

# Early parliamentary elections in Moldova: UK statement

World news story

Ms. Deirdre Brown, Deputy Head of the UK Delegation to the OSCE, congratulate the people of Moldova on the successful conduct of their early parliamentary elections.



Thank you Madam Chair. I would like to thank the esteemed delegation of the Republic of Moldova for updating the Permanent Council on the early parliamentary elections held in their country on 11 July. We congratulate the people of Moldova on the successful conduct of these elections.

We would also like to thank ODIHR for observing these elections and for its [statement of preliminary findings and conclusions](#).

We welcome the findings that the elections were well administered, competitive and that fundamental freedoms were broadly respected. That candidates had ample opportunities to campaign and voters were provided a wide range of alternatives. And that Election day itself was calm, transparent and the process was assessed overwhelmingly positively. We commend those who contributed to achieving this, especially the administrators of polling stations.

However, we regret to note that persistent challenges remain. Decisions regarding the number of polling stations to be established abroad and for voters residing in localities in the Transnistrian region of Moldova raised questions about impartiality of the Central Election Commission. We deplore the use of financial inducements to encourage citizens from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova to vote, and call on those responsible to desist from this practice. Moreover, the Observer Mission's preliminary statement also noted that while there has been some progress in addressing previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, further improvements are needed in particular to the legal framework on the complaints and appeals process and on campaign finance oversight.

We look forward to the valuable recommendations to come in the Election Observation Mission's final report. We encourage the Government of the Republic of Moldova to implement these and previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, in order to make full use of this valuable tool provided by ODIHR to make further improvements to the electoral process.

The UK will continue our close partnership with Moldova, including through support for reforms which reinforce the rule of law and democracy, and promote prosperity. We will also continue to take steps designed to help create conditions conducive to a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the Transnistrian conflict.

Thank you Chair.

Published 16 July 2021

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## [26th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide: UK statement](#)

World news story

Ms. Deirdre Brown, Deputy Head of the UK Delegation to the OSCE, commemorates the victims and honour the survivors of the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina on its 26th anniversary.



On 11th July we paused to remember the victims and honour the survivors of the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina on its 26th anniversary.

The genocide claimed the lives of over 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys and led to the displacement of over 20,000 women and children who were forcibly expelled from their homes.

The United Kingdom continues to play a vital role in ending impunity for these horrific crimes as we have shown by agreeing to provide the prison cell

so Radovan Karadzic can serve his life sentence following his conviction by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals for the Srebrenica genocide and War Crimes.

The Foreign Secretary in [his message to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) reiterated the UK's ongoing commitment to supporting reconciliation across the Western Balkans.

Over the past 26 years, the UK has provided millions of pounds to support projects relating to the Srebrenica genocide, including support for the victims' families and survivors. We now have an ongoing project with the Srebrenica Memorial Centre to develop its operational capacities and establish a globally relevant centre for genocide research, prevention, and reconciliation.

It remains a great concern that some continue to deny the genocide. Two international courts, the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former-Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Court of Justice, after exhaustive legal processes, have ruled that Srebrenica was a genocide.

We continue to urge political leaders in the region to reject hate speech, to condemn any glorification of the perpetrators of genocide and war crimes, and to respect the verdicts of international and domestic courts.

Published 16 July 2021

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## **[Recent developments in Belarus: UK statement, 16 July 2021](#)**

Madam Chairperson,

It is with regret that we must speak again about the further deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus. Over the last two weeks, the Belarusian regime has launched another wave of crackdowns on independent media, human rights defenders and civil society organisations. Raids, searches and detentions have taken place in offices and homes across the country. On the morning of 14 July, searches were carried out against various human rights organisations including Viasna, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and Human Constanta. Dozens of individuals have been detained.

We share the concerns of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in her [24th June statement](#) about amendments to the Belarusian laws on media, mass events and criminal liability. The changes to the laws will place excessive restrictions on media actors and shrink the space for freedom of expression.

