

Report by OSCE Chief Observer

Ambassador Varga: UK statement

Thank you Madam Chairperson. Ambassador Varga we are grateful to you for briefing the Permanent Council here in person and for providing a detailed insight into the activities of your Mission. We thank you and your team of observers for your ongoing work to provide the international community with impartial and transparent reporting on the situation on the ground, particularly given additional challenges posed by COVID-19.

Your work is all the more important given the fragile security situation in eastern Ukraine and the recent increase in regional tensions. The UK therefore remains deeply disappointed that the Mission's recent mandate extension was reduced from four months to two, due to unrelated political considerations.

Ambassador Varga, your report outlines that this has had a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of the Mission's staff, who already work in challenging conditions and now face increased uncertainty. The reduced mandate extension has also unnecessarily increased the administrative and operational burden incurred by your Mission, impeding your ability to carry out your mandate efficiently. Given these consequences of the shortened mandate period, we are concerned that this decision by Russia represents a negative political signal at a time when confidence and transparency are in dire need.

The excessive restrictions placed on the Mission by Russia mean that it already faces many challenges to carrying out monitoring activities, which if allowed would provide greater transparency around the situation at the border. The Mission remains present at only two checkpoints along over 400 kilometres of the uncontrolled section of the Ukraine-Russia state border, outside government control. As we have repeatedly stated, this is a far cry from the comprehensive monitoring of the border foreseen under the Minsk agreements.

Moreover, at the two checkpoints where the Mission is allowed to be present, its freedom of movement remains severely limited and it is still prohibited from using any observation tools, including binoculars or cameras. Ambassador Varga, as outlined in your report, the result is that "blind spots" are created, where the Mission is unable to observe persons in military style outfits or to assess whether vehicles are crossing in to Ukraine or not.

Despite these limitations, the Mission is able to provide valuable reporting on the situation on the ground. Its reports have shown that between 2 February and 1 June this year, 78 persons in military style outfits crossed from Russia in to Ukraine. The Mission has also recorded a substantial increase in traffic across the two check points in both directions, including 940,000 people during the last 4 month period, compared to roughly 540,000 people during the same period in 2020. Despite the increased movement at these checkpoints, the Russia-backed armed formations continue to use

Covid-19 as a pretence for heavily restricting civilians' ability to cross the Line of Contact.

The UK will continue to support the work of this Mission. We join our international partners in calling on Russia to end all undue restrictions placed on the Observer Mission and to end its objection to the expansion of the Mission to the entirety of the uncontrolled section of the border. We will also continue to call for the Mission to be given a longer mandate extension. If Russia has nothing to hide, we see no reason why it should object to this.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the UK's unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters. Thank you, Madam Chair.

New national surveillance of possible COVID-19 reinfection, published by PHE

For the first time, Public Health England (PHE) has today published population surveillance data on possible coronavirus (COVID-19) reinfections, to help monitor and understand the risk of people catching COVID-19 again. The data will be published regularly as part of the PHE Weekly Surveillance Report.

The current data shows that there is a low risk of reinfection with SARS-CoV-2. There were 15,893 possible reinfections with SARS-CoV-2 identified up to 30 May 2021 in England throughout the pandemic, out of nearly 4 million people with confirmed infections. This is equivalent to around 0.4% cases becoming reinfected.

Reinfection with SARS-CoV-2 is expected and has been previously reported, however, this data highlights that the overall risk, as detected through national surveillance, remains low. PHE is calling on everyone who is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine to take up the offer of 2 doses as this will minimise the risk of re-infection.

The population surveillance suggests that there were:

15,893 possible reinfections

A possible reinfection is identified where consecutive positive test results in the same person are at least 90 days apart. These are reinfections which have not been sequenced and so we cannot be completely certain they are not the same original infection.

478 probable reinfections

A probable reinfection is identified when sequencing of the second test sample identifies a variant known to be circulating now and/or that was not circulating at the time of the first test.

