UK experts drive Peru’s ongoing response to February’s oil spill in the Pacific Ocean

- Team of experts from the United Kingdom carried out the workshop “Response to marine pollution: preparedness and best practices from the United Kingdom” with Peruvian authorities.
- More than 50 representatives from Peru’s environmental, fisheries, and coast guard sectors actively participated in the four-day workshop.

Lima, 26th September. – Between 20 and 23 September, a team of UK-based pollution response experts from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), delivered the workshop “Marine Pollution Response: preparedness and best practise from the UK”, with Peruvian Governmental authorities.

This 4-day workshop brought together over 50 representatives from Peruvian environment, fisheries and coastguard sectors, including officers from the Minister of Environment, the National Park Service and coastal municipalities. With the support of colleagues from British Embassy in Lima, the UK delegation shared lessons learned from historic UK incidents and discussed key legislation and preparedness principles to ensure an effective and timely response to marine pollution incidents.

The workshop also covered a range of topics including response options, use of satellite and drone technology, socio-economic impacts of spills, evaluating impacts to marine birds and marine mammals, post-spill monitoring and hydrocarbon analysis and fingerprinting. It also included presentations from UK Deputy to the Secretary of State’s Representative for Maritime and Salvage, and sessions from oiled wildlife response organisation Aiuka.

Bethany Graves, from the JNCC, said:

> It’s a pleasure to be here, sharing UK experience and knowledge and working closely with Peruvian Governmental agencies to explore opportunities to be better prepared. We have had an excellent week of workshops with good engagement and discussions.
>
> We’re grateful for the British Embassy Lima’s help in the organisation of the workshop and we are glad to see that all who attended found it useful.

The workshop concluded with a table-top exercise in which lessons learned from the previous days were tested and cemented. After this workshop, the UK team will prepare a ‘Recommendations for better Readiness’ report to hand over in the next few months. This will include comments on Peru’s National

Contingency Plan and key gaps in preparedness as identified in the workshop (and shared from Peru agencies).

The British Ambassador to Peru, Gavin Cook added:

> The oil spill off Lima was a wake-up call. But it's one the Peruvian government is responding to, in both managing the aftermath of the disaster and thinking longer-term. The UK is proud to be supporting this alongside our broad environmental work in Peru.
>
> British expertise has a huge amount to offer – especially in the use of technology – and we look forward to continuing to share best practice and drive change.

The workshop was delivered under the Ocean Country Partnership Programme, a UK-led programme funded through the UK government's £500 million Blue Planet Fund, which aims to help eligible countries reduce poverty, through supporting the sustainable management of their marine environment.

Workshop participants discussing during the table-top exercise.

Close to 1,000 jobs moved from London to Scotland under UK Civil Service shakeup

- Major progress made with 933 UK Civil Service jobs moved out of London to Scotland
- UK government has committed to relocate 1500 jobs to Scotland by 2025
- Cabinet Office second HQ to more than double department's presence in Glasgow by 2025

Almost 1,000 London-based Civil Service jobs have moved to Scotland since March 2020, the Cabinet Office has announced today.

The latest figures have been announced as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Nadhim Zahawi, visited the department's new second HQ at Atlantic Square, Glasgow ahead of chairing the inaugural Islands Forum in Orkney on Wednesday.

The relocation programme, known as Places for Growth, is moving 22,000 Civil Service jobs out of London by 2030. Already 933 jobs have been relocated from the capital to Scotland since the start of the scheme, with a further 600 high-quality jobs to be permanently based in Scotland by 2025.

The Cabinet Office will more than double its current numbers of Glasgow employees to around 750 by 2025.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations Nadhim Zahawi said:

> We want to drive growth right across the United Kingdom and moving Civil Service jobs out of London is crucial to delivering this. I am delighted to say that the Cabinet Office is leading the way with this work by ensuring we have key decision makers based in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
>
> It is imperative that we continue to build on this momentum and expand opportunities for people outside of London, giving them the chance to build successful careers right across the UK and bring diversity of thought and experience right to the very top of government.

The number of Senior UK Civil Servants now based in Glasgow has grown by 1,400 per cent under the scheme, with 30 senior officials now permanently located in the city. The government plans to have at least 50 per cent of UK-based Senior Civil Servants located outside of London by 2030.

