

# UN Human Rights Council 46: UK Closing Statement

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 46th session on Thursday, adopting important resolutions on Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Syria, Iran, Myanmar, Belarus and Georgia, among many other pressing issues.

At the start of the session, the Foreign Secretary delivered the UK national statement, in which he set out our serious concerns on the deteriorating human rights situation in China, including systematic human rights violations perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang, the restrictions of personal freedoms in Hong Kong, and the continuing restrictions in Tibet. On Monday the UK, alongside the EU, Canada and the US, announced sanctions against officials and an entity identified as directly involved in the human rights violations in Xinjiang. We are committed to taking action. I reiterate the Foreign Secretary's call for the High Commissioner, or another independent expert, to be given urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang.

I welcome the adoption of the resolution on Sri Lanka. This signals the international community's continued commitment to post-conflict justice and accountability. It also responds to the deeply concerning report by the High Commissioner who warned that Sri Lanka risked returning to the grave violations of the past. It is therefore right that the UN should continue its monitoring and collect evidence to support future accountability processes. I call on Sri Lanka to make meaningful progress on justice, accountability and human rights, and reiterate the UK's readiness to support these efforts. The UK stands ready to engage constructively in this respect.

I welcome the Council's adoption of a resolution on the human rights situation in South Sudan, reflecting ongoing concern at issues such as widespread sexual and gender-based violence, humanitarian access limits, and human rights violations and abuses against children. I also welcome the Transitional Government of National Unity's commitment to address these challenges as South Sudan approaches ten years of independence. In a spirit of partnership we call on South Sudan to continue its cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan and remain committed to working together to help end suffering of ordinary South Sudanese.

I am also pleased that the Council has again adopted the resolution on Syria. This month marks ten years since the conflict started. The resolution highlights the Commission of Inquiry's latest findings and confirms a decade of appalling atrocities in Syria. Syria remains one of the worst human rights crises in the world. The Syrian regime's use of enforced disappearance, torture and sexual violence is deplorable. It is right that the resolution mandates the Commission to continue assessing the human rights concerns. We must not forget the plight of the Syrian people.

I welcome the renewal of the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on Human

Rights in Iran. This is an important signal that the international community remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation and I urge Iran to grant the Special Rapporteur immediate access to the country, so that he can properly fulfil his mandate. The UK remains particularly concerned by the continued targeting of groups from human rights defenders and journalists, to ethnic and religious minorities and dual and foreign nationals, including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Anoosheh Ashoori, and Morad Tahbaz.

The UK remains deeply concerned by the wide range of human rights violations and abuses in Myanmar. Peaceful protests are suppressed violently, arbitrary arrests continue, freedoms are inhibited, and the military shows no sign of deescalating the situation. We stand with the people of Myanmar. Their wishes, and the result of the November 2020 General Election, must be respected, and I welcome the adoption of the resolution by consensus, reflecting the strength of the international community's condemnation of the military's actions.

The UK remains committed to a two state solution which ends the Israeli-Palestine conflict, delivering a secure Israel and self-determination for the Palestinian people. We continue to be concerned by the Council's disproportionate focus on Israel, which is a barrier to dialogue and hardens positions. We support justified scrutiny of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and welcomed the tabling of one resolution under Item 2, although ultimately this was not sufficiently balanced to support. We will continue to raise concerns about Israel's actions when warranted.

I also welcome the renewal of the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the DPRK, the Independent Expert for Mali and the adoption of the resolution on torture. I am also pleased that the Council adopted a resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua, the technical co-operation with Georgia and the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

The Human Rights Council continues to be the best tool the international community has to address human rights violations and abuses and to advance many of our international goals. We are honoured to have been elected to serve a further term from 2021 to 2023 and the UK continues to deliver on all our pledges including our pledge to promote girls' education. We were pleased to partner with the UAE on a joint statement this session, confirming our shared commitment to work with all states across all regions, to deliver a Human Rights Council resolution on girls' education this summer.

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[Hythe Ranges sea defence scheme](#)

# virtual opening ceremony

A virtual opening ceremony today, Friday 26 March, marked the official opening of the Hythe Ranges sea defences scheme between Dymchurch Redoubt and Fisherman's Beach.

With the scheme's completion, 787 properties are now better protected from tidal flooding for the next 100 years, taking into account climate change and sea level rise.

The improved standard of flood protection will help protect the coast against a flood event with a 0.5%, or 1 in 200 chance of occurring in any year. Before the scheme there was a 5% or 1 in 20 chance of flooding in any year.

Also better protected with the scheme's completion is the Ministry of Defence (MoD) firing ranges that provide a critical resource for the army and the country's security.

The Hythe Ranges scheme represents a £25m investment, delivered in partnership with the MoD. The event was officially opened by Dr Martin Hurst, Chair of the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (SRFCC).

