

Statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the findings of the Ballymurphy inquest

Press release

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I want to acknowledge the terrible hurt that has been caused to the families of Francis Quinn, Father Hugh Mullan, Noel Phillips, Joan Connolly, Daniel Teggart, Joseph Murphy, Edward Doherty, John Laverty, Joseph Corr, and John McKerr. I pay tribute to the great patience with which their families have conducted themselves during their determined campaign, which has lasted almost 50 years. They should not have had to wait this long for details about the events that unfolded between 9 – 11 August 1971.

The Government will carefully consider the extensive findings set out by the Coroner, but it is clear that those who died were entirely innocent of wrongdoing.

This Government is clear that the current system for dealing with the legacy of the Troubles is not working for anyone – in particular, the families of the bereaved, such as those who lost loved ones in Ballymurphy in 1971, whose grief has been compounded by the long and difficult process of waiting for answers for so many years.

Every family who wants them deserves answers about what happened to

their loved ones. We should never forget, dismiss, or ignore the past.

This Government wants to deliver a way forward that will provide information about what happened during the Troubles in a way that helps families get the answers they want and lays the foundation for greater reconciliation and a shared future for all communities.

Published 11 May 2021

Lord Frost calls on EU to show pragmatism on the Protocol after meetings with a number of business and community representatives in Northern Ireland

- Lord Frost and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (SoSNI), Brandon Lewis, met with a number of business and community representatives on two-day visit.
- They heard about some of the current difficulties in the operation of the Protocol and the consequent disruption to businesses and consumers.
- Both Lord Frost and SoSNI made clear the EU needed to take a pragmatic and proportionate approach to the Protocol if key elements of it were to be sustainable.

In his first official visit to Northern Ireland, Lord Frost has met with a number of business and community representatives to listen to their experiences and to reaffirm the Government's commitment to address issues with the Northern Ireland Protocol. The visit forms part of the UK Government's ongoing engagement with stakeholders in Northern Ireland, including through the Northern Ireland Business Engagement Forum and Brexit Business Taskforce.

Lord Frost was able to talk to a range of businesses from several sectors,

notably aerospace, manufacturing, food and drink, retail, and life sciences, to hear how they are adapting to the new arrangements and to understand the challenges they are facing.

Lord Frost and SoSNI also visited Larne Port, a Point of Entry for goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, to see how checks and controls under the Protocol are currently being operated. They met Border Force and DAERA officials, and EU Commission staff present under the Protocol arrangements.

Throughout the visit, Lord Frost and SoSNI heard about the challenges in the operation of the Protocol and the consequent disruption for businesses and communities. In particular they heard concerns about the level and complexity of paperwork required even on goods remaining in Northern Ireland, notably in the agrifood sector; about disruption to supply chains from Great Britain and consequent diversion of trade; and about the risks associated with the expiry of the grace periods and the introduction of further processes as a result.

Lord Frost and SoSNI also pledged to continue working closely with all sectors of opinion in Northern Ireland, including the NI Executive, as talks with the EU Commission continue.

Lord Frost, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, said:

It's clear from my visit that the Protocol is presenting significant challenges for many in Northern Ireland. Businesses have gone to extraordinary efforts to make the current requirements work, but it is hard to see that the way the Protocol is currently operating can be sustainable for long.

We're committed to working through the issues with the EU urgently and in good faith. I hope they will take a common sense, risk-based approach that enables us to agree a pragmatic way forward that substantially eases the burdens on Northern Ireland.

Solutions must be found rapidly in order to protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all its dimensions and to minimise disruption to the everyday lives of people in Northern Ireland – as the Protocol itself requires. As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will continue to consider all our options in meeting our overriding responsibility for sustaining the peace and prosperity of everyone in Northern Ireland.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

Over the past two days, I have had productive meetings with Lord Frost and representatives from across Northern Ireland, building on my extensive engagement since the start of this year.

It is vital that the experiences, opportunities and challenges

faced by people and Northern Ireland are understood and at the heart of our approach. I will continue these constructive and practical discussions in the weeks ahead, supporting Northern Ireland's business needs and minimising the risk of disruptions at a crucial time.

A pivotal year for Iraq and potential for a step towards increased stability

Thank you very much, Mr President, and let me thank SRSG Hennis-Plaeschert and her team in UNAMI for their continued hard work in difficult circumstances.

Today, I'd like to focus my remarks on the elections, the economy, humanitarian and security issues.

So let me start with the crucial question before us all of elections. Like Linda and others today, I want to underline that this is a pivotal year for Iraq. The elections in October could be a defining moment and a step towards increased stability. It is essential that those elections are seen by the Iraqi people as delivering a representative result. To that end, I welcome the Government of Iraq's determination to hold free, fair and credible elections. The UK is fully committed to Iraq's democratic process, and we look forward to discussions on how the UN can significantly enhance its support to the elections alongside the ongoing package of technical assistance.

While on the elections, let me also welcome the establishment of a higher committee to promote and monitor women's electoral participation and propose measures to prevent and address violence against women candidates.

Let me turn to the economics, Mr President. While it is welcome that Iraq's Parliament has approved the 2021 budget, we note, however, that many of the more ambitious measures aimed at economic reform were removed. This risks continued Iraqi vulnerability to oil price fluctuations, which in turn undermines the country's achievement of sustainable and inclusive development and ability to mitigate poverty. We would therefore urge the government to continue to pursue these much-needed economic reforms.