53 confirmed reinfections

A confirmed reinfection is where sequences are available from each episode and the sequences are genetically distinct.

Dr Susan Hopkins, Strategic Director for COVID-19 at PHE said:

People are understandably concerned about whether you can catch COVID-19 more than once. While we know that people can catch viruses more than once, this data currently suggests that the rate of COVID-19 reinfection is low. However, it is important that we do not become complacent about this – it is vital to have both doses of the vaccine and to follow the guidance at all times to reduce your chance of any infection.

We continue to learn more each day about this virus and its variants. Through continued close monitoring and research, we will understand how best we can control outbreaks and the impact this virus will have on society over the coming years.

This data shows reinfections from June 2020 up until the end of May 2021 and PHE will continue to look at the impact of vaccines and severity of illness in reinfections. Current evidence suggests that most reinfections will not cause symptoms. Work is ongoing to better understand the factors that make someone more likely to catch COVID-19 again and also the impact of vaccine status.

There is currently no evidence that the Delta variant, or any other Variants of Concern, are more likely to cause reinfection than others, but we will closely monitor this.

COP26 President speech at UN Climate Change Conference

It is a pleasure to be here to mark the end of the June period of the 2021 Subsidiary Bodies Session.

These have been an important few weeks.

It is undeniably challenging to undertake such complicated discussions virtually with such a large group of people.

So I would like to thank each and every person who took part, for taking on the challenge and engaging so fully with the process. I know colleagues have worked all hours of the day and night.

And I particularly thank the Subsidiary Bodies Chairs and their co-facilitators for their leadership; and colleagues across the UNFCCC Secretariat who made this all possible.

I was pleased to hear that negotiators have had meaningful discussions on each of the matters addressed.

They have reached a common understanding on some issues, consolidated options on others and developed possible solutions, which they will continue to work on.

However, we all realise there is more work to be done. And there are some areas where we have much further to go.

So it is vital that negotiators continue their work, so that when we arrive in Glasgow having done our homework it is across the full-spectrum of issues.

Our best chance of securing resolution at Glasgow is to have had frank, focused discussion amongst ministers before we get there.

So, in July, the UK COP26 Presidency is convening a Ministerial meeting.

Bringing a representative group of ministers together to sketch the desired and balanced outcome from Glasgow that will keep 1.5 alive.

This includes discussing some of the topics that many countries have said require more attention, such as adaptation, finance and loss and damage.

And to make further progress on some of the critical issues that need political guidance, including Article 6.

Outside the Subsidiary Bodies Session, we have seen broader progress on climate and our COP26 goals, over the past few weeks.

This year's G7 has committed to halving emissions by 2030, end support for international coal power, and to transition away from dirty coal domestically.

And it has made some progress towards closing the gap on the \$100 billion a year in climate finance that developed countries have promised to mobilise, which I have always said is a matter of trust.

Each and every G7 country has committed to increase finance, including increasing funds for adaptation.

And Canada, Japan and Germany have put new money on the table, committing to

increase their climate finance to 2025 to 5.3 billion Canadian Dollars, 6.5 trillion Japanese Yen, and 6 billion Euros per year by 2025, respectively.

This is very welcome.

However, we know there is much further to go, both in terms of raising commitments, and articulating a collective vision on how the goal will be met in the coming years, providing developing countries with clarity and certainty.

And I am committed to continuing to work with all countries and stakeholders to make this a reality.

We must also make further progress on reducing emissions and protecting people and nature from the effects of climate change.

And we need to move faster.

Because we are now in the home stretch to COP26, with just over four months to go.

So we really need to get going over the next few months.

At the G20 Climate and Energy Ministerial in July, we must build on the leadership we have seen from the G7 and some of the most climate vulnerable countries who now have net zero aligned 2030 national climate plans.

And use the full weight of some of the world's major economies to push down global emissions.

So that we keep 1.5 degrees alive.

As we approach COP26, we must also be ready to respond to the latest science, including of course the IPCC report, which will be published later this year and will inform our discussions at COP26.

