

Speech: “A step-by-step approach to global nuclear disarmament is what we need to build trust and confidence.”

Thank you very much Nikki for convening this initiative.

And I want to thank all member states standing here who have expressed concern that the proposal for a nuclear weapons ban treaty would fail to address the key issues that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament.

My country, the United Kingdom, is completely committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and we recognise that we have obligations, as every country does, under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In our case, under all three pillars of that treaty.

And we have a strong record that we are proud of, on nuclear disarmament. We have reduced the size of our nuclear forces by over 50% since the height of the Cold War.

The UK is not attending the negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons because we do not believe that those negotiations will lead to effective progress on global nuclear disarmament. They cannot and will not work.

The British government firmly believes that the best way to achieve the goal of global nuclear disarmament is through gradual multilateral disarmament, negotiated using a step-by-step approach and within existing international frameworks.

A step-by-step approach to global nuclear disarmament is what we need to build trust and confidence. It will provide for tangible steps towards a safer and a more stable world where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

Finally, I just want to say that a ban on nuclear weapons will not in itself improve the international security environment, or increase trust and transparency between nuclear weapon possessor states and it will also not address the technical and procedural challenges of nuclear disarmament verification. And that is why I am standing with Ambassador Haley today.

News story: Margot James launches Scale-Up Taskforce to identify barriers to small business growth

- Launched as part of the Industrial Strategy, the Scale-Up Taskforce aims to increase the number of businesses expanding their operations
- The focus will be on helping high-growth businesses to reach their full potential both at home and overseas
- The taskforce will look at barriers to small business growth across different regions and sectors

On 21 March, Scale-Up Champion Margot James chaired the first meeting of a taskforce to help assess the barriers to growth facing UK businesses.

The Scale-Up Taskforce, which brings together entrepreneurs, investors and local bodies from across the country, was announced as part of the government's commitment to a modern Industrial Strategy that helps small businesses thrive.

Sahar Hashemi, entrepreneur and founder of leading coffee chain Coffee Republic, will co-chair the regular taskforce meetings alongside Small Business Minister Margot James.

A 'scale-up' is an enterprise that is experiencing significant growth rates in employees and turnover, over a number of years. By examining scale-ups, the taskforce's aim is to increase the number of businesses maximising opportunities available to achieve their full growth potential, which will in turn feed into the government's Industrial Strategy.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

This government is committed to ensuring the UK remains the best place in the world to start and grow a business. That means identifying and then helping those high-growth businesses to scale-up, go global and invest in their future.

I want to thank all the entrepreneurs and investors for coming along to the first Scale-Up Taskforce armed with ideas and enthusiasm, which I know will play an important role in building a modern Industrial Strategy.

Scale-Up Taskforce Co-Chair and entrepreneur Sahar Hashemi said:

We are already a start-up nation and now the opportunity is to become a scale-up nation – by removing the barriers and creating an ecosystem to enable the entrepreneurs who had the grit and

determination to start a business to capitalise on opportunities this new global networked world brings and grow their businesses to scale.

The Scale-Up Taskforce will complement the new Entrepreneurship Review led by Professor Tim Dafforn, which will examine the entrepreneurial journey from starting-up to the point of scale-up, and the Patient Capital Review led by Damon Buffini.

[It is crucial that there is effective judicial oversight of the security services' access to encrypted messages – Abbott](#)

Diane Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, speaking in response to the controversy over encrypted messages in the wake of the terrorist attack at Westminster, said:

“Labour opposes an open access trawl of all messaging. Good counter-terrorism measures are nearly always intelligence led.

“In the cases of suspects or perpetrators of serious crime or terrorism, it is crucial that there is effective judicial oversight of the security services' access to encrypted messages.

“Amber Rudd will be keen to set out exactly how the Government will ensure that law-abiding citizens' privacy is not breached.

“Fighting terrorism is a serious business, and should not be used for political grandstanding.”

News story: New cash to help vulnerable women turn their backs on crime

Vulnerable women at risk of committing crime are to benefit from tailored, targeted support to break the cycle of reoffending and turn their lives around for good – backed by funding totalling over £800,000, Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee has today (28 March 2017) announced.