In that context, let me welcome the Special Representative's continued engagement and support to the Government of Iraq's anti-corruption efforts. As the Iraqi government has itself acknowledged, tackling corruption is vital to Iraq's economic development and to building stability in the country. It's important that these efforts adhere to criminal procedures with due process, fairness and transparency reflective of Iraq as a democratic system.

Mr President, we remain concerned by the humanitarian situation for the country's 1.2 million internally displaced people and the closure of camps for IDPs. Since 2014, the UK has committed over \$380 million dollars in humanitarian support for Iraq, providing a vital lifeline to millions with shelter, medical care and clean water. We welcome the recent presentation by the Government of Iraq of its national plan for returning IDPs. And we urge the government to prioritise finding sustainable and durable solutions for Iraq's IDP population and to coordinate closely with the United Nations to ensure that all returns are safe, dignified and voluntary.

Let me also say that we were pleased to see the first delivery of COVAX vaccines to Iraq on 25 March as part of Iraq's own plan to vaccinate its vulnerable people. The UK has given \$750 million to COVAX, and we're proud that the G7 countries overall have pledged over \$7 billion.

Mr President, on the security side, I want to condemn the recent attacks in the Iraqi Kurdistan region and support the government's investigation to ensure that those responsible are held accountable. Continuing Daesh attacks across the country undermine Iraq's stability and also demonstrate the importance of the ongoing work of the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh, in close partnership, of course, with the Iraqi security forces.

And the government of Iraq is striving to strengthen its relations with regional neighbours. We continue to support that and to reiterate the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security and protect civilians. Let me, in that context of relations with the region, commend the shared commitment of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti governments to make progress on the file of missing Kuwaiti persons and property pursuant to SCR 2107, as demonstrated through the recent transfer of Kuwaiti property by Iraq. The identification of the remains of an additional eight Kuwaiti missing persons was a really positive step.

Mr President, let me conclude by saying that the United Kingdom will continue to stand with the Government and people of Iraq over these coming vital months as they work to advance the country's stability with well-run elections, the implementation of crucial economic reform and the effective combatting of terrorism.

Thank you, Mr President.

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Lord Frost, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, said:

“It’s clear from my visit that the Protocol is presenting significant challenges for many in Northern Ireland. Businesses have gone to extraordinary efforts to make the current requirements work, but it is hard to see that the way the Protocol is currently operating can be sustainable for long.

“We’re committed to working through the issues with the EU urgently and in good faith. I hope they will take a common sense, risk-based approach that enables us to agree a pragmatic way forward that substantially eases the burdens on Northern Ireland.

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“Over the past two days, I have had productive meetings with Lord Frost and representatives from across Northern Ireland, building on my extensive engagement since the start of this year.

“It is vital that the experiences, opportunities and challenges faced by people and Northern Ireland are understood and at the heart of our approach. I will continue these constructive and practical discussions in the weeks ahead, supporting Northern Ireland’s business needs and minimising the risk of disruptions at a crucial time.”

COP26 President celebrates crucial climate partnership during visit to Italy

- Alok Sharma, COP26 President-Designate met with Italian Ecological Transition Minister, Roberto Cingolani and other senior cabinet ministers
- Italy’s partnership on COP26 will be crucial in making Glasgow climate conference a success
- Hosted a meeting with IFAD and FAO on promoting adaptation and resilience to combat climate change

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma, praised the partnership between the UK

and Italy on COP26 today as he completed a two-day visit to Italy's capital, Rome.

Mr Sharma met with Roberto Cingolani, the recently appointed Minister for Ecological Transition, as well as other senior ministers in the Italian Cabinet; including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luigi Di Maio; President of the Lower House of Parliament, President Fico; President of the Upper House of Parliament, President Casellati; Minister of Finance and Economy, Daniele Franco; Minister for Economic Development, Giancarlo Giorgetti; and Minister for Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure, Enrico Giovannini.

These meetings come at an important time to strengthen international collaboration as the COP Presidency seeks to promote its four goals ahead of the conference: limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, adapting to protect communities and natural habitats, mobilising climate finance and working together to accelerate action.

With the UK and Italy as official COP26 Presidency Partners on climate change, and with Italy hosting both the upcoming Pre-COP, the Youth COP and the G20, the two countries will continue to work closely together ahead of COP26 in Glasgow in November, and help to raise climate ambition with all our international partners.

Speaking after his visit Mr Sharma said:

Placing climate and nature at the heart of this year's G7, G20 and COP26 Presidencies, will be vital if we are to keep the 1.5 degree celsius temperature limit.

The UK is firmly committed to working alongside our COP26 partner Italy to respond to the calls from young people and encourage all countries to raise the ambition of their national climate plans and deliver on the promise of the Paris Agreement.

In addition to his meetings with government officials, Mr Sharma also hosted a meeting with the IFAD President and FAO Director-General to discuss ways of working through the UN System to further adaptation and resilience to climate change for countries most vulnerable to its impact. Mr Sharma also met with youth leaders to hear about their perceptions on climate change and climate action.

- The COP26 President Designate visited Italy on 10 and 11 May. Prior to Italy, he made an official visit to the Vatican City on the morning of 10 May.
- Following his visits to the Vatican and Italy, he will now fly to Spain.
- Italy will be hosting both the Pre-COP and the Youth COP in Milan, at

the end of September. Italy will also be hosting the G20 Summit at the end of October.

- In addition to hosting COP26 in Glasgow in November, the UK will also host the G7 Summit, to be held in Cornwall, in mid-June.
- A joint statement from the COP President-Designate and Minister Cingolani [was issued today](#).