

Iran's current path of nuclear escalation risks provoking a serious crisis

Thank you Mr President.

I start by thanking USG Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing. We welcome the Secretary General's twelfth report on the implementation of resolution 2231 and thank the Secretariat for their continued professionalism and support.

Thanks also to Ambassador Byrne-Nason and His Excellency Olaf Skoog for their briefings and again to Ambassador Byrne-Nason for her, and her team's work, as 2231 Facilitator.

The UK has consistently demonstrated our commitment to resolution 2231 and the JCPOA. Our priority is to see the US return to the agreement and Iran to return to compliance. We are negotiating in Vienna towards this goal.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report, the latest talks in Vienna resumed on 29 November, five months after Iran broke them off. During these talks Iran has introduced new maximalist demands, many of which go beyond the JCPOA. The process is not moving fast enough and time is running out.

At the same time, Iran's nuclear escalation is undermining international peace and security and the global non-proliferation system. Iran has continued to develop a ballistic missile programme, which is inconsistent with resolution 2231.

It is important that this Council focuses on the gravity of the current situation. The Iranian nuclear programme has never been more advanced than it is today.

Iran's total stockpile contains enough fissile material that, if enriched further, could produce several nuclear weapons. Iran is producing Highly Enriched Uranium, which is unprecedented for a state without a nuclear weapons programme and is producing uranium metal, which provides weapons-applicable knowledge.

And since February, Iran has curtailed monitoring by the IAEA, in violation of resolution 2231; and since 2019, failed to cooperate with the Agency on safeguards investigations. Iran has also failed to implement its bilateral agreement with the IAEA to service cameras and allow access to the Karaj site. So we call on Iran to restore fully all accesses under 2231, to implement its legal obligations with the Agency without delay.

We have reached a fork in the road. We hope that Iran will choose to conclude a fair and comprehensive deal that would benefit the Iranian people and nation. If Iran continues its current path of nuclear escalation, in weeks, not months, it will be responsible for collapsing the JCPOA and provoking a

serious crisis, which would require a robust response from this Council.

As the military picture worsens, the humanitarian imperatives in Yemen increase

Thank you Mr President and thank you Hans, Ramesh for your briefings. They are both informative and very sobering.

The UK is also deeply concerned by the further escalation in the conflict in Yemen over the last month. It pushes the country deeper into humanitarian crisis, with increased civilian casualties and displacement. We are particularly worried by the impact of fighting on front lines in populated areas, such as Hodeidah City, Taiz City and Marib. We also, again, condemn the continued Houthi attacks across Yemen's border into Saudi Arabia, including the recent ballistic missile attack near Riyadh. This is utterly unacceptable and diminishes the opportunity for real progress towards a political settlement.

As the military picture worsens, the humanitarian imperatives increase. Facilitating humanitarian access across the country to those in need is paramount. The UK calls on the Government of Yemen to facilitate access of NGO partners to the country to help deliver much-needed life-saving assistance.

We are encouraged by the new appointment of Ahmed bin Ahmed Ghaleb Al-Maabqi as the Central Bank of Yemen Governor. But the Government of Yemen must commit to carrying out necessary economic reforms now, as Ramesh emphasised. The international community and International Financial Institutions must also continue to assist the Government of Yemen in the implementation of reform and facilitation of immediate external financial assistance.

We should also not lose sight of the humanitarian urgency in diffusing the SAFER tanker threat. The ship continues to deteriorate off the coast of Yemen, risking an oil spill that would devastate the livelihoods of nearly four million people.

Finally, may I express our appreciation Hans of your continued efforts to chart a way forward for peace in Yemen. I know that the international community looks forward to receiving your roadmap in due course and we are committed to helping you and mobilising behind the UN-led approach. The UK calls on all parties to work with the UN to reach sustainable peace in Yemen.

International travel update, 14 December 2021

The government has conducted a review of the temporary and precautionary international travel measures introduced to slow the spread of the new COVID-19 Omicron variant.