Cabinet Office roles previously based in London but which are now in Scotland include directors in the Counter Fraud Function, Consulting Hub and Debt Management teams. This signals the end of the era where staff who wanted to climb the ladder to senior level needed to move to London or nearby, or made the long commute from further afield. Staff are now able to lead teams delivering exceptional public services while based anywhere in the UK.

Naomi Hunter, who was born in Edinburgh but moved to London to join the Treasury in 2013, is now a Senior Civil Servant based in the Cabinet Office’s Glasgow HQ. After joining the UK Civil Service, she spent the next seven years living in London and travelling back to Scotland regularly to see family and friends.

Ms Hunter, who leads the strategy team for recovering public sector debt, said:

> When I first joined the UK civil service, I moved to London because it was the only option if I was going to progress in my career. The opening of the Cabinet Office HQ in Glasgow has meant I’ve been able to move back to Scotland and still do what I’m passionate about. I’m so pleased for people in Scotland that they no longer need to move south to start their careers or get good, expert jobs in their field.

The expansion has meant graduates are remaining in Scotland, preventing a ‘brain drain’ as young people travel south to further their careers.

Ceilidh MacDonald, aged 27 and originally from Inverness, was her family’s first university graduate. After initially ruling out a job at a central government department due to the requirement to live and work in London, she learned of the Cabinet Office’s expansion in Glasgow and took a role in the Grants team.

Ms MacDonald said:

> I thought the only way to have a career was to move to London but when Covid hit, I realised that was the last place I wanted to be. I’m now not only gaining more experience than I ever thought possible in Scotland, but we’re working in the community to get the word out that there’s fantastic opportunities on your doorstep.

Other cities have also benefited from the expansion with hundreds of roles moved to Edinburgh and East Kilbride in departments including the FCDO, Ministry of Justice and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

It is expected that these jobs will provide a significant boost for local business and enterprise, with government research having shown that workers put around 50% of their salaries back into the local economy.

BEIS in the Growth Plan

The government has published a Growth Plan aimed at delivering higher, sustainable economic growth with an ambitious target of 2.5%, with plans that will boost investment, create skilled jobs, improve living standards and make Britain an even better place to do business. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will have a key role to play in working towards this target.

The plan lays out the biggest package of tax cuts and reforms in a generation, to encourage investment and make work pay. The planned rise in corporation tax has been cancelled, keeping it at 19%, while changes to income tax and national insurance will see over 30 million people receive a tax cut. Stamp Duty cuts will also help people on all levels of the property market.

Alongside addressing the immediate challenges of high energy costs through support for households and businesses, the government recognises the importance of acting now to grow the economy. Ultimately, growth means more jobs, higher pay and more money to fund public services, like schools and the NHS.

Cutting energy bills for households and businesses

Support for Households: Energy Price Guarantee

On 8 September, the Prime Minister announced the Energy Price Guarantee.

The Energy Price Guarantee will ensure that a typical household in Great Britain pays an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill, for the next 2 years, from 1 October 2022, with an equivalent scheme in Northern Ireland from November.

The consumer saving will be based on usage, but a typical household is expected to save at least £1,000 a year (based on current prices from October). Energy suppliers will be fully compensated for the cost of the Energy Price Guarantee. Based on 2019 median consumption, houses will save around £1,000 a year, and flats will save £700 a year.

£150 of this saving will be delivered by temporarily transferring the cost of environmental and social costs, including green levies, to the Exchequer for 2 years. This will mean customers don’t bear the costs, but benefit from the low-carbon electricity generation.

This support is in addition to the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme available to all households. This will be paid in 6 instalments from October.

An additional payment of £100 will be provided to compensate for the rising costs of alternative heating fuels for those UK households who are not able to receive support for heating costs through the Energy Price Guarantee.

The most vulnerable UK households will continue to receive £1,200 of support (including £400 from the Energy Bills Support Scheme) provided in instalments over the year.

Support for businesses and non-domestic properties

Through the new Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS), the government will provide support with energy bills for all non-domestic consumers in Great Britain and Northern Ireland (including charities and public sector organisations).

This 6-month scheme will protect them from soaring energy costs by providing a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices.

It will apply to energy usage for all non-domestic energy users from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Equivalent support will be provided for non-domestic consumers who use heating oil or alternative fuels instead of gas (further detail on this will be announced shortly).

