

# OSCE joint FSC-PC meeting under Vienna Document Chapter 3: UK statement

Thank you Mister Chair, I would like to start by thanking you and your team for your efforts to convene this important and urgent meeting today.

The UK shares Ukraine's significant concerns about the recent increased Russian military activity on Ukraine's border and in illegally annexed Crimea. We fully support Ukraine's use of this Vienna Document mechanism to seek an explanation from Russia for this military activity and request greater transparency in order to deescalate the situation.

Mister Chair, the Vienna Document is a key confidence and security building measure, through which we build transparency and reduce risk. Russia's decision not to participate in the meeting convened on Saturday under Paragraph 16.2 of the Vienna Document, and indeed, Russia's stated intention not to engage at all in any Chapter III meetings only deepens our concerns. We recognise a member of the Russian Delegation is present today and hope they will show a change of heart and now engage constructively here today after hearing the contributions of other participating States.

The F10 message issued on 7 April was a creditable attempt by Ukraine to achieve greater transparency about Russia's military build-up, and to reduce the risk of further escalation. It was a legitimate request that Russia was obliged, under the terms of the Vienna Document, to answer in a satisfactory manner. Unfortunately, Russia chose not to.

At the meeting on Saturday, in which 39 participating States took part, Ukraine and a number of other states raised specific concerns and called on Russia to answer specific questions. These are contained in the Chair's Report, CBM/SE/21/0004/F14/0, and remain unanswered. We urge Russia to answer these questions here and now today, and so uphold the OSCE principles and commitments that it freely signed up to, and act responsibly to de-escalate the situation.

We would highlight that it is Ukraine's right, as a participating State, to issue a Chapter III request for explanation in relation to any unusual and unscheduled military activities outside normal peacetime locations and which are militarily significant. Russia's refusal to engage with the process to date because it "sees no reason for the implementation of procedures" completely undermines the purpose for which the risk reduction measure was designed.

Mister Chair, the UK strongly supports the political resolve demonstrated by Ukraine to resist ongoing Russian aggression, resolve the conflict through political means, and de-escalate the conflict. Ukraine has acted responsibly and with great restraint in the face of the renewed provocations by the Russian backed armed formations which have unfortunately resulted in yet further Ukrainian Armed Forces casualties. Russia's increased rhetoric and

disinformation also risks further escalation and is utterly irresponsible. We call on Russia to cease these reckless actions, and instead focus on implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements and the Normandy Summit held in Paris in December 2019.

The UK is unwavering in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters. We do not and will not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.

It is Russia's actions that continue to undermine European security including through its disregard for fundamental OSCE principles, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states, and the use of threat of force. We therefore call again on Russia to return to full compliance with OSCE principles, to fulfil its commitments, and to take urgent de-escalatory measures

I would like to finish by reiterating that the door remains open for Russia to use the Vienna Document, to provide reassurance about its intentions near Ukraine's borders and in illegally annexed Crimea, here and now today. We call on Russia to meet the above recommendations and engage in Risk Reduction measures without further delay. Russia's continued failure to do so poses a serious threat to the security of the whole OSCE region.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

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## Consultation launched on staff COVID-19 vaccines in care homes with older adult residents

- Consultation launches today on making COVID vaccination a condition of work for people who are deployed in these homes
- Care home workers urged to take up offer of a vaccine now to keep themselves and those they care for safe

Making vaccines a condition of deployment would help to further protect older people living in care homes, who are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, with some providers already implementing similar policies.

Experts on the social care working group of SAGE advise 80% of staff and 90% of residents need to be vaccinated to provide a minimum level of protection against outbreaks of COVID-19. Only 53% of older adult homes in England are currently meeting this threshold.

This means nearly half of all care homes with older adult residents, home to

150,000 vulnerable people, don't meet SAGE's recommended vaccination thresholds for care homes and staff.

Currently the staff vaccination rate is below 80% in 89 local authority areas – more than half – and all 32 London boroughs. There are 27 local authority areas with a staff vaccination rate below 70%.

The vaccine has already had a significant impact on reducing hospitalisations and deaths, with more than 10,000 lives saved between December and March but as we progress through the roadmap and restrictions begin to ease, it is vital we continue to protect those who are most vulnerable to the virus.

