

UK statement on UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet

Thank you Mr President.

Madam High Commissioner, we wish to join others in putting on record our sincere appreciation for your work over these last four years. You have been the UN's leading voice on human rights at an incredibly challenging time. And perhaps the most challenging time since the position of High Commissioner was created.

When you took up your mandate no one could have predicted the huge global challenges that we have collectively faced in recent times. It was essential that the international system shone a light on the many human rights challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we thank you for being at the forefront of that effort.

Regrettably, we have seen many more serious problems which could have been avoided.

The aggression against Ukraine remains, appalling, an ongoing deliberately-made crisis which has clearly been driven by one party – Russia. We thank you for your recent comments calling on the Russian President to halt the armed attack against Ukraine and for accountability for the violations which have occurred.

In all regions, we have seen persistent attacks against human rights defenders; we have witnessed dramatic set-backs on women's rights; and we have observed with great alarm that persons belonging to minorities have come under attack.

It is vital that your successor continues to keep these issues firmly in focus.

Madam High Commissioner, we remain hopeful that in your final days in office, one piece of business, which remains as yet unfinished, will be dealt with. The UK has been among those at the forefront in calling for violations in Xinjiang, China to be properly investigated. It is essential for all of us, that no state is free from objective scrutiny on its human rights record, and that no state can be allowed to stifle the High Commissioner's independent voice. We therefore urge you to publish your report on China.

Madam High Commissioner, we wish you well in the next chapter of your hugely distinguished life and career and thank you for everything you have done to advance human rights over these last 4 years. Thank you Mr President.