

Speech: “This is only the meaningful path to long-term peace in Ukraine. And until this path is taken, sanctions against Russia must remain in place.”

Thank you Mr President and I welcome Foreign Minister Kurz to the Security Council. I'm grateful for your briefing just now. Your chairmanship of the OSCE, together with Austria hosting the OSCE and parts of the United Nations, shows how central your country is to international cooperation and to the rules-based system.

Sadly, as we heard here yesterday, the rules-based system is under threat. It's a threat that we talk about often in this chamber, but to the residents of cities like Marinka, this threat is a horrifying, daily reality. For the past three years, the people there have lived in fear, subject to the daily, unrelenting dangers that have become the norm on the front line in eastern Ukraine. Residents there speak of daily sniper fire, of daily shelling, the daily scramble for shelter. For nearly three years, they have survived without gas supplies, in the face of plummeting temperatures every winter.

These are the consequences of Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is what happens when the rules based system is attacked. We cannot allow this to become the new normal. We must use all of the tools at our disposal in response.

The OSCE has a critical role to play – and I'd like to commend the role of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in particular, working tirelessly under the able direction of Chief Monitor Apakan. It's thanks to the bravery of the OSCE's monitors that we know what's going on in places like Marinka. It's thanks to them that we know that ceasefire violations this year have already reached record highs.

It is unacceptable that the Mission continues to be fired upon and to face restrictions on access. Such actions, so often perpetrated by the separatists, only fuels suspicion that the separatists are concealing activity at odds with the Minsk agreements.

So I hope that we can all be clear today that aggression towards monitors must stop and the Mission must be given unrestricted access to all of Ukraine, including the disengagement areas and those parts of the border with Russia not under Ukraine's control.

As we heard yesterday, the long term solution to the situation in Eastern Ukraine requires Russia to end its destabilising activities in the region, comply with its commitments under the Minsk agreements, withdraw its weapons

and personnel, use its considerable influence over the separatists to bring an end to the killing, and return Crimea to its rightful place as part of Ukraine. This is only the meaningful path to long-term peace in Ukraine. And until this path is taken, sanctions against Russia must remain in place.

Beyond Ukraine, we should not lose sight of this Council's need to work closely with the Austrian OSCE chairmanship to resolve other issues affecting the region and help protect fundamental rights and freedoms. These include protracted conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabkh.

We also value the vital role the OSCE plays in risk reduction in the region and we welcome the launch of the Structured Dialogue. We support your focus, Mr Foreign Minister, on youth and radicalisation, where the OSCE with its cross-dimensional approach to security can add real value.

If the OSCE is to respond to these and other challenges, we must also continue to strengthen the organisation. One way to do that is through strong appointments and I'm pleased that the UK has put forward an excellent candidate for the High Commissioner on National Minorities position in the OSCE as a sign of our continued commitment to the organisation.

We are also pleased that our Ambassador to the OSCE is chairing the OSCE Human Dimension Committee this year and working closely with the Austrian Chairmanship.

In conclusion, Mr President, events in Eastern Ukraine reinforce just how important the OSCE is to international cooperation. The work being done there is vital to the beleaguered residents of Marinka and to all Ukrainians in the East of the country. Sadly events in Ukraine highlight the threats that countries in the OSCE area, and the rules based system as a whole, continue to face. If we are to respond to them effectively, we must continue to strengthen the OSCE, and with it, this Council's cooperation.

Thank you.

OSCE seeks to defuse conflicts, combat radicalization and build trust, UN Security Council told

22 February 2017 – Multilateral cooperation is the only way to achieve peace, security and stability, and there is no alternative to it, Austria's Foreign Minister told the United Nations Security Council today, underscoring the work of his country in its role as the Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

“As you can imagine, chairing OSCE is not an easy task,” said Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, citing the difficulty in finding consensus among the regional body’s 57 States.

“Austria has taken over the OSCE chairmanship at a critical moment. Everywhere we look, there are grave threats to peace and security,” he added.

He said that the Austrian chairmanship will seek to contribute to defusing existing conflicts, create a platform to assist States in their efforts to combat radicalization and violent extremism, and help rebuild trust between the OSCE States.

On the crisis in and around Ukraine, he said the OSCE has demonstrated its crucial role in brokering a ceasefire and its special monitoring mission has helped prevent a worsening of the situation. However, support is needed to increase the number of monitors on the ground, improve the technical equipment for monitoring and extend the operating hours along the contact line between Government and non-Government armed forces, he said.

Austria will also support all efforts to achieve progress on other conflict situations, including those in Transnistria, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turning to radicalization and terrorism, he said more than 10,000 people from the OSCE area have joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh). The most vulnerable group to be radicalized is youth, Mr. Kurz said, adding that he has appointed Peter Neumann, an expert on terrorism, as his special representative on radicalisation.

