

PM call with First Minister of Wales: 17 December 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford.



The Prime Minister has spoken to First Minister Mark Drakeford this afternoon on the ongoing threat of Covid 19.

They discussed the shared challenges including the economic disruption caused by Covid and will continue to work together.

The Prime Minister invited Welsh Government representatives to continue discussions at a COBR meeting over the weekend with other counterparts from the devolved administrations.

The Prime Minister also provided an update on progress of work on a UK wide inquiry into the pandemic next year.

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Readout of AUKUS Joint Steering Group Meetings

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America recently held the inaugural meetings of the AUKUS Trilateral Joint Steering Groups, which were established as part of the governance structure of AUKUS in September 2021. The Joint Steering Group for Advanced Capabilities met on December 9 and the Joint Steering Group for Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine

Program met on December 14. Both meetings were held at the Pentagon.

The delegations reaffirmed the Leaders' vision that was laid out in September 2021 and discussed the intensive work underway across the governments and the significant progress made in the three months since the announcement of AUKUS.

The meetings were productive and the participants outlined next steps to continue the positive trajectory in implementation.

During the Joint Steering Group meeting on Advanced Capabilities, participants identified opportunities for collaboration on a range of critical capabilities and technologies. They committed to significantly deepen cooperation and enhance interoperability, and in so doing strengthen security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. In particular, participants committed to finalising a program of work in relation to advanced capabilities by early 2022. Beyond the four initial areas of focus outlined in the Joint Leaders' Statement on AUKUS—cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities—participants also discussed other additional capabilities and agreed to identify potential opportunities for collaboration in those areas.

During the Joint Steering Group meeting on Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program, the participants reaffirmed the trilateral commitment to bring the Australian capability into service at the earliest possible date. The delegations agreed on the next steps over the 18-month consultation period to define the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, and for the Working Groups to examine in detail the critical actions necessary to establish an enduring program in Australia. The participants reviewed achievements since September, including the signing of the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement and the path forward to bring that into force, which will enable full and effective consultation between the governments over the 18-month period.

The participants also discussed how they will work to ensure that the submarine program upholds their longstanding leadership in global non-proliferation, including through continued close consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The participants underscored that the three countries remain steadfast in support of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and its cornerstone, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. They reaffirmed that the three governments will comply with their respective non-proliferation obligations and commitments and that they intend to implement the strongest possible non-proliferation standards.

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States look forward to continuing to build on this momentum as they work together to deliver advanced defence and technology capabilities, including an Australian nuclear-powered submarine capability.

[UN report praises UK efforts on wildlife and forest crime](#)

The United Nations this week published a report praising the UK's approach to wildlife and forest crime. The report also provides key recommendations about how the UK can improve or build on policy-making in this area.

The comprehensive analysis, the [Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit Report: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#), puts forward a series of recommendations as to how the UK can better address key aspects of wildlife crime which the government will consider carefully.

As President of the G7, the UK led other countries in recognising wildlife trafficking as a serious crime and secured commitments from members to use the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime's (ICWC) Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit to assess their response to wildlife crime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recommended the UK exports its world-leading expertise to support international efforts to tackle wildlife crime such as from Border Force and the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

The report highlighted the UK's strength in "overarching policing structures and strategies to address wildlife crime" and that these structures could be described as "international best practice". It also recognises the UK as being the first G7 country to request the [ICWC Toolkit assessment](#) as "a commendable demonstration of leadership shown by the UK in the wildlife crime arena".

The report also recommends that the UK undertakes a review of regulations governing the [implementation of CITES](#), particularly the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (COTES) Regulations 2018, and evaluates the scale and value of the legal and illegal wildlife trade in the UK to help support the detection of, and collection of data on, the illegal wildlife trade.

Today's assessment forms part of our ongoing work to tackle wildlife crime, using the framework of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) toolkit which was originally developed in 2012.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

I welcome this report and the fact that it recognises the UK's global leadership in fighting wildlife and forestry crime. We invited the UN to undertake this analysis and we are proud to be the first G7 country to request this assessment.

There is always more we can do to tackle this abhorrent trade and we will carefully consider all of the UN's recommendations to help us build on the positive progress we have already made to tackle this issue.

Candice Welsh, Deputy Director, Division for Operations, UNODC, said:

The UK is not only one of the principal donors to UNODC in important areas ranging from wildlife and forest crime, to anti-corruption, cybercrime and anti-money laundering, but is also a leader in ensuring that the subject continues to be a priority on the international political agenda. Furthermore, the UK is the first donor country to undertake a national criminal justice and preventive response assessment using the ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit. This is yet another demonstration of its leadership in addressing wildlife and forest crime.

