

UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue

Press release

Communique of the first meeting of the re-launched UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, which was hosted by the Government of Sudan in Khartoum on 19 and 20 October.



The first meeting of the re-launched UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue was co-chaired by Sudanese Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Sharief Abdalla, and UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford. Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mariam Alsadig Almahadi, opened the meeting and delivered welcoming remarks emphasizing the importance of the Dialogue in further strengthening and consolidating the developing bilateral relations between Sudan and the United Kingdom. The meeting was the first in the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue since the December 2018 revolution; reflecting renewed and refreshed bilateral engagement as Sudan transitions to democracy, as well as our deep and longstanding ties. In particular, in the same week of the anniversary of the Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security, the Minister for Africa paid tribute to the role that Sudanese women, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, played in the revolution. The Strategic Dialogue followed an agreement between Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and former UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab during a visit to Sudan in January 2021, to discuss UK support to the transitional government's goals, including UK support to economic reforms, and to strengthen bilateral cooperation in different spheres. Senior officials from both sides participated also in the meeting. Both sides emphasised the importance attached to their shared history, people to people links and affirmed their commitment to the bilateral relationship. The meeting, which included agreement on a number of areas of cooperation, involved a productive exchange of views concerning the civilian-led transition to democracy and UK support to transitional institutions; delivering justice and accountability, including positive engagement between the Government of Sudan and the International Criminal Court; regional affairs; and UK support to economic reforms and promoting investment into Sudan, including on renewable energy. Constructive discussions covered also peace and stability and how the UK can be a supportive partner on implementing the Juba Peace Agreement; on UK-Sudan cooperation in the education sector; on enhancing cooperation and support on

irregular migration, returns and readmission; and on defence engagement. Key announcements at this year's Strategic Dialogue include:

- An InfraCo Africa visit in November to scope opportunities for private sector investment into Sudan.
- British Council support to the development of a five-year strategy for the Ministry of Higher Education, for improving English language at public universities.
- An additional UK £20m humanitarian assistance to benefit the poorest in Sudan.
- UK support to safe drinking water to 40,000 people in the city of Port Sudan.

During her visit, the Minister hosted a roundtable discussion with women engaged in Sudan's transitional processes through their work as politicians, activists, artists and professionals. The Minister paid tribute to the role of women, and the importance of women in Sudan's political transition. Both sides welcomed the convening of the Strategic Dialogue and agreed that the next meeting should take place in 6 months, in London.

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[UK's strict gun laws strengthened with new medical arrangements](#)

The UK's strict laws on gun ownership will be tightened further to protect the public, with additional safety checks introduced for those applying for a licence, the government confirms today (Wednesday 20 October).

No one will be given a firearms licence unless the police have reviewed information from a registered doctor setting out whether or not the applicant has any relevant medical history – including mental health, neurological conditions or substance abuse.

[Comprehensive statutory guidance](#) has been published by the Home Office which sets a clear framework for police to follow when considering applications. For the first time, police will be legally required to have regard to the guidance, to help improve standards and consistency across forces in the UK.

Following the shocking shooting in Plymouth, where five people were killed on 12 August, the Home Secretary made clear that today's guidance will be kept under close review, and updated with any further lessons learned from the ongoing inquiries into these murders.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The UK has some of the toughest firearms laws in world, but we must never become complacent about these high standards.

This new guidance prioritises public safety above all else and we have taken considerable care to ensure it is comprehensive and enforceable, having worked closely with the medical, policing and shooting sectors.

We are delivering on our promise to the British people to ensure everyone feels safe in their communities.

From 1 November, individuals will be required to provide a medical pro forma alongside their application, filled out and signed by a registered doctor. The doctor providing the medical information must be registered with the General Medical Council and have a licence to practise.

Today's guidance was developed following extensive cooperation with the British Medical Association (BMA), as well as policing partners and shooting representatives, and incorporates lessons learned from previous shooting incidents.

Dr Mark Sanford-Wood, deputy chair of BMA GP committee England said:

We are very pleased that this new guidance reflects the BMA's significant contribution to its lengthy and complicated development. Public safety is paramount and we are delighted that this finally sets the standards, clarifies the national process and provides a clear approach for doctors and police forces to follow.

As doctors we support the government's overall message – that gun ownership is a privilege and not a right – and that firearms must be in the hands of only those who are deemed safe and responsible.

We have been emphatic throughout the consultation period that clarity was needed over where responsibility for licensing and safety lay and this has now been settled, with the BMA's points taken fully into consideration.

