

[FCDO statement on US-Russia talks \(10 January 2022\)](#)

Press release

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office statement on the US-Russia talks held in Geneva on Monday 10 January 2022.



An FCDO Spokesperson said:

The UK is working closely with our allies and partners, including the US, to make clear to Russia that we will not accept its campaign to subvert its democratic neighbours.

Russia must stop its acts of aggression and pursue a path of diplomacy.

We are united with our allies and partners in condemning Russia's threatening behaviour and we will hold Russia to its Helsinki, Budapest and Minsk commitments.

Any military incursion into Ukraine would be a massive strategic mistake with severe costs.

At the NATO-Russia Council on Wednesday the UK, along with our allies, will tell Russia that its military build-up on Ukraine's borders is utterly unacceptable.

Published 10 January 2022

Building social cohesion, good governance and open, inclusive societies in West Africa and the Sahel.

Thank you Madame President. I would like to thank Special Representative Annadif, Executive-Director Ghada Waly and Ms Yougbare for their briefings and for their work.

Madame President, let me start on politics and by welcoming the peaceful election in The Gambia in December. This was an example of West African democracy in action. However, the United Kingdom remains concerned by ongoing transition challenges including in Mali and Guinea. We encourage UNOWAS to continue its good offices role to support the upcoming local elections in Senegal, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia, and the preparations for the Nigerian elections in 2023.

Madame President, we will have the opportunity to discuss Mali in more detail tomorrow, but the United Kingdom shares the concern set out by ECOWAS this weekend and by Ghana today on behalf of the A3 and by other colleagues, at the proposal of the Malian transitional authorities to postpone elections by up to five years. We will continue working with ECOWAS, with UNOWAS, with the Council and the international community to hold the transitional authorities to their commitments.

Madame President, more broadly on security, the United Kingdom remains concerned by the deteriorating situation across the Sahel. The prevalence of conflict and violent attacks, in the tri-border region between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger is having a tangible impact on security across the West Africa region; most recently the deadly attack in Northern Benin. This conflict is driving a high level of humanitarian need and severe food insecurity, compounded by the continued impacts of Covid-19. And as others in this Council have said, climate change is also a driver of insecurity in this region. Madame President, with these interconnected challenges facing this region, we welcome the continued implementation of the UN integrated strategy for the Sahel and UNOWAS's close engagement with the region and with regional bodies.

On the Lake Chad basin, ongoing conflict involving extremist groups in North East Nigeria and the wider Lake Chad Basin also remains deeply concerning. The United Kingdom remains committed to working alongside regional and international actors, to support better cross-border efforts to respond to the conflict and tackle the ongoing terrorist threat.

Madame President, in closing, it is clear that a holistic and integrated approach is needed to address the interconnected challenges in the region. In this regard, the United Kingdom supports wider UN integration and coherence,

including greater alignment between the work of UNOWAS and UN Country Teams. National security efforts need to be joined up with the efforts of wider development partners, UN agencies and the Peacebuilding Commission to help tackle the root causes and drivers of conflict, and to help build social cohesion, good governance and open, inclusive societies.

Thank you, Madame President.

[UK statement on Nicaragua: Presidential inauguration](#)

Press release

FCDO Minister Ford has made a statement on Nicaragua in light of the Presidential inauguration on 10 January 2022.



Minister Ford said:

The steps taken by President Ortega and Vice President Murillo to prevent free and fair elections in Nicaragua were a clear abuse of power. The elections of 7 November 2021 lacked credibility, with opposition figures detained, including seven potential presidential candidates, and a crackdown on fundamental rights and freedoms. Today's inauguration is therefore not a result of the freely expressed will of the Nicaraguan people and the UK will not attend.

This increasing authoritarianism must end. The rule of law and the rights of the Nicaraguan people must be respected, and free and fair elections restored.

The UK calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all opposition leaders and other political prisoners in Nicaragua and for the full restoration of their civil and political rights. We

reiterate our call on the regime of Daniel Ortega to fulfil its international obligations, end the repression of independent media, allow for the return of international human rights observers and establish a meaningful national dialogue.