From 4am on Wednesday 15 December 2021, all 11 remaining countries and territories will be removed from the [red list](#). As such, passengers arriving from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe will not have to stay in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival in England from this date.

As Omicron cases rise in the UK and in countries around the world, the travel red list is less effective in slowing the incursion of the variant from abroad and these temporary measures are no longer proportionate.

While all countries have been removed, the red list policy remains in place alongside the managed quarantine service policy, acting as a crucial line of defence against the importation of variants of concern.

The additional temporary testing measures for passengers taken in response to Omicron also remain in place. The government recognises the impact that these temporary health measures have on the travel and aviation industry, and they will be reviewed again in the first week of January.

Chief Medical Officer urges public to Get Boosted Now

- Part of new multimedia marketing blitz as booster rollout accelerates to offer all adults in England a jab by end of the year
- This comes as new milestone hit with 24 million boosters given in UK and 75% of over 50s boosted
- Data shows booster is needed to protect against the Omicron variant

Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Chris Whitty will call on the

public to get a booster vaccination, in a nationwide advertising campaign launching today (Tuesday 14 December) to further galvanise the booster programme.

This comes as a total of 24 million boosters and third doses have now been administered in the UK.

75% of over 50 year-olds across the UK have had their booster or third dose and over 1 million people have booked a booster vaccination appointment since the National Booking Service opened yesterday to people aged over 30 in England. The booking service will expand to all adults in England tomorrow.

The NHS in England experienced its busiest Monday ever for vaccinations yesterday (Monday 13 December) since the rollout began in December last year and 418,000 boosters were delivered yesterday alone, with 185,000 of these delivered by community pharmacies.

The latest preliminary data has shown vaccine efficacy against symptomatic infection is substantially reduced against Omicron with just two doses, but a booster pushes protection back up to over 70%, showing how vital the top up jab is to bolster immunity.

In the advert, Professor Whitty says:

There is a new variant of COVID-19 – Omicron – which is highly infectious and spreading fast.

Every adult in the country needs to get a COVID-19 booster vaccine.

Boosters give you the best possible protection against the virus and should significantly reduce your risk of serious illness and hospitalisation.

Get your COVID-19 booster vaccine to strengthen your protection. Please, get boosted now.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

We know a booster jab increases protection against the Omicron variant and in our race against the virus it's crucial everyone gets their top-up jab.

Our heroic NHS staff and volunteers are working around the clock to speed up our vaccination programme, helping millions of people to get boosted now – so play your part, roll up your sleeves and get protected.

Data suggests Omicron is extremely transmissible and is rapidly becoming the dominant variant as cases double every 2 to 3 days. The Chief Medical Officer is encouraging “every adult in the country” to get a booster vaccine and

strengthen their protection.

The UK has the fastest booster rollout in Europe, with over 23 million people having received their boost so far, but to stay ahead in this race against the virus the booster programme is opening up to give every adult the chance to get their booster before the New Year.

To boost the booster programme the government and the NHS are:

- Opening new vaccination sites across the country, including pop up and mobile sites
- Increasing opening times of vaccination sites to 7 days a week
- Asking GPs and pharmacies to do more vaccinations
- Bringing in 750 Armed Forces Personnel and 41 military planners in every region to help coordinate the national effort

[Africa and the UK: Priorities for engagement in 2022 – Minister for Africa speech at Chatham House](#)

It was very good to be here last week when the Foreign Secretary spoke. She gave a rallying call to friends and allies of the UK to build a network of liberty together.

For like-minded democracies to work together, from a position of collective strength, to forge closer ties on economic, security issues and technology issues. And lead the world into a new age of ideas, influence and inspiration.

By 2050, it is predicted that 1 in 4 people on this planet will live in the continent of Africa – so Africa really matters. To achieve our aims, the UK needs to invest and build long-term partnerships in Africa.

