

Rwanda Treaty – statement by UK government

The UK government made the following statement yesterday

” Home Secretary James Cleverly has signed a joint Treaty with his counterpart, Foreign Minister, Dr Vincent Biruta, strengthening the UK and Rwanda’s Migration and Economic Development Partnership and directly addressing the concerns of the Supreme Court.

The agreement is part of the government’s plan to ensure that illegal migrants can be lawfully relocated to Rwanda under the Government’s ambition to stop the boats – ensuring that people know that if they come to the UK illegally, they cannot stay here.

Following further positive discussions between the two countries after the Supreme Court judgment, and building on months of work between the two countries, the Treaty responds directly to the conclusions of the Supreme Court and presents a new long-term solution.

The landmark Treaty is binding in international law and ensures that people relocated to Rwanda under the Partnership are not at risk of being returned to a country where their life or freedom would be threatened – an act known as refoulement.

It also enhances the functions of the independent Monitoring Committee to ensure compliance with the obligations in the Treaty, such as reception conditions, processing of asylum claims, and treatment and support for individuals including up to 5 years after they have received final determination of their status. The Committee is made up of 8 independent members.

The Monitoring Committee will also develop a system which will enable relocated individuals and legal representatives to lodge confidential complaints directly to them. It will have the power to set its own priority areas for monitoring, and have unfettered access for the purposes of completing assessments and reports. It may publish reports as it sees fit on its findings.

To further bolster assurances that relocated individuals will not be returned, under the Treaty, Rwanda’s asylum system will be strengthened through a new Appeal Body. The Appeal Body will consist of a Rwandan and other Commonwealth national Co-President, and be composed of judges from a mixture of nationalities with asylum and humanitarian protection expertise (appointed by the Co-Presidents) to hear individual appeals.”

I and my friends will be looking carefully at the text of the Treaty and at the draft legislation which will be needed to ensure the Rwanda policy can proceed without further interruption by UK Courts. The government believes

that if it can send some migrants to Rwanda the numbers wishing to come to the UK illegally will drop substantially. To achieve this the government will need to assert the supremacy of the law established by Parliament over other legal interventions.

Response to the emails about civilian deaths in Gaza

Dear Correspondent,

Thank you for your email. Like you I am most concerned about the deaths in the Hamas/Israel war and support the diplomatic initiatives being undertaken to limit civilian deaths, to pause the fighting and to allow humanitarian aid.

The UK government seeks to influence Israel alongside the USA to avoid civilian casualties and to ensure humanitarian supplies enter Gaza. The US and UK have been seeking humanitarian pauses to the fighting. The UK government assists the Qataris who are best placed to help both sides reach an agreement. A ceasefire can only happen when the two combatants agree one. To agree a ceasefire requires more work by those neutral and trusted intermediaries locally and a change of view of the two sides. I hope they can achieve a breakthrough. I will put your strong concerns to the UK government.

Yours sincerely

Fewer migrants?

Yesterday in the Common we were promised 300,000 fewer migrants in the year to spring 2024. I would prefer it if the government speeded up its changes to bring them in by the end of this year.

In proof that the UK can now control its own border, the government is setting about reducing migration. by raising the amount an employer needs to offer to £38,000. Dependents of students will not be allowed in.

The government appeared to have shaken off its wrong Treasury view that more cheap labour is good for the economy. Now the government is stressing all the costs and pressures generated by large scale migration with big demands for housing and public services.

It left Labour , the Lib Dems and SNP saying they wanted to bring in more cheap labour from abroad to undercut UK employees, arguing public services cannot survive without more cheap foreign labour. It was good to remind the Commons that more training and higher pay has solved the problem of a shortage of truck drivers. We should do the same for other shortage occupations.

Public sector employment

Between the end of 2019 and June 2023 the NHS increased its staff by 230,000 and the civil service by 67,000. It is no wonder there has been such a large increase in public spending. Other public sector administration over the same time period is up 41,000 making a total of 108,000 with the civil service.

It is true Ministers have allowed all of this to happen. Chief Secretaries to the Treasury and Cabinet Office Ministers responsible for personnel should have asked more questions about why such a huge recruitment was underway and why it was so top heavy.

It is, however, also true that Permanent Secretaries for each Department are the Accounting Officers. On their high six figure salaries they are charged with ensuring financial regularity and value for money. Why have they recruited so many to ensure such a collapse of productivity? Why hasn't the Chairman of The Public Accounts Committee, Meg Hillier, called them out or cross examined them about this huge increase in spending with no increase in output?

There have always been large pockets of over employment. Why does the Army have 650 colonels and Brigadiers?

Why does the Cabinet Office have 74 Directors often duplicating functions of departments? How many Chief Executives are there in the NHS with its overlapping CEO s of Health Trusts, national quangos and the rest? Why can they not even tell me how many CEO s they have on the payroll?

Ministers of State in each department could be empowered by Secretaries of State to get to grips with excessive administrative overmanning, under the guidance of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. They could ask for plans from Permanent Secretaries to get back up to 2019 levels of productivity for starters, as they must remember how they did that.

Productivity

The main parties and most pundits agree the UK economy has been held back by a poor performance on productivity. Most want productivity up. Most define productivity just as labour productivity, though productive use of capital and materials is also important in achieving high quality affordable output.

So let us begin with labour productivity. The cross party consensus on the need to raise it soon breaks down when you explain that the biggest part of the problem is the collapse of labour productivity in the public sector in the last three years, after a desultory performance from the sector all this century. Labour rush to the barricades and spend much of their time arguing the public services need more staff and more money to deliver. They think the extra £330bn a year this government has decided to spend this Parliament is not enough, instead of asking more questions about where all the money went to and why it is not working better. They have pointed to a few areas in health, defence and railway procurement where they think the government paid too much to the private sector but have never identified waste in the public sector itself.

Let me protect myself from unfair charges by saying I am all in favour of more well qualified teachers and medics to cope with growing demand. My immediate concerns are about the large increase in management and administration staff, and particularly in the large numbers of extra well paid senior managers and the runaway budgets of the profusion of quangos that sit between Ministers and Parliament on the one hand and those providing the medical and schools services on the other.

There is increase in the civil service and in other public administration of some 130,000 people since 2020. Since 2012 the percentage of higher grades (E0 and above) has risen from 54% to 72% of the total. Grade 6-7 are up from 7% to 14%. The civil service analysis of the workforce has a large number of charts on sexual orientation, religion and sex but nothing on qualifications and skills. It says 54.5% are women and 45.5% are men. I have no problem with them not complaining about the under representation of men as I am more interested in what they contribute and what their skills are. There are 11 grades in the civil service though we are assured not all departmental or divisional structures contain all 11 in a reporting line. It nonetheless trends to a top heavy and multi layered approach to working which can be a low productivity model.

I have tried to get Ministers to impose a ban on additional recruitment to the civil service and public administration save where an exceptional case can be made out for the need. I have urged them to rationalise senior positions as people leave. One of the obvious causes of poor productivity is the ever higher ratio of managerial to working level staff. I will be writing more on this topic