBT individuals.

We call on Russia, a member of this Council, to live up to its responsibilities and to fulfil its international human rights obligations. If Russia continues to disregard the rights of those in and those beyond its border, this Council must respond.

Thank you.

United States and United Kingdom to host joint UK/ US Dialogues on the Future of Atlantic Trade in Baltimore, Maryland

News story

The US Trade Representative and UK Trade Secretary will host joint trade dialogues this spring.



WASHINGTON – United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai and United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Trade Anne-Marie Trevelyan will host joint UK/US Dialogues on the Future of Atlantic Trade in Baltimore, Maryland on March 21 and 22, 2022 and in the UK later this Spring.

Following on from President Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s announcement last year of a new ‘Atlantic Charter’, the UK/US Dialogues on the Future of Atlantic Trade will explore how the United States and United Kingdom can collaborate to advance mutual international trade priorities rooted in our shared values, while promoting innovation and inclusive economic growth for workers and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic. The trade ministers will use these events as they further deepen our important US-UK bilateral trade relationship and address our shared challenges and opportunities through discussions over the following months.

“I am pleased to welcome Secretary Trevelyan to Baltimore later this month as we begin an open-minded and deep discussion on how we can advance smarter and more strategic trade between our two countries,” Ambassador Tai said. “The United Kingdom is one of our oldest and most trusted allies, and our partnership is rooted in shared values and priorities. These Dialogues will provide an opportunity to engage our stakeholders to help inform how an inclusive trade policy can promote equitable economic growth and prosperity for our two countries.”

“I am excited to join Ambassador Tai in Baltimore to kick-start these important conversations on the future of UK-US trade,” Secretary of State Trevelyan said. “I look forward to welcoming Ambassador Tai to the UK later this Spring, where we will continue our discussions on how the UK and US work can use trade intelligently in the modern global economy. Trade is central to the UK’s Levelling Up Agenda and how we will deepen UK-US trade links in a way that benefits communities across the United Kingdom.”

The UK/US Dialogues on the Future of Atlantic Trade will also feature a diverse group of national and local stakeholders to advance these important talks on how to use trade policy to build a more modern, fair and responsible global economy. Additional details on the Dialogues will come at a later date.

Published 16 March 2022

[UK & US launch transatlantic dialogues to boost £200bn trade relationship](#)

- Joint events in US and UK this spring to deepen our thriving bilateral trading relationship
- Trade Secretary and her US counterpart will be joined by senior attendees from government, civil society and business to set strategic direction of UK-US partnership
- Major step in our broader UK-US trade strategy to support levelling-up agenda and build back better post-pandemic

The UK and US today announce a new series of transatlantic dialogues aimed at deepening trade and investment ties and boosting our already-thriving £200bn relationship.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan and United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai will be among those gathering at the Joint UK/US Dialogues on the Future of Atlantic Trade.

The first dialogue will take place in Baltimore, Maryland, on 21-22 March with the second to take place in the UK later in spring. They will form a platform for further conversations between the two sides.

The events will bring together government ministers, senior officials, trade unions, businesses and civil society from both sides to discuss ways the UK and US can work together to deepen our trading relationship.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

The US is our biggest trading partner. Our thriving relationship already delivers so much for our economies, businesses and people. Now, more than ever, we recognise the power of deepening trade ties with like-minded allies around the world.

This new UK-US dialogue is a symbol of our ambition to work even closer with businesses and workers to promote innovation, inclusive economic growth and support jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

These events are a huge opportunity to make it even easier, quicker and more cost-effective to do trans-Atlantic trade, but also to tackle the most pressing challenges we face like congested supply chains and climate change.

The dialogues will encourage closer collaboration on shared values such as our respective 'Build Back Better' agendas, as well as explore ways to drive more modern, innovative approaches to international trade with our biggest trading partner in areas such as digital, green trade and supporting SMEs.

The Joint UK/UK Dialogues form one part of DIT's broader approach to trading with the US. The UK has already begun a major initiative to identify measures that can lift barriers at a state level – for example, through discussions on recognising each other's professional qualifications.

All of this builds on the work we've done such as removing restrictions on high-quality Welsh lamb and Scottish beef and reaching an understanding on the longstanding Airbus-Boeing dispute to remove 25% tariffs on Scotch whisky, while launching talks to end the Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminium produced in Yorkshire, Wales and across the UK.

British Ambassador to the United States Dame Karen Pierce said:

In every state I visit I'm struck by the depth and dynamism of our trade and investment relationship, as well as local support for a UK-US Free Trade Agreement.