Successful bidders in 6 regions across the country

- Lancashire
- Shropshire
- Norfolk
- Sussex
- Surrey
- Devon

will use the cash boost to increase the support on offer to female offenders both behind bars and in the community. This should improve life chances for vulnerable women and cut crime.

The money will be used to provide a more joined-up and tailored support for local women at risk of crime and in the justice system. It will bring together local agencies and services to provide wraparound care and support to women to turn their backs on crime for good.

Some areas will use the money to help generate better working relationships with counterparts in the NHS, courts and police, making sure that vulnerable women have access to the services they need.

One area which has already benefited from the funding has developed a successful early intervention pilot, identifying female offenders as soon as they come into contact with the police.

Almost half of women released from prison reoffend within a year. Yet many suffer from a range of complex issues including substance misuse, mental health problems and domestic violence. These require specialist support and intervention to improve lives and end the scourge of reoffending which costs the taxpayer £15 billion a year.

Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee said:

I am delighted to announce this investment in support for female offenders, which will help local areas to support vulnerable women and get them out of the cycle of crime.

Many women who are at risk of offending or reoffending have a range

of complex circumstances. Our funding will help local areas provide the support women need to lead crime free lives, helping to reduce reoffending, cut crime and make our streets safer.

I am absolutely committed to improving support for women as part of our wider reforms and we will set out our strategy to improve outcomes for female offenders later in the year.

The money will be used in these communities to put structures in place to assess and address the needs of these women at an early stage and provide the kind of wraparound support that can make all the difference in diverting them from crime.

The areas will develop their own unique strategies which are best targeted to address the needs of women in their areas, working across local public and third sector organisations.

Today's announcement builds on the wholesale changes taking place across the criminal justice system following on from the publication of the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper in November last year.

This includes giving governors more powers over education, work and health, so they can tailor support to the prisoners in their charge.

News story: Improved mail service ensures loved ones can stay in touch

The new contract with Neopost will mean Britain's Armed Forces will continue to receive hard copy, secure mail, including photos, from their loved ones, for free and with no break in service as the new imail INTouch system takes over from the e-bluey on 1 April 2017.

The new imail INTouch system will allow users to send up to eight pages, including high definition photographs and official documents. The old e-bluey system that is being replaced only allowed single pages to be sent and did not support high definition photographs. Use of the e-bluey has dropped by 98% since 2007, with the same fixed cost, meaning it no longer provided value for money for the taxpayer.

With around 4000 personnel on over 20 operations around the world, communications are very important to personnel and their loved ones, especially for those who do not typically use electronic communications.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

We are investing in a better mail service to make sure our Armed Forces can stay in touch with their loved ones for free when they are away from home.

Along with improved internet connections and global post deliveries, imail means families can now send longer messages and share higher quality photos than before with personnel serving around the world.

The MOD's new contract with Neopost will reflect actual usage and offer around half a million pounds worth of savings, which will be reinvested into welfare services like improved internet and Wi-Fi provision around the world.

By offering both secure internet calls, emails, a letter and parcel service, as well as the imail INTouch service, we have ensured that our personnel have a range of ways of keeping in touch with their loved ones while they are deployed.

Sara Baade, Chief Executive, Army Families Federation

It's good news that this service is being rolled out and there will not be a gap between e-Bluey ceasing and the new contract with Neopost beginning.

Communication with families whilst on operations is vital for morale and it is encouraging that this service will offer a raft of ways for families to stay in touch with their loved ones.

We will monitor this contract to make sure it is offering families the best service possible and we eagerly await news of how the reinvested money will be used to support Army welfare services around the world.

The MOD is committed to the welfare of its people and enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant in law, a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. Replacing the ageing e-bluey service is recognition of the fact that, to provide the best possible communication system for service personnel overseas, we must take advantage of the latest technology. This is why the funding for e-bluey is being redirected to imail INTouch and development of cutting-edge communications solutions.