The changes to the laws are detrimental to an already dire situation. The authorities' forced entry into a number of media offices, the detention of journalists with criminal charges brought against them, and the blocking of the Nasha Niva website – one of the very few remaining independent news outlets in Belarus – are simply unacceptable. We urge the Belarusian authorities to halt their persecution of independent media, unblock access to media websites and release all those held on political grounds.

Madam Chairperson,

The verdict and sentencing of Viktor Babaryka last week on what is widely believed to be trumped-up, politically motivated, charges is another example of the regime using any tool they can to silence critics and stifle any form of political opposition. The fact that independent media and diplomats continue to be blocked from observing trials, and lawyers are being stripped of their licences to stop them defending their clients, highlights the unjust and political nature of such proceedings.

We have further reports of poor conditions, torture and ill treatment in prisons and detention centres. Again, we call on the Belarusian authorities to launch proper, transparent and independent investigations into all reports of mistreatment and violations of human rights. And we call, again, for the release of all political detainees and journalists and those imprisoned for voicing opposition to the Lukashenko regime.

We are also concerned about the regime's facilitating of trafficking of vulnerable migrants across the border, a purposeful act intended to undermine the support offered by people in neighbouring countries who have shown solidarity for Belarusian democracy.

Madam Chairperson,

We continue to support the offer of the current and previous OSCE Chairpersons-in-Office to facilitate a genuine national dialogue and urge the Belarusian authorities to take up this offer. We also remind the Belarusian authorities, and this Permanent Council, that the recommendations of the independent report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, provide a clear roadmap to end the political and human rights crisis that engulfs Belarus.

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## [World first process achieves significant hazard reduction at Dounreay](#)

Around 1,810 litres of radioactive sodium coolant (approximately 1.7 tonnes) remaining in a 'heel' pool at the base of the reactor vessel in the Prototype

Fast Reactor (PFR) has been pumped out using specially designed equipment.

Removing the heel pool was a major hurdle in the programme that has now been overcome, as the amount of liquid metal had to be reduced before the interior of the reactor vessel could be treated. It paves the way for the next step in the decommissioning of PFR to take place.

The project continued through the pandemic, with the team following COVID-19 safe ways of working to keep themselves and their colleagues protected.

Project Manager James Robertson said:

This has been a significant challenge. The team has delivered a project that is really at the cutting edge of decommissioning, something that's truly world class. This was Dounreay at its best delivering a highly complex decommissioning task in a way that demonstrated a really innovative and collaborative working approach.

## **A project full of challenges and innovation**

The DSRL project team worked closely with the supply chain to develop an innovative technical solution to the removal of the sodium; since the heel was difficult to access a flexible 65m long pumping and camera system that could operate in temperatures of several hundred degrees had to be designed, manufactured and tested.

The sodium, which had solidified at the bottom of the reactor, first had to be melted. Bespoke heaters similar in shape to the petals of a flower were designed by the project team, and deployed through holes drilled through the base of the reactor leak jacket and attached to the underside of the reactor vessel to melt the sodium from the outside.

Access to the heel pool at the bottom of the reactor wasn't straightforward either. Locating the sodium heel with the pump was like threading the eye of a needle by the operators on the reactor top. They manoeuvred the flexible pump system through a challenging route, negotiating 90 degree and 180 degree bends and other obstacles on the way to the bottom of the reactor vessel, while maintaining containment.

[Watch the progress of the pump and camera](#)

The heel pool project team has been working for the last 4 years from the initial design to get the project to this stage. They spent months rehearsing the moves and skills required to position the pump in the heel pool, using a mocked up version of the reactor internals and making changes to the equipment where necessary. Extracting the sodium also needed the operators to develop skills to undertake a task never performed previously.

The team believes the process is a world first for the site, and the innovation and learning can be applied to other decommissioning projects UK-

wide, where hazards are difficult to access.