The UK welcomes the sanctions packages announced by the US and the EU today. We will continue to voice our concerns to the Government, calling for Nicaragua to fulfil its international obligations by respecting the human rights of its citizens and bringing an end to the repression in the country.

Published 10 January 2022

[New rules to protect value of small pension pots laid in Parliament](#)



The rules, which come into force from April 2022, mean pension savings invested in the default funds of schemes used for Automatic Enrolment with a value of £100 or less will be exempt from flat fees, benefitting hundreds of thousands of savers across the country.

Minister for Pensions Guy Opperman said:

Automatic enrolment has truly revolutionised pension saving in the UK. More than 10 million people have been enrolled into a workplace pension, with an additional £28.4 billion per year being saved since 2012.

By removing flat fees on pension savings worth less than £100, we're protecting savers, particularly those who regularly take on short-term work or change jobs frequently, and helping them build for their financial futures.

2022 marks ten years since the introduction of Automatic Enrolment. Since its introduction, the percentage of eligible employees participating in workplace pensions as a whole has grown from 55% to 88% – an increase of 33%.

By November 2021, a record 10.6m eligible employees were enrolled in an Automatic Enrolment pension scheme.

Alongside the £100 threshold – known as the ‘de minimis’ – the government continues to engage with the pensions industry on wider consolidation initiatives to tackle the growth of small pots, including through the industry-led Small Pots Co-ordination Group.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

Follow DWP on:

Published 10 January 2022

Last updated 10 January 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 10 January 2022

First published.

[Government sets out new plan to protect leaseholders and make industry pay for the cladding crisis](#)

- Levelling Up Secretary resets government action on building safety in England
- Leaseholders living in their own flats will not face any costs to fix dangerous cladding, with developers and cladding companies paying instead
- Industry given two months to agree to a plan of action to fund remediation costs, currently estimated at £4 billion
- New measures to hold firms to account and restore common sense to the market

The government has today (10 January 2022) reset its approach to building safety with a bold new plan to protect leaseholders and make wealthy developers and companies pay to fix the cladding crisis.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove today guaranteed that no leaseholder living in their own flat will have to pay a penny to fix unsafe cladding.

Following Mr Gove's [letter to industry](#), the old proposed loan scheme for leaseholders in medium-rise flats will be scrapped, with industry given two months to agree to a financial contributions scheme to fund the new plan, otherwise, if necessary, the government will impose a solution in law.

In addition, a new dedicated team is being established to pursue and expose companies at fault and to force them to shoulder the burden of making buildings safe.

Mr Gove revealed a 4-point plan to reset the government's approach:

- Opening up the next phase of the Building Safety Fund to drive forward taking dangerous cladding off high-rise buildings, prioritising the government's £5.1 billion funding on the highest risk
- Those at fault will be held properly to account: a new team is being established to pursue and expose companies at fault, making them fix the buildings they built and face commercial consequences if they refuse
- Restoring common sense to building assessments: indemnifying building assessors from being sued; and withdrawing the old, misinterpreted government advice that prompted too many buildings being declared as unsafe; and
- New protections for leaseholders living in their own flats: with no bills for fixing unsafe cladding and new statutory protections for leaseholders within the Building Safety Bill

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove, said:

More than 4 years after the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the system is broken.

Leaseholders are trapped, unable to sell their homes and facing vast bills.

But the developers and cladding companies who caused the problem are dodging accountability and have made vast profits during the pandemic whilst hard working families have struggled.

From today, we are bringing this scandal to an end – protecting leaseholders and making industry pay.

We will scrap proposals for loans and long-term debt for leaseholders in medium-rise buildings and give a guarantee that no leaseholder living in their own flat will pay a penny to fix dangerous cladding.

Working with members of both Houses, we will look to bring a raft of leaseholder protections into law through our Building Safety bill.

And we will restore much needed common sense on building safety assessments, ending the practice of too many buildings being declared unsafe.

