

UK government and Overseas Territories leaders gather to discuss COVID-19, climate change and economic resilience

The Duke of Cambridge and the Foreign Secretary Liz Truss joined elected leaders and Overseas Territories representatives in London for the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC), to discuss the global challenges facing the territories. The UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson also addressed Overseas Territories via video to begin proceedings.

The JMC, which took place from 16 to 17 November, was the first in person since 2018. Amanda Milling, Minister for the Overseas Territories, chaired the plenary, with UK ministers from across Whitehall attending various sessions.

Over the course of the 2-day plenary representatives discussed a range of topics, including the wide-ranging effects of COVID-19, the protection of the OTs extraordinary natural environments, ongoing security and law enforcement collaboration, and economic resilience.

The Duke of Cambridge attended a reception of the JMC and spoke to delegates from the Overseas Territories of the need to tackle climate change. Alongside delegates, the Duke also met business leaders and a group of inspiring young people including students and climate advocates who are working to protect the environment and tackle environmental issues in their territories, which account for over 90% of the UK's biodiversity.

The JMC welcomed the announcement of Blue Shield, the latest programme funded by the Blue Belt, to support maritime domain awareness so that Territories are better equipped to tackle illegal activities within their waters and ensure compliance with regulatory frameworks managing human activities in these fragile and diverse environments. Bermuda is the first Territory to sign up to the [Blue Shield programme which has been launched this week](#).

At the conclusion of the JMC, UK ministers and Overseas Territories leaders agreed a [joint communiqué](#).

Speaking at the opening of the JMC earlier this week, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I'm proud that Britain has been able help with vaccines and vital medical supplies, and as part of one big British family we will continue to put our arms around the Overseas Territories throughout this crisis for however long it takes.

As we face the greatest challenge of our lifetime, I'm acutely aware of the precious biodiversity at risk and as the delegations at COP26 made so clear, while your contribution to climate change

is negligible, it is vulnerable island homes like yours that stands to feel the full force of the devastating effects of rising temperatures. We will spare no effort in this great struggle, and I want to commend the Overseas Territories for everything they are doing to protect precious marine environments, including more than 4 million square kilometres of the world's ocean through the Blue Belt programme.

The Foreign Secretary said:

I am proud of the UK and the British family, and the real value the Overseas Territories bring to our family. As Foreign Secretary, I believe we have a positive proactive role to play in the world – promoting freedom, free enterprise, democracy and the rule of law. I want to ensure the Overseas Territories are an integral part of Global Britain and benefit from a confident UK, with an active presence across the globe.

I want the Overseas Territories to know they can rely on the UK, just as we have shown during the pandemic. So let's strengthen our partnership for the years ahead.

UK backs digital revolution of public services at international summit

The annual [Digital Nations](#) summit, hosted this year by the UK, saw digital ministers from Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, Republic of Korea and Uruguay meet virtually to discuss the opportunities artificial intelligence, big data, digital identity and other cutting-edge tech could offer.

The ten Digital Nations governments work together on issues relating to the digital transformation of government including the technical design of digital government services – such as the range of online services on GOV.UK and the digital identity systems that enable e-passports to function – digital infrastructure, the development and use of data, digital tools and technologies, and the digital skills of civil servants and end-users.

Technology is already helping make improvements in the UK. For example, the NHS Blood and Transplant Service scanned health data to find donors urgently during the pandemic while better data sharing is revolutionising public services, with [open banking](#) models allowing those in financial need to share their income to HM Revenue & Customs to fast-track their applications for new

welfare entitlements.

At the event today the Minister for Tech and Digital Economy Chris Philp joined his international counterparts in committing to using digital technology to improve government services and decision making. He pointed to the UK government's recently published National AI Strategy as a good example of commitments to increase the transparency of algorithmic-assisted decisions in the public sector and invest in upskilling the civil service in data sciences.

Ministers agreed to continue to use digital tech to reduce the environmental impacts of government, narrow digital divides, and build trust in digital government services by putting safeguards in place on human rights, data protection, data and AI ethics and transparency.

Minister for Tech and Digital Economy Chris Philp said:

The last eighteen months have proven that digital transformation is no longer a 'nice-to-have', but an essential tool with the potential to improve lives by building more efficient and innovative public services.

The UK is committed to harnessing the latest technology to deliver more on people's priorities and level up the country, so it was a privilege to host this year's Digital Nations summit to share insights with member countries and learn from their experience.

Following the summit, the ten member nations published a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to work together to accelerate digital transformation, continue to use technology to break down barriers between government and people, and embrace innovative digital solutions that deliver real-world impact.

ENDS

[Powering Royal Navy ships with hybrid-electric engines](#)

News story

DASA is exploring solutions for innovations in hybrid powertrain technologies that could power Royal Navy vessels and reduce carbon emissions



The [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) (DASA) is pleased to launch a new Market Exploration called [Hybridisation of the Naval Fleet](#), which aims to identify hybrid powertrain technologies for Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships.