Guests at the virtual ceremony included constituency MP Damian Collins, Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd, representatives from the Ministry of Defence, Kent County Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council and construction partners that worked on the scheme.

## **Hythe Ranges Video**

The ceremony included the first public viewing of a video about the scheme and its construction. The video can be viewed on the [Environment Agency's YouTube channel](#)

## **Construction at the site**

Work started in spring 2020 and was successfully and safely completed during the Covid-19 restrictions. Due to the rigorous health and safety measures applied, the site did not have a single positive test of Covid-19.

The works involved:

- refurbishment and raising of 30 timber groynes
- construction of a 200m rock revetment made from 37,000 tonnes of imported Norwegian granite
- recharging the shingle beach with over 300,000 cubic metres of material.

This work to the beach and groynes will reduce the risk of flooding from the sea. The rock revetment helps shield the Grand Redoubt and merges with the existing Dymchurch seafront.

A number of environmental features were introduced as part of the scheme such as the creation of over 70 rock pools in the rock revetment. Benches made from recycled wood and an information board have also been installed on the Dymchurch promenade for the public to enjoy.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

The climate crisis is a major threat to world security but our preparations will be made locally with communities and with partners, so it's fitting we've worked with the military and Natural England on the Hythe Ranges sea defence scheme.

This project represents our largest volume of low carbon concrete used in a flood defence scheme, which helps us protect people from climate shocks and reduces our carbon footprint at the same time. As the country heads towards net zero, I predict the whole construction industry will at some point switch to low carbon concrete, this scheme has helped speed that up.

With the COP26 climate talks coming to Glasgow this year, examples like Hythe show what adaptation means in practice.

Lt Col Richard Bishop, Commander UK Defence Training Estate South East, said:

We are extremely proud to have been a part of this fantastic project. By working closely with the Environment Agency and Natural England we have been able to protect properties, our military Ranges and several important wildlife habitats in this beautiful and historic area for many years to come.

Dr Martin Hurst, Chair of the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (SRFCC), said:

Romney marsh is one of the real treasures of the south coast. It contains 14,500 houses, 700 businesses, 25,000 hectares of grazing land, nationally important infrastructure and high-class nature – much of which lies below the high water level. It is our job and our privilege to defend this area from flooding.

The Hythe ranges scheme is an essential part of our defences, continuing the £155m already spent on defending the marsh. Further defence improvements will follow soon at Lydd ranges and on the Rother tidal walls.

I would like to pay tribute to all those involved in completing the Hythe ranges scheme, working through the Covid 19 epidemic. It is the result of genuine partnerships between the Environment Agency, local councils and communities, the MoD and contractors – and

partnership is what my Committee is all about.

We cannot and should not always seek to defend against the sea. But the case for defence here is unanswerable, and I was hugely proud to be asked to open this scheme.

Mark Douch, Environment Agency Flood Risk Manager, said:

Thank you to our partners, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Natural England for their co-operation in enabling us to complete the works on schedule.

It represents a key stage in the Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy leaving us ready for the next step at Lydd Ranges where again we will work closely with the MoD.

By completing this scheme in February we were able to meet our regional target ahead of schedule. Thus contributing our share of the overall Environment Agency target of 300,000 homes better protected target which we set in 2015.

We would like to thank our staff and contractors Van Oord for carrying out this critical construction during the coronavirus outbreak. They followed guidance from Public Health England to work safely on construction sites. The safety of our staff, partners and the communities we work is always our priority.

## **FCERM Strategy**

Nationally, work is also already under way on the delivery of some of the 2,000 new flood and coastal defences that will better protect a further 336,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion by 2027, which will also see the implementation of the Environment Agency's Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy.

Alongside building new defences, the strategy sets out how the Environment Agency and partners will work to make communities more resilient to the effects of climate change, ensuring they are better prepared for when flooding sadly hits, and able to recover quickly. It will also ensure a greater use of nature to reduce flood risk.

## **Further information**

### **Coronavirus (Covid-19)**

The project team worked within government and Public Health England safe working guidelines with strict attention to social distancing and cleaning.

The safety of staff, partners and the local community is always given priority.

The project started and finished during the Covid-19 pandemic, and delivered the scheme in a safe manner with no incidents of Covid-19 on site.

## **Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy (FoCES)**

The Hythe Ranges Sea Defences Scheme forms part of the Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy (FoCES) approved by DEFRA in 2010.

The Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy (FoCES) was approved by Defra in 2010. It sets out our plans to manage flood and erosion risks along the Romney Marsh coastline over the next 100 years, taking the predicted impacts of climate change into account.

Much of Romney Marsh is below the present day high tide level, and 14,500 homes, 700 businesses and nationally important, critical infrastructure are at risk of flooding. The strategy identified how we can improve the existing defences to reduce flood risk to Romney Marsh to a 0.5% chance in any year.