Jorge Rios, Chief of the UNODC Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, said:

The Toolkit analysis outlines the strengths and weaknesses in the UK's current response to wildlife and forest crime and makes clear recommendations for future action. This knowledge can be used to strengthen inter-institutional coordination, deepen the understanding of the challenges, and to more effectively prevent and address these crimes. I am hopeful that this undertaking will not only benefit the UK in its fight against wildlife and forest crime but will also serve as an example for other G20 countries to follow.

The Government recognises the importance of tackling wildlife crime and we are committed to doing all we can to protect wildlife, not just here in the UK but across the world. We are investing over £46m between 2014 and 2022 to counter illegal trade internationally by reducing demand, strengthening enforcement, ensuring effective legal frameworks and developing sustainable livelihoods.

Since 2016, Defra and the Home Office have jointly committed £300,000 funding the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit. The unit plays a valuable role in detecting and preventing wildlife crime by monitoring and gathering intelligence on illegal activities, undertaking analysis and directly assisting law enforcers with their investigations.

The National Wildlife Crime Unit is one part of the UK's network fighting wildlife crime. Police, customs officers and other enforcers also carry out vital work on the ground. In addition, the UK Border Force continues to make successful seizures and work with international partners to ensure illegal wildlife trade products do not enter the market.

The Government will now consider the recommendations to ensure our legislation and enforcement of wildlife crime is as strong as it can be.

New UK-Australia co-production agreement boosts UK film and TV

- The UK-Australia audiovisual co-production agreement has been renegotiated, helping create more skilled jobs and opportunities in the film and TV sectors
- More support for UK independent producers to build international networks and reach wider audiences
- Agreement comes amid the UK/Australia Season 2021-22 which will strengthen and build cultural connections between the two countries

A new co-production agreement between the UK and Australia will grow and promote British film and television on the world stage, supporting the exchange of culture and creating more opportunities for UK producers, cast and crew.

These latest amendments will modernise the 30-year-old agreement, making it easier for UK and Australian filmmakers to co-produce film and TV content together and strengthening the Government's commitment to creating more skilled jobs and opportunities in the creative industries.

The new agreement will allow UK-Australia co-productions to hire staff from third-party countries more easily and now reflects the UK's status as a sovereign trading nation after our exit from the European Union. Co-producers will now also be able to make a smaller minimum financial contribution towards their project in order to benefit from the updated agreement.

Since 2010, there have been more than 180 co-productions as a result of existing international agreements overseen by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), including *The Father* (France) and *Brooklyn* (Canada/Ireland). Co-productions made under the UK-Australia agreement include David Attenborough's *Life in Colour* and *Shane*, an upcoming documentary looking at the life and career of famous cricketer Shane Warne. This latest agreement will help build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic and make sure that UK stories continue to be told, both domestically and abroad.

Creative Industries Minister Julia Lopez said:

Today's milestone will unlock fantastic opportunities in the creative industry and support this Government's commitment to help more people into skilled jobs. The UK and Australia share a long and rich history of strong cultural and economic ties and this agreement will help us continue to create great film and TV together for many more years to come.

Australian Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said:

Many important and culturally significant stories have been enabled by the co-production agreement between Australia and the UK since its inception in 1990, and it provides an important pathway for Australian and UK producers to work closely to compete in the global market place.

Neil Peplow, the BFI's Director of Industry and International Affairs, said:

This revised co-production treaty provides UK and Australian producers with many more opportunities to build on the strong cultural and commercial ties we already enjoy. It will bring the two countries even closer together, and allow us to tell stories that define who we are and how we relate on a global stage.

This agreement also comes amid the UK/Australia Season 2021-22. A joint initiative by the British Council and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Season is an opportunity to strengthen and build new cultural connections. With a specific focus on film, the Season includes collaboration between ACMI, Australia's national museum of screen culture, and the British Film Institute (BFI) presenting a series of films, performance and moving image art that explore themes of representation and identity and ask 'Who We Are Now'. In October, the British Film Festival and Palaces Cinemas in Australia showcased the very best of British film to Australian audiences.

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Notes to Editors:

More information on the [UK/Australia Season](#).

This announcement comes following the signing of the [UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement](#) on Thursday 16 December.

[PM call with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon: 17 December 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.



The Prime Minister has spoken to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon this afternoon to discuss the ongoing response to the Omicron variant.

The Prime Minister and the First Minister agreed on the importance of close collaboration for the benefit of citizens across the UK.

They discussed the shared challenges including the economic disruption caused by Covid and will continue to work together.

The Prime Minister confirmed UK Government will be convening a COBR meeting over the weekend with counterparts from the devolved administrations to continue discussions.

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