

# Press release: PM meeting with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi: 23 February 2017

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Prime Minister May met with His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and they discussed regional security, defence and trade.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister welcomed His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to Downing Street today for their first formal bilateral meeting.

They discussed a range of international defence and security matters, and agreed on the importance of efforts to combat terrorism and bring stability to the Middle East. The Prime Minister reiterated the message she gave to the Gulf Cooperation Council Heads of State in December, that Gulf security is fundamental to our security, and that we remain a committed partner on this agenda.

On regional issues, they agreed on the need to find solutions to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, and stressed the importance of inclusive political settlements as the only way to deliver long-term stability.

The Prime Minister talked about the conference on Somalia that the UK will host this year, and welcomed the Crown Prince's commitment to work together to ensure Somalia's recent progress can continue.

They also committed to build on the close and historic bilateral relationship between the UK and United Arab Emirates, including by stepping up our already strong trade and investment ties.

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# UN health agency reports depression now 'leading cause of disability worldwide'

23 February 2017 – Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, the United Nations health agency today reported, estimating that it affects more than 300 million people worldwide – the majority of them women, young people and the elderly.

An estimated 4.4 per cent of the global population suffers from depression, according to a report released today by the UN World Health Organization (WHO), which shows an 18 per cent increase in the number of people living with depression between 2005 and 2015.

“Depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life,” the WHO said.

According to the report, which was released today ahead of April’s World Health Day, prevalence rates seem to peak in adults at around 60 years of age, but are also seen in teenagers.

When long-lasting and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition leading, at its worst, to suicide. According to the report, some 800,000 people kill themselves every year, a significant number of them young adults between the ages of 15 and 29.

“Depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors,” WHO said, adding that depression can lead to more stress and dysfunction and worsen the affected person’s life situation.

To reduce depression, the UN agency recommends effective school-based programmes and exercise regimes.

Different psychological and psychosocial treatments were also noted in the report, which notes that health-care providers may offer behavioural activation, cognitive behavioural therapy [CBT], and interpersonal psychotherapy [IPT], or antidepressant medication (such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors [SSRIs] and tricyclic antidepressants [TCAs]).

Among the findings, however, the authors caution against using antidepressants to treat children or to quickly offer them to adolescents.

Some psychological treatment formats for consideration include individual and/or group face-to-face psychological treatments delivered by professionals and supervised lay therapists.

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## [‘Turn the tide on plastic’ urges UN, as microplastics in the seas now outnumber stars in our galaxy](#)

23 February 2017 – Launching an unprecedented global campaign, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is urging everyone to eliminate the use of microplastics and stop the excessive, wasteful use of single-use plastic, to save the world’s seas and oceans from irreversible damage before it’s too late.

“Plastic pollution is surfing onto Indonesian beaches, settling onto the ocean floor at the North Pole, and rising through the food chain onto our dinner tables,” Erik Solheim, the Executive Director of UNEP, said in a news release announcing the campaign.

“We’ve stood by too long as the problem has gotten worse. It must stop,” he added.

Through its Clean Seas campaign, the agency has urged countries and businesses to take ambitious measures to eliminate microplastics from personal-care products, ban or tax single-use plastic bags, and dramatically reduce other disposable plastic items by 2022.

Ten countries have already joined the initiative with far-reaching pledges: Indonesia has committed to slash its marine litter by 70 per cent by 2025; Uruguay will tax single-use plastic bags later this year; and Costa Rica will take measures to dramatically reduce single-use plastic through better waste management and education, according to UNEP.

These initiatives could not come sooner as up to 80 per cent of all litter in the oceans are made of plastic.

According to estimates, by 2050, 99 per cent of earth’s seabirds will have ingested plastic

An illustration of the sheer magnitude of the problem is that as much as 51 trillion microplastic particles – 500 times more than stars in our galaxy – litter the seas.

Each year, more than eight million metric tonnes of plastic end up in oceans, wreaking havoc on marine wildlife, fisheries and tourism, and cost at least \$8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems. According to estimates, by 2050, oceans will have more plastic than fish if present trends are not arrested.