I want those partnerships to go far beyond African governments, so that we are working with citizens, businesses, civil society – and all those who share our goals and values.

And I want our African partnerships to have global support. We should be working together, on the greatest global challenges. Our partners should

include the African Union, but also the UN, Commonwealth, World Bank and IMF.

I want to work together in support of African nations. And for our partnerships to deliver for British business and for British people as well.

I know there is a road to travel. I want to pause for a moment, to reflect on the challenges of the past year.

The impact of COVID has been felt across every nation, and in all walks of life. African nations have suffered dreadfully.

The continent experienced its largest recession on record last year. It pushed around around 32 million more people into extreme poverty. Over 11 million girls may not go back to school, because of the disruption caused by school closures.

Unfortunately, the discovery of the Omicron variant highlights that COVID will continue to be a shared threat in 2022 as well.

South Africa and Southern African scientists deserve our deep gratitude for their leadership in the swift identification and reporting of this variant.

I am pleased that today we have been able to take eleven African countries off the UK travel red-list following the advice of our scientists. I know that the initial decision to restrict international travel hurt individuals, businesses and the local economy in each country.

The decision to red list was not one we wanted to ever have to make. I am truly sorry that we had to take this decision – but it was not done lightly.

Both decisions were based on the objective advice of our Health Security Agency experts, which were using clear evidence and data, and done to protect the health of the British public and the hard-won gains of our vaccination programme. Now that there are high levels of community transmission in the UK, it is right to remove the red list.

On COVID we know that we are not safe until everyone is safe.

The UK has been playing a key role to get more vaccinations into arms across Africa. We are one of the largest donors to Covax, having committed £548m, and that is helping to deliver more than 214 million doses to 44 African countries.

We have also provided £20m to the African Union's COVID-19 Response Fund, which supports the excellent work of Dr John Nkengasong [and the Africa Centres for Diseases Control.

Last month when I was in Senegal I visited the Institut Pasteur which with the support of the UK government and private sector, is producing excellent rapid diagnostic tests. Our support from the UK for vaccine manufacturing in Senegal, South Africa and Morocco has catalysed investment, which means we will see COVID vaccines produced on the African continent in 2022.

But we know that the long term COVID recovery needs more than vaccines and support to health services. It also needs greater economic support. So I am also very pleased that, under the UK's presidency, the G7 pledged \$80bn of finance for Africa over five years to help unlock investment in fragile economies and support economic recovery from COVID.

I want to see as much progress as possible to strengthen ties between Britain and African countries.

These are encompassed within my five major priorities for 2022.

The first priority, is to strengthen freedom and democracy because we know that free, democratic countries are more peaceful and they are more prosperous.

The peaceful democratic transition of power in Zambia, Cape Verde and Niger provide encouraging evidence that freedom and democracy are flourishing in many African countries.

My recent visit to Sudan I saw just how bumpy the road to liberty can be. We should not take for granted that progress is irreversible and we must nurture and protect the gains that are made.

I want to maintain the UK's strong track record of supporting African partners and collaborating with the AU to shore-up democracy and good governance. That includes encouraging the development of inclusive political institutions, a free media and an active civil society.

I have been following the work of the UK's first independent election observation mission. Led by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the mission deployed to observe the election in The Gambia this month. I fully expect that more will follow in their footsteps.

There is a long list of elections taking place in Africa in 2022, including in Kenya, Lesotho and South Sudan, they are a key test of a functioning democracy.

It is important that each one demonstrates to those watching across the globe that the light of liberty burns brightly in Africa.

There are some other key events in 2022 that I hope will continue to build on this positive change. Events that will encourage greater freedom and a better understanding and a respect for human rights.

The UK is looking forward to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which is going to take place in Kigali.

It will be an important opportunity for the Commonwealth family – which includes 19 African countries – which will be able to recommit themselves to the shared core values of the Commonwealth Charter and build on our priorities for prosperity, security, sustainability and fairness.