Dame Judith Hackitt, who chaired the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety said:

Today's announcement by the Secretary of State is very welcome and should come as a great relief to the many leaseholders who have felt trapped by the prospect of having to pay for remediating defects to properties which they bought in good faith.

Those who caused the problem now need to step up, take responsibility and show some leadership. This problem has gone on for too long and we need a rapid solution, not months of debate and negotiation leaving innocent leaseholders in further limbo.

The announcement that industry is being put "on notice" follows both the suspension of Rydon Homes, because of its links to Rydon Maintenance, the company responsible for the refurbishment of the Tower, from the government's Help to Buy Scheme last month, and the welcome decision by Mercedes to end their sponsorship deal with Kingspan.

The [Levelling Up Secretary has written to developers](#) to convene a meeting over the next few weeks, and report back before the House rises at Easter with a fully funded plan of action including remediating unsafe cladding on 11-18m buildings.

Should industry not come to the table and agree to a solution, the government will be forced to impose one.

Clauses in the Building Safety Bill will allow the government to introduce a levy on developers of high-rise buildings, building on the 4% tax on the largest most profitable developers, which was announced in this year's Budget and expected to raise at least £2 billion over the next 10 years to help pay for building safety remediation.

To ensure that every dangerous building has the necessary work done to make it safe, we will open up the next phase of the Building Safety Fund later this year and focus relentlessly on making sure it is risk driven.

In a bid to provide more transparency, leaseholders will also soon be able to access a new portal which will show them the status of their building's application to the Building Safety Fund. More information will follow shortly.

Protecting leaseholders

To protect blameless leaseholders in buildings over 11m from short-term enforcement of excessive bills and potential bankruptcy, the government will introduce a series of rapid measures.

An additional [£27 million will see fire alarms installed in all high-risk buildings](#) to keep residents safe and end the dreadful misuse of costly waking

watch measures, which are usually paid for by leaseholders.

The government will also work with MPs and Peers to consider further amendments to the Bill to enshrine protections for leaseholders in law, and will continue to work across government to ensure leaseholders are protected from forfeiture and eviction due to historic fire safety costs.

Changes to grant funding guidance will help those in shared ownership homes who want to sublet their properties and encourage landlords and lenders to approve requests, in recognition of the hardship shared owners are facing.

The government will also introduce amendments to the Building Safety Bill to retrospectively extend the legal right of building owners and leaseholders to demand compensation from their building's developer for safety defects up to 30 years old. The Bill currently covers defects up to 15 years old and so this amendment will give thousands more leaseholders the right to challenge.

Restoring common sense

To help restore common sense to the market, the Levelling Up Secretary today insisted there must be fewer unnecessary surveys, an assumption that there is no risk to life in medium and low-rise buildings unless clear evidence of the contrary, and far greater use of sensible, risk-mitigating fire safety measures such as sprinklers and alarms.

Following our statement in July, the government is withdrawing the [Consolidated Advice Note](#) – interim guidance which has been wrongly interpreted by the industry as requiring remediation of all cladding irrespective of building height.

The government will also support updated guidance, produced by the British Standard Institution, to help fire risk assessors take a proportionate approach to the assessment of walls and avoid wholesale cladding replacement where safe to do so.

In the minority of buildings where valuers deem EWS1 forms are still necessary, the government will introduce an indemnity scheme for building assessors to give them greater confidence to exercise professional judgement. We will also begin auditing building assessments to make sure expensive remediation is only being advised where necessary to remove a threat to life.

[New data from lenders](#), also published today, demonstrates that EWS1s are requested by lenders for fewer than 1 in 10 mortgage valuations for flats, and lenders are encouraged to continue to minimise their usage in medium and lower rise blocks.

Fairer and safer housing

The action being taken on building safety is part of a wider programme of reform to create a fairer housing system, hold landlords to account and ensure a crisis can never happen again. This includes putting forward the recommendations of the Hackitt review into law and the commencement of the

Fire Safety Act, which is due shortly.

[New procurement guidance](#), published today, will help remove incentives for industry to cut corners, while legislation going through parliament will ban ground rent charges for most new residential leases, expected to take effect later this year.