In Northern Ireland, the scheme will be established on the same criteria and offering comparable support, but recognising the different market fundamentals

We will publish a review into the operation of the EBRS in 3 months to inform decisions on continued support after March 2023.

Reform to tackle root causes in the energy sector

While the interventions for households and businesses will be funded by the government, action is being taken to significantly reduce the cost over time.

A new Energy Supply Taskforce – The new Taskforce will seek to negotiate long-term agreements with major gas producers. BEIS is also working with low carbon electricity generators to reduce the link between gas and electricity prices. Successful action should smooth the price of wholesale gas and electricity over time. Such action should also increase security of supply over time, reducing the likelihood of similar energy price crises in the future.

Energy Markets Financing Scheme – Together with the Bank of England, HM Treasury are providing further details around a £40 billion scheme announced on 8 September to address extraordinary liquidity requirements faced by energy firms, due to variation margin calls. The Energy Markets Financing Scheme will improve resilience in energy markets, and the economy. To deliver the scheme, there will be a 100% guarantee to commercial banks covering additional lending they extend to firms. The scheme will provide short term financial support and will be designed to be used as a last resort, with pricing and conditions reflecting this. The EMFS will only be available to firms who are able to meet eligibility requirements.

Energy Company Obligation (ECO) – This scheme requires medium and large energy suppliers to achieve bill-savings for low-income and vulnerable households, by delivering energy efficiency improvements such as insulation. We will expand this existing obligation by a further £1 billion over 3 years, beginning from April 2023. Support will be targeted at those most vulnerable, but will also be available for the least efficient homes in lower council tax bands. This will help hundreds of thousands of customers take action to reduce their energy bills, delivering an average saving of around £200 a year through measures such as cavity wall insulation and loft insulation.

Moving to a simpler, lower tax economy

The Growth Plan reduces the tax burden by delivering tax cuts worth around £45 billion per year by 2026/27, which is the biggest tax cut in generations.

A pro-growth tax system:

- creates the conditions for business to invest, innovate and create jobs
- allows hard working families to keep more of what they earn
- is simple and fit for the future

Tax cuts for businesses

We are cancelling the planned rise of the Corporation Tax rate from 19% to 25%, which puts £19 billion back into the economy by 2026/27 and will make the UK tax system one of the most competitive in the world.

The increase in the Diverted Profit Tax rate will remain at 25%. The Bank Corporation Tax Surcharge cut will also be cancelled. Super-deduction technical rules will also be amended to ensure it works as intended at the new Corporation Tax rate.

We are introducing an investment package designed to supercharge the ability of small British businesses to raise money, attract talent and ultimately grow and succeed

The level of the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) at is remaining at £1 million permanently, which is a tax cut for businesses of around £1.3 billion a year.

At £1 million, the AIA covers the investment needs of over 99% of the UK’s businesses.

From April 2023, the amount companies can raise under Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) will increase by £100,000 to £250,000, and the gross asset limit will increase from £200,000 to £350,000.

The company age limit will increase from 2 to 3 years, and the annual investor limit will be doubled to £200,000. This package will help over 2,000 start-up companies raise the capital they need to grow.

The Company Share Option Plan (CSOP) scheme options limit is doubling from £30,000 to £60,000, and the rules which restrict use of the scheme when companies have more than one class of ordinary shares (the ‘worth having’ restriction) is being relaxed from April 2023.

We are introducing a new VAT-free shopping scheme for overseas visitors, which will boost our high streets and help create jobs for those working in the travel and retail sectors.

Growth

Driving greater private capital investment

The growth plan will unlock billions of pounds of long-term investment, helping our pioneering British businesses developing new technologies, accelerate their growth and to scale up.

We are bringing forward draft regulations to reform the pensions regulatory charge cap, giving defined contribution pension schemes the clarity and flexibility to invest in the UK’s most innovative businesses and productive assets creating opportunities to deliver higher returns for savers

Building on this, the government is also introducing the Long-Term Investment for Technology and Science (LIFTS) initiative, providing up to £500 million to mobilise billions of pounds of investment into pioneering UK businesses.

Getting more people into work with the right skills

In addition to making work pay and helping working families keep more of what they earn, the government is introducing further reforms to incentivise and support people into more and better paid work.

Government will set Minimum Service Levels (MSLs) for transport, to ensure some services run during industrial action and unions cannot prevent the public making journeys that are essential for day-to-day life.