A [5-week consultation](#) will be launched today looking at requiring care home providers, caring for older adults, to deploy only those workers who have received their COVID-19 vaccination to further protect residents who are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, and staff.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Older people living in care homes are most at risk of suffering serious consequences of COVID-19 and we have seen the grave effects the virus has had on this group.

Making vaccines a condition of deployment is something many care homes have called for, to help them provide greater protection for staff and residents in older people's care homes and so save lives.

The vaccine is already preventing deaths and is our route out of this pandemic. We have a duty of care to those most vulnerable to COVID-19, so it is right we consider all options to keep people safe.

This will not include those who can provide evidence of a medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination.

With some providers already implementing similar policies, the consultation will help inform decision-making around how the change could be implemented and whether respondents think it will be beneficial.

The consultation will seek views on the proposal, it's scope, any potential impact it could have on staffing and safety as well as how it is implemented and who could be exempt.

Staff, providers, stakeholders, residents and their families are being urged to take part to have their views heard with a final decision expected this summer.

Chair of the Adult Social Care COVID-19 Taskforce, David Pearson said:

I would like to thank all our social care workers for providing

care and support during the last very difficult year, for having the vaccine and supporting people who have social care services to be vaccinated.

It is absolutely vital those who have not yet taken the opportunity to have their vaccine do so to keep themselves and those they care for safe.

NHS England has been running a minimum 4-visit schedule for each older adult care home and with hundreds of vaccination centres across the country to make vaccinations as easy as possible.

Vaccination is a safe and effective way of protecting people from infectious disease. Vaccines help prevent the most serious symptoms and there is growing evidence the vaccine also reduces transmission, making having a vaccine even more important.

This will build on the successful rollout of priority vaccinations in care homes with more than 40 million vaccinations given.

Taking up the COVID-19 vaccine will protect those who work in care homes, their colleagues, residents and provide reassurance to their families.

All eligible care homes have been visited and vaccines offered to staff and residents, with the vast majority of homes having now had repeat visits.

When people are called to get the vaccine, they should get their jab. Vaccines are the best way out of this pandemic and provide strong protection against COVID-19.

All the approved vaccines are safe, effective and have already saved thousands of lives.

There has already been a significant impact of the vaccination programme on reducing hospitalisations and deaths, with more than 10,000 lives saved by vaccinations between December and March.

Last week, the JCVI advised that it is preferable for adults aged under 30 with no underlying conditions to be offered an alternative to the AstraZeneca vaccine where available.

The MHRA – the UK's independent regulator – and the JCVI have said the benefits of the vaccine far outweigh the risks for the vast majority of adults.

Requiring care home providers, caring for older adults, to deploy only those workers who have received their COVID-19 vaccination will increase uptake in these areas and assist in helping all care providers reach the required rate of uptake to keep people safe and save lives.

We continue to do all we can to protect care homes, including spending £1.35 billion on infection and prevention control and offering priority vaccines,

free PPE and rapid testing.

Barchester Healthcare chief executive Dr Pete Calveley said:

Barchester believes the vaccination programme has transformed the outlook for the vulnerable residents in older people care homes, a significant proportion of whom will not acquire full immunity despite being vaccinated.

We have not lightly introduced our vaccine policy, but we take the view that providing safe care for those we care for is our paramount obligation.

As the Chief Medical Officer has said, it is a professional duty for care home staff to accept the vaccine unless there is a medical reason they should not.

As time has progressed, the safety, efficacy and transmission-reduction evidence has become ever stronger, which supports our initial view.

For those reasons we support the proposal by the DHSC to open a consultation on this important matter and strongly encourage other providers to support this proposal.

The [Making vaccination a condition of deployment in older adult care homes](#) consultation has been published.

Some individuals have an allergy or condition where the Green Book or the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises seeking medical advice, before proceeding with vaccination, where a professional medical opinion should be sought on whether the individual should be exempt. We will ensure that the regulations allow for exemptions on medical grounds. The regulations will be drafted in line with the Green Book on Immunisation against infectious disease ([COVID-19: the green book, chapter 14a](#) and JCVI which reflect clinical advice.

Both nationally and internationally, no concerning safety signals have been identified so far in relation to the vaccination of women who are pregnant. JCVI is continuing to review data on the risks and benefit of vaccination for women without significant underlying health conditions who are pregnant. As evidence becomes available, it will be reviewed, and advice offered as appropriate.