Lead Commissioning Engineer Joe Christie said:

The technical and practical challenges to overcome were considerable. The project required the support from all the disciplines and specialists available on site as well as our contractors off site. The project could not have been delivered without this collaborative approach.

The project is also a showcase for the design and engineering skills available in Caithness.

The heel pool pump was designed in-house, and fabricated locally by Gows Lybster Ltd, who also manufactured a shielded tank where the sodium was transferred into.

The special heaters that were used to melt the sodium were also designed in-house and fabricated locally by JGC Technical Services Ltd, Forsyths and Arch Henderson.

Senior Project Manager Graeme Dunnett said:

The removal of the sodium heel from the reactor vessel is a significant achievement and important step forward in the decommissioning programme of the PFR complex by a team of local contractors and DSRL workers. Hazard reduction is a priority for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the site and this takes us another step along that journey. I'm particularly pleased that this work was carried out safely and with no environmental impact.

DSRL Managing Director Mark Rouse added:

A huge well done to the heel pool team – and every single person in the company who supported them in any capacity – for achieving their target ahead of the date we had set. This was not an easy task; it was technically and practically difficult and required a lot of resilience in the face of disappointments and setbacks as they explored the limits of what was known and what has been done before.

The next phase will be to decommission and remove the pump from the reactor and install a water vapour nitrogen system, using purpose built skids, which will remove the sodium residues from the reactor vessel and pipework. The project is on course to complete the clean out work by the end of 2023.

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## UN Human Rights Council 47: UK closing statement

I am delighted by the huge support we have received for the UK and UAE led resolution on girls' education, which remains a major international priority for the UK. This is the first UN resolution to call on states to ensure access to at least 12 years of quality education for all girls, amidst the largest disruption to education in global history.

The UK has remained unwavering in its commitment to gender equality and women and girls' rights, particularly in the face of COVID-19. I am pleased that this session we have co-sponsored resolutions on the elimination of violence against women and girls with disabilities, and preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.

During this session the UK supported Canada's statement, alongside a record 42 countries, setting out serious concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in China, including systematic human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang, the restrictions of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong, and the continuing restrictions in Tibet. The UK reiterates its commitment to defending freedom of religion or belief for all and promoting respect between different religious communities. We call for China to allow immediate and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The UK reiterated our call on Myanmar's military to respect human rights and the democratic wishes of the people. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate due to conflict, a new wave of Covid-19, and lack of access to basic services and humanitarian assistance. The UK was pleased to join consensus on an OIC led resolution on the Rohingya. We were however concerned by language calling for 'immediate' returns of Rohingya refugees as returns under unsafe conditions would be unacceptable. Myanmar must take steps to protect the Rohingya.

I welcome the Council's adoption of a UK-led resolution on Syria, where the human rights situation remains appalling. This session's text focused on missing people, many of whom have likely been tortured or killed, but whose families do not know their fate. This resolution also referenced the wider human rights situation, including the need for unimpeded aid access to prevent further suffering.

I was pleased that the Council adopted a balanced, moderate resolution on the conflict in Tigray. There are very credible allegations of atrocities, including conflict related sexual violence having been carried out by all sides in Tigray. It is important that the joint investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission be supported as it continues to gather evidence and that it is

properly mandated to brief this Council.

I welcome the renewal of the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Belarus and urge the Belarusian authorities to grant the Special Rapporteur immediate access to the country. The UK remains deeply concerned by the repression of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including by the forced diversion and landing of a civil airliner in Minsk in order to arrest an independent journalist and his partner. I also welcome the Council's adoption of resolutions on Eritrea and Ukraine, and on a range of thematic resolutions, including corruption and human rights, human rights on the internet, and racism. The Human Rights Council continues to play an essential role in promoting human rights and holding to account those who violate or abuse them. The UK remains strongly committed to supporting the Council and the wider international community in championing human rights.