Unions will be obliged to put employer pay offers to member vote. This requires defining the calling of a strike as a breakdown in negotiations, allowing employers to engage employees directly.

In addition, the government will set out further measures relating to flexible childcare and ensuring the immigration system supports growth in due course.

Allowing business to get on with business

A simple tax system is critical for growth. Instead of having a separate arms-length body oversee simplification, the government will embed tax simplification into the institutions of government. It will therefore abolish the Office of Tax Simplification and set a mandate to the Treasury and HMRC to focus on simplifying the tax code.

The reforms to off-payroll working, known as IR35, have added complexity and cost for many businesses. To achieve a simpler tax system and reduce burden on businesses which engage contractors, the government must be ready to change course. That is why the government is repealing the reforms introduced in 2017 and 2021.

This will free up time and money for business. Businesses can now focus on the services they receive and invest time and resources in core activities that stimulate growth and productivity.

The government is reforming alcohol duty to reduce the administrative burden on businesses and tax alcohol according to its strength. This will encourage growth in the lower ABV market and incentivise product innovation.

The government will introduce a modern, digital, VAT-free shopping scheme as soon as possible, with the aim of providing a boost to the high street and creating jobs in retail and tourism.

Later this autumn, the government will bring forward a set of measures to reduce the burden of business regulation and remove barriers to growth.

The government will also set out its strategy for maximising the long-term productivity, resilience and competitiveness of the UK’s agricultural sector.

Building High quality infrastructure

The Growth Plan announces that new legislation will be brought forward in the coming months to address barriers that restrict the growth potential of the government's landmark public investment in high quality infrastructure. This includes;

- reducing the burden of environmental assessments
- reducing bureaucracy in the consultation process
- reforming the existing habitat and species regulations
- increasing flexibility to make changes to the Development Consent Order (DCO) once it has been submitted
- reviewing the spending control framework, including the business case process, to accelerate decision making across government

The Growth Plan also announces further sector specific changes to accelerate delivery of infrastructure, including:

- prioritising the delivery of National Policy Statements for energy, water resources and national networks, and of a cross-government action plan for reform of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure planning system
- supporting deployment of onshore wind, by bringing planning policy in line with other infrastructure to allow it to be deployed more easily in England

Investment zones

The government is announcing Investment Zones, and is in early discussions with 38 Mayoral Combined Authorities and Upper Tier Local Authorities who have already expressed an initial interest in having a clearly designated, specific site within their locality.

Investment Zones will drive growth and unlock housing right across the UK. Areas with Investment Zones will benefit from tax incentives, planning liberalisation, and wider support for the local economy. Investment zones will benefit from:

- Lower taxes – businesses in designated sites will benefit from time-limited tax incentives
- Accelerated development – there will be designated development sites to deliver growth and housing. Where planning applications are already in flight, they will be streamlined and we will work with sites to understand what specific measures are needed to unlock growth, including disapplying legacy EU red tape where appropriate. Development sites may be co-located with, or separate to, tax sites, depending on what makes most sense for the local economy
- Wider support for local growth – for example, through greater control over local growth funding for areas with appropriate governance. Subject to demonstrating readiness, Mayoral Combined Authorities hosting Investment Zones will receive a single local growth settlement in the next Spending Review period

The government will announce further supply side growth measures in October and early November, including changes to the planning system, business regulations, childcare, immigration, agricultural productivity, and digital infrastructure.

New law change allows more flexibility for healthcare professionals completing DVLA medical questionnaires

