

Joint Statement by Embassies of Argentina and the United Kingdom marking International LGBT+ Pride Day in Paraguay.

World news story

The co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC), Argentina and the United Kingdom, join together to commemorate International LGBT+ Pride Day.



Argentina Ambassador Oscar Peppo (left) and British Ambassador Ramin Navai (right) pictured in front of the “La Serafina” cultural centre.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines in its first article that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. More than 70 years later, discriminatory attitudes based on sexual orientation and gender identity are still strongly entrenched in all regions of the world.

As co-chairs of the ERC, we want to take a moment to commemorate International Pride Day and draw attention to the challenges still faced by people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions and sexual characteristics in Paraguay and across the world. 28 June is a day to denounce the human rights violations that these individuals face every day, but it is also a day of pride, hope and a celebration of diversity.

To mark the occasion, we paid a visit to ‘La Serafina’ cultural centre. La Serafina was founded by local organisation Aireana that works for lesbian rights, and is a physical space for sharing, learning and exchanging information, culture, and knowledge. The community holds meetings, talks, discussions, debates and training as well as other educational and recreational activities.

Since its creation in 2016, the ERC has worked to unite governments and civil society in pursuit of a common goal to promote the human rights of all people

and ensure their inclusive development, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sexual characteristics. We must leave no one behind.

Let us double our efforts towards a more open, inclusive and diverse society!

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Syria: Joint Statement on the Ministerial Meeting

We, the Ministers and representatives of the United States, Italy, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, the United Kingdom, and representatives of the Arab League and European Union, met today on the margins of the Defeat ISIS Coalition Ministerial to discuss the crisis in Syria. We stressed the critical importance of meeting humanitarian needs, including life-saving assistance and COVID-19 response for all Syrians in need through all modalities, including through the provision and expansion of the UN cross-border mechanism to which there is no adequate alternative. We also underlined the importance of continued support to Syrian refugees and host countries until Syrians can voluntarily return home with safety and dignity in line with UNHCR standards.

We welcomed UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen's briefing and reaffirmed strong support for UN-led efforts to implement all aspects of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, including continued support for an immediate nation-wide ceasefire, the unimpeded and safe delivery of aid, and the Constitutional Committee, as well as fighting against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Reaffirming the unity and territorial integrity of Syria, we remain committed to continue working actively to reach a credible, sustainable, and inclusive political solution based on Resolution 2254. This is the only solution that will bring an end to Syria's decade long conflict and guarantee the security of the Syrian people and fulfil their aspirations.

Cameroon receives humanitarian

assistance for vulnerable groups affected by conflicts

World news story

The UK provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups affected by the conflicts in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions of Cameroon.



Humanitarian Relief in the Far North

The British High Commissioner to Cameroon, H.E. Dr Christian Dennys-McClure has recently completed two official visits to three regions of Cameroon – the South-West, North-West and Far North. In all three regions he met with partners working to address the humanitarian crises impacting the Far North, North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

In the past 3 years, the UK has spent over £20m to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity in these crisis-affected regions through multilateral partners including UNICEF, WFP and ICRC. This has resulted in:

- the UK supporting 11,000 beneficiaries with unconditional cash assistance to people in the North-West and South-West to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, including pregnant and lactating women, girls, persons with special needs and people with disabilities
- the UK supporting the construction of at least 6 primary health structures to the east of Bamenda, provision of preventive care including vaccinations, medical evacuation to surgical centres in Kumbo and Bamenda and subsidising hospital costs of patients hospitalised because of traumatic injury
- the UK supporting at least 36,000 people in Health, Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH), and protection targeted at children and women through the Comprehensive Child Response
- an additional 59,000 people in the South-West, North-West and Far North, receiving assistance in livelihoods, food security, water, sanitation and health

The British High Commissioner to Cameroon, Dr Christian Dennys-McClure said:

The UK is determined to be and to remain a force for good in Cameroon to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. We reiterate our support for humanitarian principles and call on all actors, state and non-state to enable humanitarian actors the access to carry out their activities safely.

Further information

For more information, contact the Press and Public Affairs Officer, Mireille Djob on mireille.djob@fcdo.go.uk.

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19 July remains our target date for ending restrictions

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to have been asked to become Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

I understand the responsibility that comes with this job, especially at this critical moment.

As someone who has sat on these front benches for many years, this past year has been a difficult one.

I've been frustrated not to be able to play my part in helping to meet the greatest public health challenge our country has ever faced.

I'm especially proud, Mr Deputy Speaker, to have been given this opportunity for public service.

Nothing embodies the spirit of public service more than our National Health Service and those who work in our social care.

I've seen it myself in my constituency in Bromsgrove – and I saw it again just this morning at St Thomas' Hospital where I met doctors, nurses and volunteers who have moved such mountains this past year.

Now they're helping us vaccinate our way out of this pandemic.

I pay tribute to them all, and I pledge to do everything I can to deliver for them, and the people of this great country and I look forward to working with

colleagues on all sides of the House, as we work together on that vital mission.

We are making phenomenal progress with our vaccination programme.

Vaccination is now open to every adult in the country: 84% of adults have got a jab and 61% of adults have had 2 doses.

This progress has allowed us to safely take those first 3 steps out of lockdown – and on towards greater freedoms we enjoy today.

We owe this strong position, not only to the NHS, but everyone that has played their part.

I want to take this opportunity also to pay tribute to my predecessor, my RHF the Member for West Suffolk, who had worked hard through these testing times.