As we requested, this guidance states that doctors are responsible for providing medical evidence with the police force making the final judgement on the issuing of the firearms licence. Our close collaborative working with the National Police Chiefs' Council has resulted in unilateral agreement on this point.

The statutory guidance also sets out other areas the police should review before granting a licence – including examining an applicant’s social media, financial history, interviewing associates, or checking with domestic violence or public protection units. The importance of this is stressed in cases where the police consider that more evidence is needed before authorising a licence.

Background checks which can be conducted by the police are already extensive, spanning everything from criminal convictions and previous run-ins with the law, to evidence of domestic turmoil, unmanaged debt or even dishonesty.

Existing laws also require a home visit by the police for first-time applicants, to ensure they have utmost confidence in an individual’s suitability to own a gun with no risk to public. Two credible referees for a firearm and one for a shotgun must be provided before a licence can be issued.

National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for firearms licensing, Chief Constable Debbie Tedds, said:

We welcome the new statutory guidance for firearms licensing from the Home Office.

Police forces are responsible for issuing firearms certificates to individuals and will only do so after their application has been assessed by a dedicated team of experts, a robust process of background checks is completed and the individual meets criteria set out in the Home Office’s national legislation.

The need for medical records to be viewed by officers carrying out the licensing check is something policing has been encouraging for many years and have been utilising as part of the Home Office scheme. The consultation process has been thorough and we welcome this addition to the guidance.

Policing take this matter incredibly seriously and any advancement on the already extensive checks will help to ensure that only those who are safe to carry a firearms licence will receive one.

[View the statutory guidance](#) and the [new pro forma](#).

A public consultation on the statutory guidance and the arrangements for medical checks of applications was also held and the [government response has been published today](#).

The statutory guidance will come into effect on 1 November 2021, and has been published now to ensure that police have sufficient time to review it and incorporate changes into their processes.

Schedule released for 5th Annual Public User Event in November

News story

HMCTS welcomes feedback on reform services at online event.



We're inviting attendees to register for our latest [Public User Event, 'Reforming Court & Tribunal Services Together'](#). The event will be held virtually on Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 November 2021, following the success of last year's similar online format.

We've published the schedule for both days on the [Eventbrite registration](#) page so we encourage attendees to hold slots in their diaries for the sessions they'd like to attend. We'll send links to the Microsoft Teams sessions to everyone who registered nearer the time of the event.

Sessions from our leaders will cover a range of projects and services that make up the Reform Programme, and the progress made over the past year. They'll be particularly focused on the experiences of public users, so aimed at those who support and advise users through court and tribunal processes.

Attendees will gain an insight into the work being done to improve the user experience and have the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions.

We've now confirmed sessions on the programme, including remote hearings, improving defendant engagement, whiplash reform and online divorce. We encourage you to register on the Eventbrite page and check that page for the latest information.

The event will include live demonstrations of online services, with sessions covering crime, civil, family, tribunals and cross-jurisdictional services.

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[New UK Atomic Energy Authority board ready to take on fusion challenges](#)

The UK Atomic Energy Authority's new board holds its first meeting on 13 December, following the recruitment of a team of world-renowned physicists and highly-skilled professionals as directors. The board will lead the authority into a new era of unique and exciting challenges. These challenges include overseeing the authority's main research into fusion at Culham Centre for Fusion Energy (through operation of the JET and MAST fusion experiments) and, further into the future, positioning the Authority to best exploit work on the new international ITER device and future fusion power plants.

Professor Roger Cashmore chairs the new board. Professor Cashmore was formerly the Director of Research and Deputy Director General of CERN. He is finishing a successful 7-year stint as Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford.

Professor Cashmore will be joined by new board members Professor Keith Burnett, currently the Vice Chancellor of Sheffield University, and Dr Steve McQuillan, formerly CEO of the National Physical Laboratory. Peter Jones, currently Chairman of the Audit Committee of National Nuclear Laboratory, and Martin Cox, the authority's Operations Director, round off the impressive list of additions to the board.

Roger Cashmore said:

It's exciting to be working with such highly qualified and eminent physicists and engineers, who all believe, like me, in a great future for nuclear energy – in particular fusion. With the experience and skills of the new board members, I'm confident that we can provide the leadership that the authority deserves as it tackles matters of huge importance to the UK and the future energy needs of the world.

More information

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Notes to editors

UK Atomic Energy Authority

Originally formed in 1954 to carry out nuclear research for the Government, the Authority now manages the UK fusion research programme at Culham Centre for Fusion Energy in Oxfordshire, including the Mega Amp Spherical Tokamak (MAST) experiment. It also operates the Joint European Torus (JET) fusion facility on behalf of the European Fusion Development Agreement (EFDA) at Culham. Fusion research at Culham is funded by the Research Councils UK Energy Programme and by the European Union under the EURATOM Treaty. See <http://www.uk-atomic-energy.org.uk> and www.ccf.ac.uk for more information.