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# Statement on 33rd Anniversary of the Anfal campaign

Press release

Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly, has issued a statement on the anniversary of the Anfal campaign to honour those killed or injured.



Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly, said:

Saddam Hussein's brutal assault against the Kurdish people in Iraq killed many men, women and children, as others were driven from their homes. Many who lost loved ones are still waiting for the truth about what really happened. Today, the 33rd Anniversary of the Anfal campaign, is a day to honour those who were killed or injured and to ensure that such crimes can never happen again. My thoughts are with all those who suffered in this tragedy.

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of United Nations' Security Council Resolution 688, and the subsequent no-fly zones over the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). This crucial security umbrella protected the Iraqi Kurds from Saddam's regime, and created the conditions for the stability and prosperity of the region. This was an historic moment for Iraqi Kurds, and for the partnership between the UK and the KRI. In the years since, our relationship has only strengthened further.

The UK will continue to play its part in supporting the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to build a more peaceful, more prosperous future.

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# Iran to start Iranian enrichment up to 60%: E3 statement

## News story

The governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom respond to Iran's announcement that it will start uranium enrichment up to 60%.



Statement from the governments of France, Germany, and the UK:

The governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom (the E3) note with grave concern the announcement by Iran that it will start uranium enrichment up to 60% using advanced centrifuges as Iran communicated to the IAEA on 13 April.

This is a serious development since the production of highly enriched uranium constitutes an important step in the production of a nuclear weapon. Iran has no credible civilian need for enrichment at this level.

We also express our concern at the news that Iran plans to install 1000 additional centrifuges at Natanz, which will significantly increase Iran's enrichment capacity.

Iran's announcements are particularly regrettable given they come at a time when all JCPoA participants and the United States have started substantive discussions, with the objective of finding a rapid diplomatic solution to revitalize and restore the JCPoA. Iran's dangerous recent communication is contrary to the constructive spirit and good faith of these discussions.

In light of recent developments, we reject all escalatory measures by any actor and call upon Iran not to further complicate the diplomatic process.

## CMA provisionally clears merger of Virgin and O2

Both Virgin and O2 provide certain wholesale services to other mobile network operators in the UK, as well as retail services to consumers. The CMA was clear at the outset of its in-depth inquiry that it was not concerned about overlapping retail services such as mobile, due to the small size of Virgin Mobile. It has therefore focused on whether the merger could lead to reduced competition in wholesale services as part of this review.

Virgin provides wholesale leased lines to mobile telecommunications companies, such as Vodafone and Three, which they use to connect key parts of their network. This is often referred to in the industry as 'backhaul'. Similarly, O2 offers mobile operators such as Sky and Lycamobile, which do not have their own mobile network, use of the O2 network to provide their customers with mobile phone services.

The CMA was initially concerned that, following the merger, Virgin and O2 could raise prices or reduce the quality of these wholesale services, or withdraw them altogether. If this were to happen, the quality of these other companies' mobile services could suffer and – if wholesale price increases were passed on by these companies to their customers – their retail prices could go up. This might make Virgin and O2's own mobile service comparatively more attractive to retail customers, but would ultimately lead to a worse deal for UK consumers.

These concerns led to the merger being referred to a group of independent CMA Panel members for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation.

Having examined the evidence, the CMA inquiry group has now provisionally concluded that the deal is unlikely to lead to any substantial lessening of competition in relation to the supply of wholesale services for several reasons:

- Backhaul costs are only a relatively small element of rival mobile companies' overall costs, so it is unlikely that Virgin would be able to raise backhaul costs in a way that would lead to higher charges for consumers.
- There are other players in the market offering the same leased-line services, including BT Openreach – which has a much greater geographical reach than Virgin – and other smaller providers. This means the merged company will still need to maintain the competitiveness of its service



or risk losing wholesale custom.

- As with leased-line services, there are a number of other companies that provide mobile networks for telecoms firms to use, meaning O2 will need to keep its service competitive with its wholesale rivals in order to maintain this business.

Martin Coleman, CMA Panel Inquiry Chair, said:

Given the impact this deal could have in the UK, we needed to scrutinise this merger closely.

A thorough analysis of the evidence gathered during our phase 2 investigation has shown that the deal is unlikely to lead to higher prices or a reduced quality of mobile services – meaning customers should continue to benefit from strong competition.

More information is available on the [Liberty Global plc / Telefónica S.A. merger inquiry case page](#).