The Austrian chairmanship will also try to resume discussions on conventional arms control in Europe, and seek to launch a structured dialogue on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area.

Cyber security and social and economic cooperation – two issues discussed in Vienna recently – are areas where everybody stands to gain from more cooperation, and success in these areas will lead to more trust, he stressed.

“The same is true for human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Together we can strengthen the cohesiveness and resilience of our societies to better counter threats to our security,” he said.

In closing, he welcomed the establishment of a UN liaison office in Vienna that would enable even stronger cooperation between the OSCE and the UN.

[Tackling hunger crises in South Sudan,](#)

Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen requires \$4.4 billion – UN

22 February 2017 – Sounding the alarm on behalf of more than 20 million people in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and north-east Nigeria facing devastating levels of food insecurity, Secretary-General António Guterres joined other top United Nations officials today calling for “strong and urgent” action from the international community to help the already-fragile countries avert catastrophe.

“Famine is already a reality in parts of South Sudan. Unless we act now, it is only a matter of time until it affects other areas and other countries. We are already facing a tragedy; we must avoid it becoming a catastrophe,” said the Secretary-General, stressing: “This is preventable if the international community takes decisive action.”

Briefing the press at UN Headquarters in New York alongside the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, Helen Clark, and by video conference, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Ertharin Cousin, Mr. Guterres said the UN needs at least \$4.4 billion by the end of March to avert a catastrophe.

“Despite some generous pledges, just \$90 million has actually been received so far – around two cents for every dollar needed. We are at the beginning of the year, but these numbers are very worrying,” he said: “The lives of millions of people depend on our collective ability to act. In our world of plenty, there is no excuse for inaction or indifference.”

In South Sudan, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners aim to assist 5.8 million people this year; in Somalia, 5.5 million people and in Yemen 8.3 million. In north-east Nigeria, humanitarians are reaching more than two million people with food assistance.

These four crises are very different, but are all preventable. “They all stem from conflict, which we must do much more to prevent and resolve,” he said, urging all members of the international community to step up and do whatever is in their power, whether that is mobilizing support, exerting political pressure on parties to conflict, or funding humanitarian operations.

“Saving lives is the first priority, but we are also looking to build longer-term resilience to shocks,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that UNDP Administrator and the Emergency Relief Coordinator will set up a steering committee to link the UN Development Group and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for humanitarian assistance to ensure a coordinated long-term approach.

VIDEO: Speaking at a joint press conference on humanitarian crises in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, United Nations Secretary-General

chief António Guterres today urged the international community to 'step up' and take 'decisive action' to prevent devastating food insecurity levels from becoming a catastrophe.

Speaking next, Mr. O'Brien, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, reemphasized the ongoing effort to ensure that development and humanitarian partners will work together to tackle these crises. "We want to help people survive," he said, "but we also want to help them build more durable solutions so they will not be left in vulnerable situations."

He went on to stress that almost 1.4 million children are at imminent risk of death from severe acute malnutrition this year, as famine looms in the four countries, an issue spotlighted yesterday by UNICEF. He said that catastrophe can be averted if action is taken now. The funding noted by the Secretary-General must be made available by the end of March to make a difference. "We are ready to scale up [...] with brave and committed aid workers already in place."

Miss Clark noted that the way forward on the four crises would very much reflect the "new way of working" among relief and development agencies agreed by the 2016 UN World Humanitarian Summit, which stressed that "the priority is saving lives and part of saving lives is building resilience for the future."

For her part, Ms. Cousin said that in each of these four countries, "the plans are in place and the people are prepared to perform the work that is necessary. What we need is the resources and the access."

"Acting now, before we reach the height of the lean season in these countries will ensure our ability to provide the support that is necessary to avoid what we all see on the horizon, which is a famine in each one of these countries if we fail to act," she stated.

Carla Mucavi, the Director of UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office in New York, and Justin Forsyth, the Deputy Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), also attended the briefing.

[Press release: Communities Secretary confirms funding certainty for councils](#)

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has confirmed that councils will continue to benefit from the long-term financial certainty of a four-year funding

settlement, helping them to plan ahead with confidence.

He also confirmed he is working closely with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to determine how best to provide further support to businesses facing the steepest increases, with further details expected to be set out in the Budget in two weeks.

Mr Javid published individual funding allocations for local authorities for the second year of the historic settlement, with figures largely unchanged from those published a year ago.

It means that over the course of this Parliament, councils will receive more than £200 billion in government funding – ensuring they can deliver the frontline services people value. Councils are also able to use this increased certainty to change the way they work and become more efficient, building on the £508 million savings already delivered across local government.