Next June, the UK will be hosting the Safe to Be Me Global Equality

conference on LGBT rights. The conference which will be held in London aims to be a catalyst for change, creating a platform to share best practice on tackling violence and discrimination, and to showcase leadership from countries like Angola, Botswana and South Africa.

We also look forward to engaging with African partners in the run-up to the Freedom of Religion or Belief conference that the UK will host in July.

Supporting freedom and democracy pays dividends for the UK too. Because that prosperity and stability abroad makes for improved security and prosperity at home.

And that brings me to my second priority – strengthening economic partnerships.

The Foreign Secretary is a strong believer in the transformative power of trade – it creates positive bonds between countries, can stimulate growth, jobs, opportunity and even freedom.

The Prime Minister has said that he wants the UK to be Africa's investor of choice.

We know that delivering economic growth needs investment – investment in business, investment in infrastructure and investment in people – particularly in education and health.

We want to be the honest and reliable investment partner that African countries want. By promoting a liberal free trade approach, we will help create conditions that support businesses in all parts of the UK and across the African continent – and that includes our work to tackle corruption and illicit finance.

Investing in African markets has the potential to bear fruit. By 2040, African countries will have the largest youth population in the world. With the right investments, young people can be Africa's greatest resource and drive economic growth across the continent.

That is why we recently launched British International Investment, to establish values-driven, high standard finance for clean, green infrastructure, and aims to leverage our world-class asset in the City of London as we support democratic countries to grow.

I saw the results of this for myself when I visited Senegal last month. In Dakar, British International Investment is partnering with DP World to develop and build a new world-class container port. This is part of a £1.7bn investment to modernise and expand three African ports – Dakar, Sokhna and Berbera that will create 5 million new jobs and increase trade for 35 million people.

This is also why we have welcomed the creation of the AU's African Continental Free Trade Area, the world's largest trade bloc. When fully implemented, a common African market will have a combined GDP of \$2.6 trillion, which will bring greater opportunities for African and British

businesses alike.

I believe deals are out there for UK businesses and the government is working to help find them. At the UK-Africa Investment Summit last year, we secured £15bn in commercial commitments.

I would encourage those of you here who are from the business world to register for the Africa Investment Conference that will be happening in January. The conference will showcase emerging opportunities across African countries, especially in clean growth.

It will highlight UK expertise and the Growth Gateway business service which supports two-way trade between African countries and the UK.

My third priority is that that growth should be clean, green and sustainable.

This is part of our commitment to deliver for the planet, and deliver on the agreements made at COP26.

It was a great honour and a huge responsibility for the UK to host COP26. We made significant headway, but Glasgow is only the start.

There are still 11 months of UK presidency to run before we hand the baton to Egypt in November next year. Between now and then, my focus will be on finding ways to assist African countries to turn those COP26 promises into tangible actions.

We want to make the most of our £200m contribution to the \$1.5bn Congo Basin forest initiative.

We want to support countries to adapt to extreme weather and the changing climate, building on our £140m commitment and working with other donors.

We want to work closely with South Africa as well as with the US, France and Germany to ensure the \$8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership gets off to a flying start, and becomes a template for similar schemes elsewhere.

We also want to see the COP15 Biodiversity Conference in China deliver meaningful outcomes to support biodiversity in Africa.

And finally, we want to develop our support for the African Union Green Recovery Action Plan, which brings a shift to cleaner, greener development.

So I've said a lot of what we want, but most crucially the UK will work with our African partners, through 2022 and beyond, to conserve and restore nature; to support adaptation and resilience to climate change; to increase access to climate finance; and to accelerate the transition to more climate-resilient, low carbon, and environmentally sustainable economies.

My fourth priority is how to make the world and the UK safer by helping African countries to become safer.

Conflict and insecurity is causing misery for millions of people. It

undermines liberty and hampers development. It creates regional instability and it creates permissive environments for organised criminals, terrorists and hostile activity.

