

Foreign Secretary statement: UNSC ceasefires resolution passed unanimously

Press release

UN Security Council Resolution 2565 for ceasefires in conflict zones to allow the delivery of vaccines was unanimously agreed today.



Today, Friday 26 February, the UN Security Council Resolution 2565 for ceasefires in conflict zones to allow the delivery of vaccines was unanimously agreed. The UK called for this resolution as Chair of the UN Security Council this month. The resolution was co-sponsored by 112 countries, including all 15 members of the Security Council.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

We're proud to lead in securing the swift and unanimous agreement of today's UN Security Council ceasefires resolution, which will help get vaccines to people living in conflict zones.

The resolution also builds support for COVAX, through which the UK is providing over a billion vaccine doses for the most vulnerable people around the world – because we need a global solution to a global pandemic.

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Scottish Seafood Exports Taskforce – second meeting update

Press release

Second meeting brings together key industry figures with ministerial and official representatives of the UK Government to help cut EU red tape.



EU red tape that has been creating delays to seafood industry exports from the UK is being cut, the Scottish Seafood Exports Taskforce heard today (Friday 26 February).

The second meeting brought together key industry figures with ministerial and official representatives of the UK Government. The Scottish Government was represented both by officials and Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy.

UK Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis joined the virtual event, hosted by the Scotland Office, and told the taskforce that streamlining of paperwork required by the EU had taken place as a result of industry feedback.

UK Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis said:

We are ensuring exports keep flowing and are fixing issues such as the same information being entered multiple times.

We have held 11 workshops to discuss issues and progress so far, and we will continue to work closely with the industry and the Scottish Government to address any outstanding concerns.

Chairing the taskforce meeting, UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid said:

We have instigated specialist work to map the seafood process from catch to customer. The idea is to identify and then eliminate choke

points that have arisen across the supply chains.

He said discussions are ongoing to ensure the industry gets the best out of support schemes offered by both the UK Government and the Scottish Government.

Today's focus was on efficiency and costs, and it was helpful to hear from Tavish Scott, CEO of the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation, who has agreed to head a working sub-group that will drill down into specific areas where the industry tells us it is facing problems.

Further information:

- The Scottish Seafood Exports Taskforce, hosted by the Scotland Office, emerged from ongoing consultation with the seafood and aquaculture industry. While background work takes place daily, the taskforce convenes formally fortnightly.
- The taskforce's remit is to be an overarching body delivering action on medium to long-term issues for the industry, and to complement Defra's weekly seafood working groups with the aim of increasing confidence in the seafood and aquaculture supply chains.
- The taskforce has a core membership drawn from the catching, processing, exporting and aquaculture sections of industry and can invite industry experts and specialists to join on an ad hoc basis.
- The UK Government has last week announced that the £23m fisheries support fund is being expanded to offer support to a wider range of businesses – including the catching and shellfish sectors.

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[UK statement on the re-emergence of Ebola in Guinea](#)

Press release

The Minister for Africa stated he is deeply concerned about recent cases of Ebola reported in Guinea, and confirmed that the UK is already offering support.



Following the re-emergence of Ebola in Guinea, FCDO Minister for Africa, James Duddridge MP, said:

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned to hear that cases of Ebola have recently been confirmed in the Forest Region of Guinea, including a number of deaths, since the last documented cases in 2016.

We welcome the quick mobilisation of the Government of Guinea, World Health Organisation and other UN agencies, International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the Red Cross Society of Guinea and the many other organisations delivering emergency response.

The UK is already extending support to the Ebola outbreak in Guinea in several ways. The UK contributes to a number of pooled funds which have all mobilised to respond to the outbreak; these include the UN Central Emergency Response Fund of which the UK is the largest single donor, the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies, and the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund.

Furthermore, the UK is also a major donor to Gavi, the vaccine alliance, which is providing Ebola vaccines and supporting ultra-cold chain capacity. FCDO and the Department of Health and Social Care have adjusted programmes in neighbouring countries to enhance preparedness and surveillance activities. This includes in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali through the Tackling Deadly Diseases in Africa Programme and in Sierra Leone through the International Health Regulations strengthening programme.

It is more important than ever that we work together to end this deadly outbreak.

COVID-secure election campaigning will go ahead

- New rules announced on campaigning will ensure free and fair local elections
- One-to-one campaigning outdoors will be allowed from 8 March, such as leafleting and canvassing
- Constitution Minister urges “social responsibility” from political parties and individual activists

Individual activists will be able to campaign outdoors in a COVID-secure way from 8 March, ahead of the English local elections in May.

New government [guidance](#) published today will enable free and fair elections, striking the necessary balance to protect public health and ensure voters can make informed choices.

From 8 March, rules will allow for individual campaigners to deliver leaflets and to engage with electors on their doorsteps – but they should always be socially distanced and not enter inside people’s homes.

Outdoor activity remains prohibited until this point and it is vital the current national lockdown rules continue to be followed.

Constitution Minister, Chloe Smith, said:

Democracy should not be cancelled because of COVID. Voters appreciate being well-informed and campaigning is an important part of effective elections.

The guidance I have set out today can give voters and candidates confidence that free and fair elections can be delivered on 6 May and, most crucially, in a COVID-Secure way.

I urge political campaigners to continue to show social responsibility, and for parties, agents and candidates to ensure that their campaigners understand the clear rules.

The new rules from 8 March provide for two months of broader campaign activity in the run up to May’s polls. This proportionate approach will ensure that campaigning can be undertaken during the ‘regulated’ campaign period and also for a period of time before the election expenses restrictions commence.

Campaigners should ensure that all necessary mitigations are applied including social distancing, sanitising hands and wearing face coverings.

From 29 March, the planned provision for six people or two households to meet outdoors will support further outside campaigning, such as activists campaigning in a group along a local street.

The Parliamentary Parties Panel and Local Government Association independents group was consulted on today's guidance prior to publication, in order to take into account the views of political parties and the interests of independent candidates. It is one of a number of measures the government is putting in place to support the delivery of COVID-secure and effective elections.

Additional guidance and legislation has been introduced which reduces the number of signatures required to validate a candidate's nomination. This temporary change will limit the need for in-person contact in March (when nominations must be completed). This week, the Government also published draft legislation that will enable voters who have tested positive for COVID-19, or are self-isolating, to apply for an emergency proxy vote at short notice before election day – so that they can still have their say without having to leave their home. The public can continue to apply to vote by post.

[Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 25 February 2021](#)

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 25 February 2021.



The latest meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday (25 February 2021).

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley, plus representatives from the London Borough

of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF), the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL) and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

At yesterday's Taskforce, the LBHF provided an update on the feasibility study commissioned into the Foster & Partners and COWI temporary bridge proposal. We now expect this study to be completed next week.

In addition, the Department for Transport has received outline financing options for the bridge repair from LBHF and is working with LBHF to develop them further.

The Taskforce also heard the latest from TfL regarding the procurement for the temporary ferry service, following the announcement earlier this week of City Cruises and Uber Boat by Thames Clippers as the shortlisted operators. We expect the contract to be awarded shortly, and wish to highlight that the TfL-led ferry procurement is independent of the proposed redevelopment of Harrods Wharf.

Lastly, we discussed the limited and controlled river transits currently permitted on Sundays, when engineers are not working on the bridge, and considered whether a greater number of transits would be enabled in line with increased demand as the river community emerges from both winter and coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge.

The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, LBHF, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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