It also prepares the ground for wider reforms, to ensure councils benefit from 100% business rate retention, giving them the financial autonomy they have long campaigned for. Councils in six areas across the country will start piloting this approach from April, with all councils invited to apply to participate in further pilots from April 2018.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Our historic funding deal, accepted by 97% of councils, offers the financial certainty needed to plan ahead, with more than £200 billion over the course of this Parliament. This includes £7.6 billion dedicated funding and extra flexibility to provide vital adult social care services for the most vulnerable people in our communities.

But local government funding doesn't just have to be fair for local government. It also has to be fair to the people who provide the funds in the first place, and that includes the millions of hardworking business owners who pay business rates. Working closely with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we will determine how best to provide further support to businesses facing the steepest increases, with further details expected to be set out in the Budget in two weeks.

Over the next year, I'll be working with councils across the country as we move towards 100% business rates retention, giving local authorities the financial autonomy they have campaigned for over decades.

Further information

The key elements of the 2017-18 local government financial settlement are:

Adult social care

The Spending Review last year gave councils the opportunity to raise funds to provide dedicated care for the growing elderly population through an adult social care precept on council tax.

Listening to views from councils to provide for elderly and vulnerable citizens, the Communities Secretary confirmed that he will bring forward increases in the adult social care precept. Councils can choose to raise it by 3%, meaning they will have the ability to raise an additional £208 million next financial year.

This comes on top of a new adult social care grant, worth £240 million next year, and an improved Better Care Fund worth up to £1.5 billion so councils can work more closely with the NHS.

It brings total dedicated social care funding to £7.6 billion over the settlement period, with councils receiving more than £200 billion over the course of this Parliament.

Council tax

The Government is committed to keeping council tax down and will maintain referendum principles to protect hard-working tax-payers from rising bills. Council tax in England has fallen by 9% in real terms since 2010 and is expected to be lower in real terms in 2019-20 than it was in 2010-11.

Business rates

As part of the revaluation of business rates to make bills fairer, measures such as transitional relief have been made available to support those seeing increases. However, Government is looking at how best to provide further support to businesses facing the steepest increases. Ministers expect to be in a position to make an announcement at the time of the Budget in two weeks.

100% retention of business rates

To reduce local government's dependence on central government for funding – long campaigned for by councils – by the end of this Parliament, local government will keep 100% of the income raised locally through business rates. To ensure councils with less business rates do not lose out there will continue to be redistributions between authorities.

The Local Government Finance Bill, currently before Parliament, provides the legislative framework for these reforms. Pilots of these reforms will take place from this April in Liverpool, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West of England, Cornwall and Greater London. All councils are invited to apply to participate in the pilots from April 2018.

Press release: Foreign Secretary hosts high-level foreign policy talks with South Korea

As a sign of the strength of the close bilateral relationship between the UK and South Korea, the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has hosted his South Korean counterpart – Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se – at Lancaster House in London, for annual foreign policy talks covering trade, defence and security.

South Korea is an important strategic partner for the UK, both in Asia and on the world stage. The two ministers reaffirmed the depth of the relationship and the strong commitment to work together on pressing international issues – from collaborating together to counter Daesh, to peacekeeping operations in South Sudan, tackling piracy off the coast of Somalia and enhancing our development cooperation in Africa and other countries.

The Ministers discussed regional and international security, and emphasised the importance of close work with like-minded countries to uphold the rules-based international order. In light of recent North Korean missile tests, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the UK's commitment to working closely with South Korea and other international partners to uphold and enforce sanctions against North Korea as a clear sign that the international community will not stand for their nuclear weapons programme that violates multiple UNSC resolutions.

The talks also included our strong defence relationship, which expanded last year with the first ever deployment of RAF Typhoons to South Korea, our biggest contribution to date at last year's US and South Korea military exercises, and the intensification of our already close naval partnership. We will build on this momentum this year and look to expand our cooperation in cyber, intelligence and logistics.

The Foreign Secretary also praised the UK- Korea trade relationship, currently worth nearly £11 billion, which continues to go from strength to strength. South Korea is the third largest destination in Asia for UK goods exports, and the UK is South Korea's fifth largest foreign direct investor.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

South Korea is a very important partner for the UK and our relationship is going from strength to strength. Two trading nations with a global outlook, we have established a trade working group to discuss tackling barriers to market access, trade and investment, with the aim of building on our trade relationship already worth £11 billion.

On the world stage too, we are working together to solve global

problems. Foreign Minister Yun and I have discussed the importance of close cooperation on development assistance, both our ongoing peacekeeping operations in South Sudan, and our commitments to Somalia – including the upcoming conference in London.

And on defence and security, the UK stands absolutely united with South Korea and our international partners in condemning the dangerous and provocative behaviour of the North Korean regime, which is a clear threat to regional and international stability.

Further information