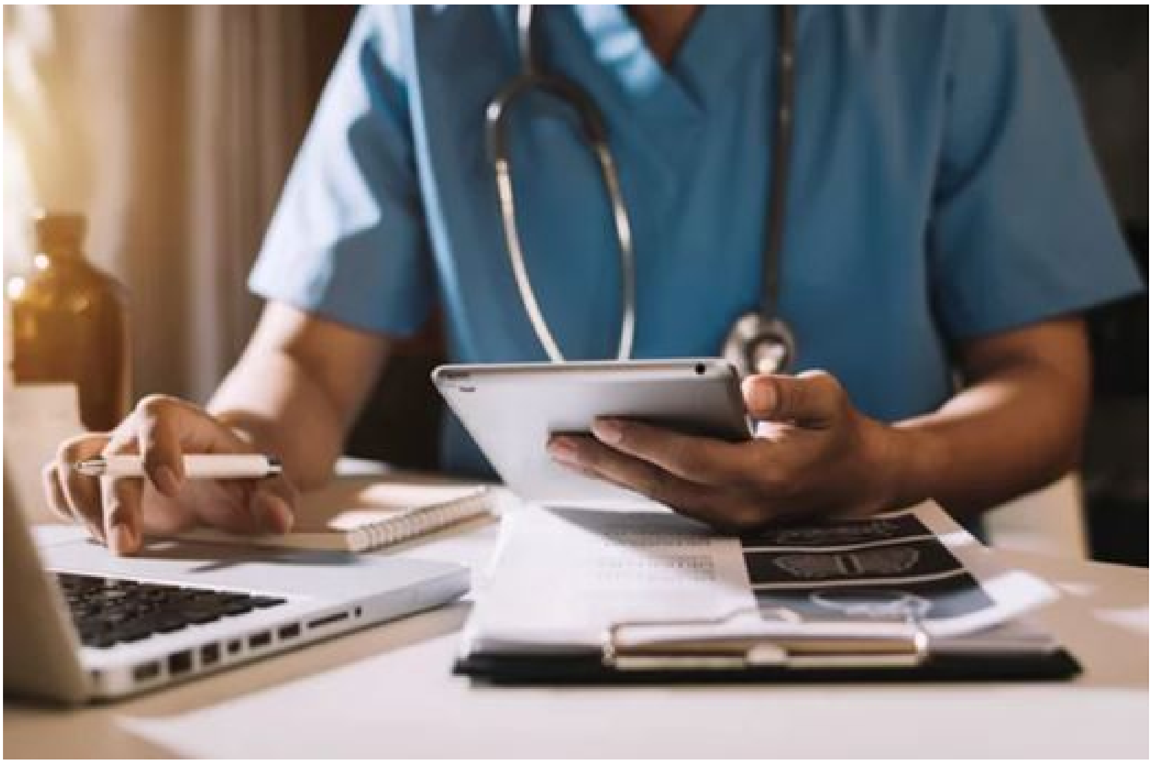
Since I last spoke to you, asking for your views on our proposals to widen the pool of medical healthcare professionals who may complete our medical questionnaires, I'm delighted to share that our work with you enabled a change in the law to widen the pool of medical professionals who can now complete DVLA medical questionnaires following a referral from a doctor.

The consultation showed 82% of those surveyed, were supportive of this approach to improve and speed up the medical licensing process.

These changes came into force in July this year.

The amendment to the Road Traffic Act 1988 means more healthcare professionals for example, clinical nurse specialists, physiotherapists and optometrists can now fill in DVLA questionnaires.

This change does not apply to the D4 Medical Examination Report which will still need to be filled in by a doctor who is registered with the GMC.



Why has it changed?

In some instances we need to contact you when we're told about a medical condition which might affect someone's driving, and we use the information to decide what action we need to take. This can sometimes be very time consuming and we're very much aware of the need for GP practices and hospital teams to prioritise and manage their resources.

Until recently, only doctors registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) were allowed by law to fill in the questionnaires. This change now means healthcare professionals from the following councils can also fill in our medical questionnaires:

- General Chiropractic Council
- The General Optical Council
- The General Osteopathic Council
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council
- Health and Care Professions Council

We'll continue to send the medical questionnaires to the GPs or hospital doctors in charge of care, but they can now pass the questionnaire to the most appropriate medical professional for completion.

Benefits

Reducing the burden on doctors and healthcare professionals is important to us:

- the change means that the administrative task of completing DVLA medical questionnaires doesn't fall solely on GPs or hospital doctors, allowing them to devote more time to clinical activities

- doctors are not required to ‘sign off’ medical questionnaires completed by other healthcare professionals

We also believe it’s essential that the hard work and expertise contributed by all professionals involved is acknowledged and reflected in the information that DVLA uses when considering applications.

For drivers, most importantly, the information we receive can be provided by the most appropriate healthcare professional who knows best how a medical condition affects the applicant. By spreading the work across a wider range of healthcare professionals, it’s likely the information will be returned to DVLA quicker, allowing us to make decisions about their case sooner.

We recognise that individual GP surgeries and hospital teams work very differently, and this law change also allows them as much flexibility as possible to manage the enquiries they receive from us.