So it's going to be a busy few months for us all.

But if we are to achieve success we must maintain the momentum, stay alive to the urgency, and build on the great progress we have seen.

So that when we meet in Glasgow, we're ready to put the world on a path to building a greener, brighter future for our planet.

Faith and Science: Towards COP26 Press

Conference

On Thursday 17 June at 11:30am (Rome time), a press conference took place in the Holy See Press Office, to launch the meeting: Faith and Science: Towards COP26.

His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, Her Excellency Sally Axworthy, British Ambassador to the Holy See, His Excellency Pietro Sebastiani, Ambassador of Italy to the Holy See, were in the panel of speakers.

Leaders of the world's largest religions and spiritual traditions and some leading scientists will be meeting in the Vatican and Rome on 04 October 2021, to set out their vision for tackling climate change.

Faith and Science: Towards COP26 meeting will aim to:

- Encourage governments to approach COP26 with ambition, including in regards to their National Determined Contributions to reach the Paris Agreement goals;
- Show how the faiths are leading the way by greening their own operations at central and local level, possibly with new commitments;
- Inspire individuals to take specific actions to slow global temperature rises.

The meeting has been informed by a series of virtual meetings at which faith leaders have shared their understanding of the responsibility for the planet and how they as faith leaders and scientists hope to contribute to the necessary change. Dr Hoesung Lee, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), [makes the case for climate action by faith leaders](#) (see Annex 1 or click the link to watch the video).

Sally Axworthy, British Ambassador to the Holy See, said:

“Climate change is not yet going in the right direction. Faith leaders played a key role in building momentum for COP21 in 2015 and they can make a similar contribution to COP26.”

“All the faiths and belief systems see nature as sacred, and our duty as being to protect the environment. The leaders have drawn on their own traditions to suggest solutions; the dialogue with the scientists has been creative – facts and values coming together.”

Pietro Sebastiani, Ambassador of Italy to the Holy See, commented:

“Faith and Science: towards COP26 is inspired by the desire to deepen,

develop and compare the concern and care for environmental issues that unites the different religions and spiritual traditions and therefore offer an unprecedented impulse to COP26.”

“An opportunity also to promote a discussion on ecological issues related to those of social justice and reflection, in particular, on a development model that cannot continue to produce an unsustainable environmental cost and increase social and economic inequalities.”

More information:

- The meeting is being organised by the Embassies of the United Kingdom and Italy to the Holy See, together with the Holy See, in the framework of the British presidency in partnership with Italy of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP26).
- The Faith and Science: Towards COP26 meeting will take place after the preparatory COP26 events in Milan: the world Conference dedicated to young people ‘Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition’ and the Pre-COP26 (28 September to 2 October 2021).
- At the UN Summit COP26 in Glasgow (1-12 November 2021), world leaders will meet with the aim to agree how to tackle the urgent threat of global climate change. It will bring 197 parties together for twelve days of talks. A moment for every country, and every part of society, to embrace their responsibility to protect our planet.
- Faith leaders played a key role creating the conditions for the success of COP21 in 2015 and many of them have spoken out about the shared responsibility of people of faith to care for the whole of creation. Based on religious values, the approach will be positive and pragmatic, emphasising our common responsibility for stewardship of the earth, and determination to change in order to care for the earth for future generations.

Hashtag: #Faiths4COP26

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Annex 1

PM call with President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani: 17 June 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, this afternoon.



The Prime Minister spoke to the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, this afternoon.

The leaders paid tribute to the thousands of British, Afghan and NATO forces who have served in Afghanistan over the last decade.

The Prime Minister underlined the UK's commitment to supporting Afghanistan to achieve a stable and democratic future following the withdrawal of NATO troops. He said the UK would use the full spectrum of our diplomatic, development and defence work to achieve this.

He also gave President Ghani his personal support and the leaders resolved to continue to work together going forward to counter the terrorist threat in Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister said the UK would continue to support a negotiated political settlement as the best path to peace in Afghanistan.

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