Some direct threats to the UK and UK interests can be traced directly back to conflicts in some African countries.

And To tackle them, the UK needs to support African efforts to improve security, and resolve conflicts.

For example, we work closely with the African Union and the Federal Government of Somalia, where their peace enforcement mission, AMISOM, works in partnership with Somali security forces to bolster stability.

We also work with the AU in Ethiopia where the AU's high representative for the Horn of Africa is leading mediation efforts; and we are supporting the Union's stance on Mali, Sudan and Chad.

We have expanded our diplomatic presence across the Sahel and are contributing 300 UK troops to MINUSMA, which is the UN's Peacekeeping Mission in Mali.

We also have around £10 million invested in building stability and bolstering conflict resolution in Mali and the wider Sahel.

In Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, where the conflict with terrorist groups has caused immense suffering to local communities for over a decade, the UK Government is supporting regional stabilisation efforts.

But we want to work with African partners to help them increase their own peace-keeping capabilities.

Another issue of security, last month we saw tragic deaths in the English Channel. Illegal migration is a priority for the whole of our government. We will continue to address global migration challenges and protect the most vulnerable. We must reduce these dangerous and unnecessary journeys and break the criminal business model of people smugglers.

My final priority is perhaps the one that will make the biggest difference – Empowering Women and Girls.

As a ministerial team with a majority of women, we share the Foreign Secretary's passion for women to be able to have greater control over their own lives, and her commitment to put women and girls at the heart of our foreign policy

We want to see girls receiving 12 years of quality education, all over the world, because when you open the door to education you open up doorways to opportunity.

We want to end female genital mutilation, and the appalling use of sexual violence, including in wars.

We are also calling out human rights abusers, including Wagner mercenaries in Central African Republic, at the UN Security Council and we're shining a spotlight on the sexual abuse and exploitation that has taken place during UN Missions.

Women and children have been at the sharp end of the pandemic everywhere, including in many African countries.

In South Africa, I listened to descriptions of domestic violence becoming a "second pandemic". They are not alone. This is an issue we have been working to tackle right here in the UK too.

I took great inspiration, however, from the spirit and fight shown by the female activists I spoke to in Khartoum, who refuse to be silenced or intimidated.

In Lesotho, I saw how UKAID has helped girls go to school and access clean water. In Sudan, I met the most wonderful resolute grandmother who has eradicated FGM from her island community with the help of UKAID.

In Senegal, I heard from women – and from men – how the family planning clinic we set up is giving them choice, and with that choice it is also giving them confidence and giving them control.

I hope to make progress on girl's education issues with African Education Ministers at the Education World Forum, being held here in the UK. And in March, I'll work to strengthen women's rights at the Commission for the Status of Women in New York.

Next year the UK will also host a global summit to unite the world around action to prevent sexual violence in conflict and to strengthen commitment to the women, peace and security agenda.

I've listed five priorities today, running through all of them are two more.

One is our unwavering commitment to humanitarian aid and crisis response. In the hardest of times, the UK stands by people in need.

Secondly, the UK is a world leader in science and technology. We will develop science and technology partnerships in Africa in order to help advance prosperity, security and liberty.

I know this agenda is ambitious, and in order to deliver it I want to tap into the knowledge and expertise of our African diaspora communities and make more of that human bridge that exemplifies so many of the rich and positive links we have with African countries.

Building stable and prosperous partnerships with African nations helps build prosperity and stability in the UK. But I think we could and should be doing more to explain to and discuss with the British public the great things we do across the world and why it makes a difference to them.

I know that Dakar and Dar-es-Salaam can seem far away if you're sitting in

Doncaster or Dundee. But I hope, starting from this speech, to reduce that distance.

Our mission is to build long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with African countries that support a freer, safer, greener, and more prosperous continent.

It will help make the UK more competitive, and will help to make African nations more resilient as we face the future: together.