He achieved a great amount in the work that he did, and I know he will have more to offer in public life. I wish him all the very best.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there remains a big task ahead of us: to restore our freedoms, freedoms that, save for the greatest of circumstances, no government should ever wish to curtail.

So my task is to help return the economic and cultural life that makes this country so great – while of course protecting life and our NHS.

That task has been made all the more difficult by the Delta variant, which we now know makes up 95% of new cases in the UK.

Not only does it spread more easily, but the evidence points to a higher risk of those who have not been vaccinated needing hospital treatment – compared to the previously dominant Alpha variant.

This narrowing of the race between the virus and the vaccine led to this government's difficult decision to pause step 4 on our roadmap until 19 July.

We're using this extra time to protect as many people as we can.

When the government took that decision on June 14, over 4.3 million over 40s had had a first dose but not a second.

That's now down to 3.2 million people over 40.

We can all be assured by how many more people are getting the life-saving opportunity that a vaccine offers.

So Mr Deputy Speaker, at this 2-week review point, I want to update the House on our progress to our roadmap to freedom.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our aim is that around two-thirds of all adults in this country will have had both doses by 19 July.

We're bringing forward second doses, and bringing forward our target for

first doses too, so we can meet that 19 July goal.

Vaccine uptake remains sky high.

We've seen that age is no barrier for enthusiasm for getting the jab.

As of this weekend, more than half of adults under 30 have taken up the chance to be vaccinated – including, in the last couple of weeks, all 3 of my own adult children.

And our vaccines are working – including against the Delta variant.

The latest modelling from Public Health England shows they have saved over 27,000 [27,243] lives and have prevented over 7 million people from getting COVID-19.

We do know that after a single dose of vaccine the effectiveness is lower against this new Delta variant at around a 33% reduction in symptomatic disease.

But 2 doses of the vaccine are just as effective against hospital admission with the Delta variant, compared to the Alpha variant.

The jabs are making a difference in our hospitals too.

In January, people over 65 who were vaccinated earlier in our programme made up the vast majority of hospital admissions.

The latest data show that group now makes up less than a third.

While cases are now are ticking up, the number of deaths remains mercifully low – and we'll continue to investigate how our vaccines are breaking that link between cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

And I'm encouraged by new data just today from Oxford University's 'mix and match' trial which show that a mixed schedule of jabs – such as getting the AstraZeneca jab first then Pfizer second – could give our booster vaccination programme more flexibility – and possibly even some better immune responses.

Finally Mr Deputy Speaker, we continue to see a rise in hospitalisations – although in line with the kinds of numbers we had anticipated at this point on our roadmap.

The number of people needing hospital treatment for COVID-19 has doubled since the start of May.

Admissions are most clearly increasing in the North East and South West of England so we've been boosting testing centres and vaccines in those areas and keeping a close watch on the numbers.

I spent my first day as Health Secretary just yesterday looking at the data and testing it to the limit.

And whilst we decided not to bring forward step 4, we see no reason to go

beyond 19 July.

Because in truth: no date we choose comes with zero-risk for COVID.

We know we cannot simply eliminate it – we have to learn to live with it.

We also know that people and businesses need certainty. So we want every step to be irreversible.

And make no mistake, Mr Deputy Speaker: the restrictions to our freedoms must come to an end.

We owe it to the British people, who have sacrificed so much, to restore their freedoms as quickly as we possibly can – and not to wait a moment longer than we need to.

So Mr Deputy Speaker, with the numbers heading the right direction – all while we protect more and more people each day – 19 July remains our target date.

The Prime Minister has called it our ‘terminus date’.

For me, the 19 July is not only the end of the line but the start of an exciting new journey for our country.

So Mr Deputy Speaker: at this crucial moment in our fightback against this pandemic, we must keep our resolve and keep on our roadmap to freedom – so, together, we can beat this pandemic and we can build back better.

It is a task I’m deeply honoured to lead – and one I know will succeed.

I commend this statement to the House.

COVID-19 vaccines have prevented 7.2 million infections and 27,000 deaths

Press release

New analysis suggests the vaccination programme has prevented between 6.4 and 7.9 million infections and 26,000 and 28,000 deaths in England alone.



Latest [modelling analysis](#) from Public Health England (PHE) and the University of Cambridge's MRC Biostatistics Unit suggests that the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme has so far prevented an estimated 7.2 million infections and 27,000 deaths in England alone.

This is the first analysis giving an estimated number of vaccine-prevented infections, providing further evidence of the staggering impact of the vaccination programme so far.

PHE Head of Immunisation Dr Mary Ramsay said:

These findings remind us once again why getting both doses of your vaccine is the most important thing you can do to stop the spread of this terrible disease.

As well as preventing the deaths of tens of thousands from COVID-19, for the first time we can now appreciate the huge impact that the vaccines have had on stopping people getting infected, and therefore passing the virus on to others.

The results were produced using the PHE and Cambridge [real-time pandemic surveillance model](#), looking at the direct and indirect impact of the COVID-19 vaccination programme on infections and mortality.

The total was calculated by comparing the estimated impact of vaccination on infection and mortality against a worst-case scenario where no vaccines were in place to reduce infections and mortality.

Dr Paul Birrell, Senior Research Associate at the MRC Biostatistics Unit, University of Cambridge and Senior Principal Modeller at PHE, said:

The number of infections and deaths saved by the vaccination programme is not only astoundingly high, but continues to grow exponentially as the vaccination programme continues.

In practice, this analysis highlights that the vaccination programme has given us a path back towards a normal life that wouldn't otherwise have been possible. This is why it's so important that we all get 2 doses of the vaccine as soon as we can.

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