## **Project efficiencies**

The Hythe project achieved efficiencies of over £2.5 million and more than 1,660t CO<sub>2</sub>e savings including:

- 490t CO<sub>2</sub>e saved by realigning a sheet pile wall to reduce total steel by 75%
- 390t CO<sub>2</sub>e saved by optimising the construction of the rock revetment toe and use of a geotextile to reduce the rock volume by 30%
- 570t CO<sub>2</sub>e from reducing the number of timber groynes from 45 to 30, saving approximately 30% of the timber volume
- 215t CO<sub>2</sub>e saved on concrete including the pioneering use of low carbon concrete.

## **Environmental enhancements**

The project included environmental enhancements which encourage intertidal habitat to develop. These included:

- The novel use of a mechanical rock grinder attached to an excavator to create artificial rock pools that were then placed in the granite rock revetment. Over 70 rock pools were created and within 48 hours of installation sand eels had been identified in the pools.
- The timber groynes were constructed from 100% Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) timber, including FSC certified recycled timber. Approximately 5-10% of the demolished timber from the old groynes was re-used in the new structures, with the remainder recycled or re-used by third parties. This included construction of benches from recycled timbers which have been installed on the public promenade.
- A rock revetment was constructed to protect the Dymchurch Redoubt, a 200-year old military fort requiring Scheduled Monument Consent and

Listed Building Consent. MoD Funding

The foreshore fronts a critical training facility for the Ministry of Defence. This required working closely with the MoD to minimise disruption and ensure works were aligned to the needs of the MoD.

The project secured 25% partnership funding from the MoD which has contributed towards the capital delivery as well as future maintenance costs.

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## [Advice for pension and benefit claimants in Yemen](#)

Published 26 March 2021

Last updated 29 April 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

### 1. 29 April 2022

The issue with processing benefit payments in Yemeni Rial (YER) through the Yemeni banking system has been resolved. The Department for Work and Pensions is now able to pay claimants in local currency again.

### 2. 26 March 2021

First published.

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## [Leeds to become second DWP HQ](#)

Leeds is already home to seven jobcentres, including Southern House where last year's hit Channel 4 series "The Yorkshire Jobcentre" was filmed.

And with over 600 jobcentres nationwide, an extra 80 temporary jobcentres announced this week and many more to follow in the coming months, the department has an established role in communities across the country. Over 90% of DWP staff, including over 20,000 Work Coaches, are already based outside of London.

This permanent ministerial office comes as the government ramps up its plans for more hubs across the country, and will officially open next month.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Thérèse Coffey said:

Designating Quarry House in Leeds as our second HQ with Ministerial offices builds on our presence in towns and cities across Britain. Leeds has a leading role in this country's recovery as we build back better and deliver our Plan for Jobs. DWP ministers are excited about our second office, giving us direct entry into the Northern Powerhouse.

The new ministerial offices will be in the department's Quarry House office in the east of the city, where core services such as digital, HR, finance, policy and operations are already established. The Secretary of State has already been to Quarry House.

Today's announcement comes as a part of the government levelling up agenda, including a pledge to reduce any regional imbalances in public sector roles by moving 22,000 Civil Service roles, currently based in London and the South East to other hubs around the UK by 2030.

The Department of Health and Social Care will also establish a regular ministerial presence in its existing second HQ in the city.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

Follow DWP on:

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## [Extended opening hours to continue when non-essential retail returns](#)

Press release

Longer opening hours in England will help people return to our high streets safely when non-essential shops re-open from 12 April at the earliest.



- Temporary measures to make socially distanced shopping easier to



continue

- Longer opening hours for retail to give shoppers more flexibility and ease transport pressures
- Flexible working hours for construction also to continue, helping industry continue to operate safely

Extended daily opening hours for non-essential retail will continue – helping people return to our high streets safely, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick MP has today (26 March 2021) confirmed.

This will help ensure the safe re-opening of non-essential shops by giving people greater flexibility to avoid peak times and easing transport pressures.

When they reopen from 12 April at the earliest, shops will have the flexibility to open until 10pm Monday to Saturday.

A written ministerial statement was laid on Thursday 25 March to give non-essential retail greater flexibility as the country cautiously moves out of lockdown.

As part of the [£56 million 'Welcome Back Fund'](#) announced last week, Mr Jenrick is encouraging councils to continue supporting social distancing measures and relaxing planning rules where possible to ensure people can continue to keep a safe distance on our high streets.

The government is also extending flexible working hours on construction sites, allowing food deliveries to supermarkets over more time periods, and keeping the flexibility for pubs and restaurants to erect marquees to help increase seating capacity in a Covid-secure way.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

To support businesses to reopen and recover, I've extended measures to allow shops to stay open for longer. This is part of a package of support to help reopen our shops and high-streets safely – backed by £56 million.

This will provide a much-needed boost for many businesses – protecting jobs, reducing pressure on public transport and supporting people and communities to continue to visit their high streets safely and shop locally.

Published 26 March 2021

Last updated 26 March 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 26 March 2021

First published.