Director profiles

Roger Cashmore was the Director of Research and Deputy Director General of CERN from 1999 to 2004. In that capacity he was primarily responsible for the major experiments and facilities (ALICE, ATLAS, CMS and LHC-b) at the newly-constructed Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at the CERN Laboratory in Geneva, Switzerland. These experiments have taken 15 years to design, build, commission, and operate and are now making spectacular measurements in a totally new energy regime, pushing back the frontiers of knowledge in high-energy particle physics. In September 2011 he retires as Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford after seven years in the post.

Keith Burnett became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield in 2007. Previously he was Head of the Division of Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences at the University of Oxford, having been a professor of Physics there for almost 20 years.

Stephen McQuillan is currently the CEO of a listed UK Engineering group – Avingtrans plc. His previous position was as Director/CEO of the National Physical Laboratory (working for Serco). Prior to joining NPL, Stephen ran a division of Oxford Instruments.

Peter Jones became a non-executive director of the National Nuclear Laboratory and Chairman of its Audit Committee in August 2009. Peter is also a qualified Chartered Accountant and has had exposure to a wide range of financial management and planning issues in a wide range of sectors varying from financial services to electricity production.

Martin Cox is a theoretical physicist who joined Culham upon graduating, working on plasma modelling. From 2000, when the Authority assumed responsibility for the operation of JET on behalf of the European fusion community, he became manager of the Machine Operations Department, overseeing

the operation of most of the JET facilities as well as the MAST device. In 2007 he became Senior Manager for all aspects of JET operation and in 2008 was appointed Assistant Director (Operations). He was appointed Operations Director on 1 November 2009.

Fusion energy

Fusion is the process which powers the Sun and stars. When light atomic nuclei fuse together to form heavier ones, a large amount of energy is released.

To utilise fusion as an energy source on Earth, gas is heated to extreme temperatures, over 100 million degrees – hotter than the centre of the Sun. This creates a plasma in which fusion reactions take place. A commercial power station will use the energy produced by fusion reactions to generate electricity.

Fusion will have major advantages as an energy source:

- no atmospheric pollution: the fusion reaction produces helium, which is not a greenhouse gas
- abundant fuels, found in seawater and the Earth's crust, with supplies for millions of years
- no long-lived radioactive waste
- an inherently safe system: even the worst conceivable accident would not require evacuation of the surrounding population
- the fusion research programme's objectives are to obtain and study conditions approaching those needed in a power plant, using the 'tokamak' machine concept – effectively a magnetic bottle which contains the hot plasma. The next step is ITER, an international tokamak experiment which should provide a full scientific demonstration of the feasibility of fusion in powerplant-like conditions. The facility is now being constructed at Cadarache in the south of France. ITER (www.iter.org) will be followed by a demonstration fusion power station, DEMO, and electricity from fusion is expected to be on the grid by 2040.

Professor Steve Cowley appointed Fellow of the Royal Society



Professor Steve Cowley at FRS

Professor Cowley's award is in recognition of his outstanding contributions to fusion research, which aims to copy the fusion of atoms that takes place in the core of the Sun for a new source of energy in the power stations of the future. His career as a fusion physicist has spanned spells at Culham, Princeton University, University of California Los Angeles and Imperial College London. As well as being CEO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, Professor Cowley is a part-time professor at Imperial College, London, and one of the Prime Minister's scientific advisers as a member of the Council for Science and Technology.

He is one of only 50 scientists to be chosen for this year's Fellowship. Considered to be the pinnacle of achievement in science, the Fellowship is made up of the most eminent scientists and technologists from the UK and the Commonwealth, including around 80 Nobel Laureates. Winners are chosen for their scientific achievements and elected by existing Fellows.

Professor Cowley, who will be admitted to the Fellowship at a ceremony in July, said:

I am honoured, delighted and frankly overawed to be elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society. It has been my privilege to work with many exceptional scientists – especially at Culham – who, like me, wish to make fusion power a reality. This award recognises all of our work.

Sir Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society, said:

Science helps us to better understand ourselves and the natural world on which we depend. Building scientific knowledge helps us face some of the planet's biggest challenges such as food shortages, climate change and tackling disease. These scientists who have been elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society have already contributed much to the scientific endeavour, whether that is in academia, industry or government.

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Last updated 20 October 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 20 October 2021

Change from nuclear fusion to fusion energy wording

2. 23 May 2014

First published.