Across the length and breadth of America and the UK, our partnerships create countless jobs and make us each other's biggest investor.

I look forward to supporting the Joint UK/US Dialogues and working with our closest ally as we each build back better from the pandemic.

Dstl scientists develop pioneering bio-batteries

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) scientists are working on bio-batteries powered by deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) which could 'change the world and change the way we do things'.

The pioneering work is a collaborative project with Touchlight Genetics, the Office of Naval Research Global (ONRG) from the US Department of Defense, and the University of Utah.

Dstl's Synthetic Biology Lead Petra Oyston said:

One of things that is really clear is that power and batteries is a big need for defence, to have alternatives.

The current battery technology that our soldiers are using is containing a lot of energy in chemical format and if that battery gets shot for example it's going to explode and burst into flames.

Our bio-battery is made out of DNA, enzymes, lactate and water. If you shot it it would just go splat so there's a significant safety benefit.

She went on to say that this idea was scalable and could take the form of large batteries, batteries too small to see or a completely new format such as a coating.

Bio-Batteries: The Power of DNA

The concept behind the batteries is to use naturally occurring products such as lactate.

This is then degraded using enzymes, which release electrons, which are then captured and can be used as power.

ONRG Chief Scientist Patrick Rose said:

For defence our warfighters continue to carry more and more electronics that require the power and that means carrying batteries with them.

These batteries might provide a solution, a greener solution to generating power.

It feels absolutely fantastic to be involved in these types of projects. The impact for defence as well as for society at large will be multi-fold.

Touchlight Genetics Head of Platforms Tom Adie said:

It's really interesting to occasionally, step back and see where it's going to go.

It has applications in so many areas potentially that it's sort of exciting to think about.

He added that it could be "dried down" and reconstituted when needed.

You have an incredibly energy-dense battery that can be carried very portably. It's very light and you can reconstitute it anywhere: seawater, freshwater. So you can carry it on ships; you can carry it in disaster areas.

He added that Touchlight is unique in the scale, speed and quality of DNA it produces.

The project, which started in 2017, is being funded by Dstl and ONRG. Touchlight Genetics are undertaking the work to produce the DNA at scale while the University of Utah are working on the enzyme optimisation and cascade evolution.

Dstl Military Adviser Andrew said:

It's vital in this day and age that the army considers sustainability and its impact on the environment.

This is the type of project that offers the military amazing benefits. It will save lives. It is the sort of technology defence needs.

[RSH provides clarity on regulating for-profit providers](#)

Press release

The Regulator of social Housing has updated its Regulating the Standards information.



The Regulator of Social Housing has today (16 March 2022) published an update to 'Regulating the Standards' setting out its approach to grading for for-profit providers.

RSH expects all registered providers to meet the same standards, regardless of whether they have a for-profit or not-for-profit business model. All private registered providers should be well governed, financially viable, and provide safe and good quality homes for their tenants.

There are, however, differences between for-profit and not-for-profit providers which the regulator needs to take into account when assessing governance and financial viability. In particular, for-profit providers have different capital structures and cash flow dynamics and are often part of wider groups of connected companies rather than standalone organisations.

The updated edition of Regulating the Standards provides clarity to stakeholders on how the regulator will report its findings from In-Depth Assessments of for-profit providers. This will be applied when the regulator reports its first regulatory judgements of for-profit providers which own more than 1,000 homes. The updated guidance also includes a range of minor amendments to other areas of the document which are set out in the publication.

The approach aligns with the regulator's primary focus to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs.

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of RSH, said:

We are pleased to share our updated regulatory guidance with stakeholders, which sets out the way in which we will report our first in-depth assessments of for-profit providers.

All providers are custodians of people's homes and need to ensure those homes meet the needs of their tenants over the long term. It is vitally important that providers meet the standards that we, their tenants and stakeholders expect.

[Regulating the Standards 2022](#) is available on the RSH website.

ENDS

1. Regulating the Standards outlines the regulator's operational approach to assessing providers' compliance with economic and consumer standards. Those standards and the requirements they place upon registered providers are set out in separate documents available on the Regulator of Social Housing's pages on www.gov.uk.
2. Reflecting the regulator's risk-based proportionate approach, it regulates providers differently depending on their level of risk exposure. Providers which own fewer than 1,000 social homes are subject to a different level of regulatory engagement on the economic standards. The regulator's approach is detailed in Regulating the Standards.
3. The new version of Regulating the Standards updates the document published in March 2020.
4. For press office contact details, see our [media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.
5. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.

Published 16 March 2022