This Market Exploration is being run on behalf of the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) Naval Ships Support Central Engineering Team and seeks hybrid powertrain technologies to explore options that will be implemented by 2030, to aid the defence environmental sustainability strategy to reduce carbon emissions by 2050. Proposals submitted to this Market Exploration should be at [Technology Readiness Levels \(TRLs\) 5-9](#).

[Do you have an innovative solution? Read the full Market Exploration now and submit your idea](#)

Using hybrid engines to reduce the emissions of Royal Navy and Auxiliary ships hybrid powertrain solutions for RN and RFA ships could reduce emissions by 20-40% by 2030. We want to understand the hybrid powertrain market for ships that meet the capability requirements for Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), as solutions will be retrofitted to ships.

We are seeking solutions per vessel, based around electrification (AC as well as DC) and electrical storage. Solutions will be able to be retrofitted to current vessels and will not have a negative impact on their individual operational capability. Preferable solutions will be weight saving or neutral.

What kind of ships will solutions need to be implemented on?

- mass of 65,000 Tonnes at a speed of no less than 25 Knots
- mass of 6,900 Tonnes at a minimum of 26 Knots
- mass of 7,350 Tonnes at a minimum speed requirement of 32 Knots

Do you have an in-depth understanding of emerging capabilities, technologies, initiatives and novel approaches that may help better our understanding of the hybrid powertrain market? Submit an idea and help inform UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) Naval Ships Support Central Engineering Team in methods for reducing carbon emissions in the Royal Navy.

[Read the full Market Exploration document and submit your innovation](#)

[Response by Belarus to the Vienna Mechanism: joint statement](#)

Madam Chairperson,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following 35 participating States that invoked the Vienna (Human Dimension) Mechanism on 4 November: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, and the United States.

[In our letter of 4 November 2021 to the Delegation of Belarus](#), and [our statement to the Permanent Council](#) on the same day, we stressed our concerns about the serious human rights violations and abuses taking place in Belarus. We highlighted specific areas of concern around (i) freedom of peaceful assembly; (ii) media freedom; (iii) continued arbitrary or unjust arrests or detentions; (iv) the targeting of opposition figures; (v) torture; and (vi) migration. In accordance with the provisions of the [Vienna Mechanism](#), we posed a number of questions to the Belarusian authorities.

The Delegation of Belarus has now replied by letter, with Annex, dated 12 November 2021.

Whilst we welcome that the Delegation of Belarus responded within the ten days mandated under the Vienna Mechanism, we regret that the content of their letter does not indicate a material change in the approach of the Belarusian authorities.

We will, of course, study the full contents of the letter in detail. However, we take this early opportunity to reject firmly some of the comments made in that letter, such as the suggestion that our concerns are groundless, and that the raising of those concerns through OSCE mechanisms undermines trust.

The Vienna Mechanism was invoked to express our concerns about the implementation of human dimension commitments in Belarus. But it also offered another opportunity for Belarus to reassess its current direction, and to consider the opportunities for serious and meaningful engagement through the unique set of tools and instruments that are available through the OSCE.

In that regard, we remind the Delegation of Belarus of the offers of the current Chairpersonship-in-Office, together with the previous and subsequent Chairs, to facilitate a true national dialogue between the Belarusian

authorities and representatives of the opposition and civil society. We underscore our call for the Belarusian authorities to implement the [2020 Moscow Mechanism report's recommendations](#). We also call on Belarus to make full, proper and meaningful use of the OSCE's institutions, bodies and mechanisms to help resolve the ongoing crisis.

Madam Chair,

In their previous statements to the Permanent Council, and now in their reply to our Vienna Mechanism letter, the Delegation of Belarus has repeatedly claimed that the Belarusian authorities are open to dialogue. So far, those words have not been reflected in their actions and behaviours.

We yet again call on the Belarusian authorities to reconsider their current approach to this crisis. And we reconfirm our commitment to continue to work together to help resolve the current crisis for the sake of the Belarusian people.

We request that this statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.

[Crime news: indictable application guidance and sending fees](#)

News story

We have amended the Criminal Legal Aid Manual guidance to help providers instructed on or immediately before the day of a sending hearing.



New guidance is now available on submitting indictable applications for representation orders when it is impossible to get information at very short notice.

In response to provider feedback, it means that we are making a very limited exception to the usual application process.

How will it work?

The new arrangements will help providers instructed on or immediately before the day of the sending hearing.

This is because it may not be possible to get the necessary information to fully complete the form.

An example would be if your client is produced from overnight police custody and does not know their National Insurance number.

In these very limited circumstances, you should still submit the application before or on the day of the sending hearing. You should include:

- all the information you can provide
- explanation of what is missing
- steps being taken to obtain missing information

We will return the application as usual, but when you resubmit you can request that we backdate the representation order. You will need to explain why you believe we should.

This slight change to the backdating arrangements will only apply to those cases where your client passes the means test in the magistrates' court.

We will be unable to backdate Crown Court only representation orders.

Where can I find out more?

For full guidance including how to bypass validation in the eForm see section 3.4.2 of the Criminal Legal Aid Manual.

Further information

[Criminal Legal Aid Manual page](#)

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