Ultimately, the aim of the change is to enable the most appropriate healthcare professional to provide the information they have. In some cases, this will remain with the doctor, but in other cases GP surgeries and hospital teams will be able to change their current practice and allow a different healthcare professional to provide the information, where possible. We believe that this change will benefit not only driving licence applicants for the reasons above but will help to reduce the administrative burdens on doctors, freeing up time to allow them to focus on patient care.

What we’ve done

We’ve made changes to our letters and forms and [updated our medical questionnaires on GOV.UK.] We’ve also shared our updated advice and guidance and the process to follow with the healthcare community.

A dedicated monitoring process has been set up to make sure there is a continuous improvement of the service.

All drivers must meet the medical standards for fitness to drive at all times, and we need to carry out more checks for bus or lorry drivers.

Rohingya crisis side event at the 2022 UN General Assembly: Minister Ford’s statement

Your Excellency Prime Minister Hasina; distinguished guests.

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today to remember the tragic events of 5 years ago. And for the chance to press for a durable solution, and to mobilise adequate resources to support the Rohingya until they can return to Myanmar.

Prime Minister Hasina, your government and the people of Bangladesh have our upmost respect. You have generously hosted one million Rohingya refugees for 5 years. And I pay tribute to your leadership and humanitarian values.

Friends and colleagues. Nobody should be forced to flee their home or their country of birth. It is a tragedy that so many have been unable to return to their communities, that so many lives have been stalled, and that there has been no accountability for the atrocities endured.

Confronted by so much pain and hardship, the courage, resilience, and spirit that the Rohingya continue to display is all the more admirable.

I wanted to reiterate our deep concerns by the increasing violence in Myanmar. In Rakhine state, Rohingya communities are caught in the cross fire of recent fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces and Arakan Army.

I am saddened to hear about the horrendous attack on a school in Sagaing. We condemn the killings. There can be no justification for the killing of children and innocent civilians.

Since 2017, the UK has provided £340 million of support to the Rohingya and neighbouring communities in Bangladesh. And £25 million for the Rohingya and other Muslim communities in Rakhine State. This has provided lifesaving food, water, shelter, healthcare and protection.

We continue to be a major contributor to the core funding of humanitarian agencies, providing £108 million this year, which underpins their ability to respond to the crisis. Our total portfolio of support makes us one of the largest global humanitarian donors.

International Financial Institutions have an important role to play in sustaining the Rohingya response, and we welcome their continuing dialogue with your government.

We will continue to support the Rohingya and, importantly, the local communities around the camps.

Preparing the Rohingya to return to Myanmar, when it is safe and sustainable to do so, is vital.

So we are pleased that the Government of Bangladesh has endorsed the rollout of the Myanmar Curriculum and a new Skills Framework. This will have a positive impact, and should be followed by expanded livelihood opportunities in Cox's Bazar and on Bhasan Char, to better equip refugees for their sustainable return to Myanmar.

Prime Minister, we agree with you that the international community must play its part to create the conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified returns.

We will continue to work alongside the international community to improve conditions for the Rohingya in Myanmar, and mitigate the risk of further atrocities. This includes using targeted sanctions and building a global coalition of countries committed to tackling the flow arms to Myanmar.

This year we marked 5 years since the military led ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people. We used the importance of this tragic anniversary to hold to account those responsible for atrocities in Rakhine state.

We have not forgotten what they did, and last month the UK announced a further round of sanctions to target businesses with close links to the Myanmar military, who funded the clearance operations in 2017.

Accountability for these atrocities is vital to end the cycle of violence, which is why we intend to intervene in the International Court of Justice case brought by The Gambia, of which we are a longstanding supporter.

To achieve true justice for the Rohingya, their citizenship in Myanmar must be restored. The systematic human rights violations they have suffered for decades must end. And Rohingya people must be meaningfully included in future visions of Myanmar society.

We will use all available opportunities, including at the G7 and with our ASEAN partners, to push for a long-term solution to the crisis and its root causes. We will also use our role as penholder to keep the situation in Myanmar on the UN Security Council's agenda, and explore all available Council tools.

We will continue to do all we can to ensure the Rohingya can voluntarily, safely and sustainably return home, when conditions allow. And help the people of Myanmar enjoy the peace, justice and prosperity they deserve.

Thank you.