According to UNEP actions to stem the growing tide of maritime litter could

include reducing the use of single-use plastics at the individual level such as by using reusable shopping bags and water bottles, choosing products without microbeads and plastic packaging, and not using straws to drink.

RELATED: UN environment agency urges ban of microplastics in cosmetics and personal care products

“Whether we choose to use plastic bags at the grocery store or sip through a plastic straw, our seemingly small daily decisions to use plastics are having a dramatic effect on our oceans,” said film actor and founder of the Lonely Whale Foundation, Adrian Grenier.



Plastic bottles and garbage waste from a village in Timor-Leste wash on the shores of a river and then spill into the sea. UN Photo/Martine Perret

Similarly, on larger and commercial scale, supply chains can be modified.

One such example is the technology company DELL Computers: which has announced that it will use recovered ocean plastic in its product packaging.

“DELL is committed to putting technology and expertise to work for a plastic-free ocean,” said its Vice President for Global Operations, Piyush Bhargava. “Our new supply chain brings us one step closer to UNEP’s vision of Clean Seas by proving that recycled ocean plastic can be commercially reused.”

According to UNEP, major announcements are also expected at the upcoming conference on The Ocean at the UN Headquarters in New York (5-9 June), and UN the Environment Assembly to be held in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, in December.

“The ocean is the lifeblood of our planet, yet we are poisoning it with millions of tonnes of plastic every year,” expressed Peter Thomson, the President of the UN General Assembly, highlighting the upcoming conference and urging for ambitious pledges to reduce single-use plastic.

“Be it a tax on plastic bags or a ban on microbeads in cosmetics, each country [can] do their bit to maintain the integrity of life in the Ocean.”

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**Reports that the Government is considering a concession on parliamentary engagement and a vote on**

## [the negotiations are welcome – Smith](#)

**Baroness**

**(Angela) Smith of Basildon, Labour’s Leader in the House of Lords, in response**

**to reports of potential government concessions on the Article 50 Bill, said:**

“Reports

that the Government is considering a serious concession on parliamentary engagement and a vote on the negotiations are welcome.

“What

happens next is a pivotal moment and will determine the tone and trust in the weeks, months and years to come on this issue.

“Ministers

have rightly conceded the need for a vote before the deal is concluded and we welcome that.

“Our

amendment on a vote on the outcome of negotiations has been drafted by taking note of what happened in the Commons, including ministerial comments, as well as expert advice from peers in the Lords debates. The Government will have heard the senior cross bench peer and former Supreme Court judge Lord Hope’s speech about the need for further legislation should this Bill not be amended.

“We

believe we would win that vote. The Government of course could try to overturn it in the Commons.

“But

rather than Ministers just holding to the line that they won’t amend the bill but will make a statement on the record, it would be a positive and mature signal for future progress of legislation if having accepted the principle they write this into the bill.”

**Ends**

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## [Security Council extends mandate of UN](#)

# Guinea-Bissau peacebuilding office through 2018

23 February 2017 – The United Nations Security Council today extended for another year the mandate of the UN Integrated Peace-Building Office in Guinea-Bissau, known as UNIOGBIS, and urged all political actors in the country to implement the provisions of the Conakry Agreement signed last October.

The Council endorsed the Conakry Agreement – which carries the name of the Guinean capital where it was signed in 2016 following talks between political leaders, civil society and religious leaders – saying that “it offers a historic opportunity for national authorities and political leaders, as well as civil society, to jointly ensure political stability and build sustainable peace.”

The 15-members of the Council welcomed and supported a high-level mission to the country that is expected to be dispatched by the regional bloc Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) as part of a follow-up for implementation of the Agreement.

Under its renewed mandate, which will begin on 1 March 2017 and run through at least 28 February 2018, UNIOGBIS will also continue to work with ECOWAS, its mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) and other international partners to implement national security sector reform and strengthen the rule of law.

Among its primary responsibilities, the Council mandated the Office to focus its efforts on supporting an inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation, and providing technical assistance to national authorities.

UNIOGBIS will also focus on supporting the Government of Guinea-Bissau in “mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance,” with UN partners, the African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLC), ECOWAS, the European Union (EU).

In 2014, the West African nation concluded a second round of presidential elections, which are widely seen as essential to restoring constitutional order, economic growth and development following a 2012 military coup.