

Normalisation should help deliver Israeli-Palestinian peace

Thank you Mr President. As others have done, I'd like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing, and welcome him to this new role. Thank you also to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States for joining us today, and for his briefing.

Mr President, let me start by welcoming President Abbas's announcement of dates for legislative and Presidential elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the first time since 2006. We encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. Free and fair elections are an important and necessary step.

Turning to the conflict, Mr President, I should first reiterate the United Kingdom's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 lines with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. The UK supports existing UN Security Council Resolutions as a basis for this settlement, including UN Security Council Resolution 2334.

With our commitment to the two-state solution in mind, Mr President, we condemn the Government of Israel's decision on 20 January to award tenders, and thus proceed towards construction of settlement units in the prospective East Jerusalem settlement of Givat Hamatos, an extremely sensitive area of the West Bank. Settlements are illegal under international law, and remain an obstacle to peace, and a threat to the two-state solution. The decision undermines the potential for future peace talks. The UK has also expressed concern at the additional 3,900 settlement units that have been advanced across the West Bank throughout January. We again urge Israel to immediately cease settlement expansion in the West Bank. And we remain concerned by demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

Mr President, we condemn the murder of Esther Horgan, in a suspected terror attack by a Palestinian suspect on 20 December in Tal Menashe. The UK is clear about our condemnation of all acts of terrorism, which gravely undermine the prospects for peace. Equally, we condemn all violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians.

Mr President, this month also saw the firing of rockets on 17 January from militant groups in Gaza. The UK condemns the firing of rockets towards civilian populations. Any attacks targeted against civilians are unlawful and unjustifiable. The UK continues to encourage actors to put forward long-term sustainable proposals, to resolve the threat posed to Israel's security by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other militants in Gaza. We call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and

rocket fire against Israel. We continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza. And we encourage Israel to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

Mr President, as we have consistently done, we join the US and other Council members today in rejecting unilateral action on both sides.

The UK has been a strong supporter of recent Arab-Israeli normalisation agreements. Normalisation changes the regional context, and presents opportunities for moving ahead with material benefits and new partnerships, to help deliver long overdue Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Mr President, a two-state solution is the only viable long-term solution. It is the only way to permanently end the Arab-Israeli conflict, deliver Palestinian self-determination, and preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity.

We echo the incoming US administration's hope that the process will unlock options for advancing a two-state solution. We look forward to working with them, alongside regional partners and the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to seize this positive momentum – helping deliver greater regional prosperity and security, and progressing a solution to the conflict. We continue to support that goal.

Reiterating the UK's full support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire

Thank you, Mr. President. May I start by thanking you for calling this debate. The United Kingdom reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and the implementation of the commitments under resolution 2532.

Sadly, as we've heard, despite a global pandemic of historic proportions, peacebuilding has not always been afforded the priority it deserves. There has indeed been some progress, but implementation of the resolution continues to be mixed, as the following three examples illustrate.

In Yemen, as we've heard, the Houthis failed to reciprocate the Saudi-led coalition's unilateral ceasefire offers in 2020, and the recent Houthi attack on Aden has gravely undercut peace efforts. Now is the time to rally round the UN Special Envoys efforts to secure a lasting political solution to the conflict. The stakes have never been higher and the humanitarian crisis, already the world's worst, is significantly worsening with the effects of

Covid-19. In September the Foreign Secretary warned that Yemen had never looked more likely to slide into famine. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification data, published in 2020, 16,500 Yemenis were living in famine conditions, now set to almost triple to forty seven thousand by June 2021.

Second, in South-Sudan, sustained increases in violence throughout 2020, combined with record flooding, mean areas of the country now likely face famine or famine-like conditions. This is a catastrophe that the government of South-Sudan must urgently address with international support. The 2018 peace deal remains the best chance of an end to violence and longer-term stability. However, implementation has stagnated. As such, greater coordinated international and regional pressure is needed on the government of South-Sudan to ensure they deliver their commitments.

More encouragingly, we welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on the 3rd of October 2020 by the government of Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front and Sudan Liberation Movement, Minni Minawi. This is a crucial step towards comprehensive peace. But despite this progress, significant challenges remain here too, including intercommunal violence. The violence that occurred recently in West and South Darfur highlights the continued need for protection of civilians, which full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement could help provide for. We encourage the signatories of the agreement to begin swiftly the process of implementation, particularly those provisions of the agreement pertaining to security arrangements and addressing the root causes of conflict. We also urge all those who remain outside the peace negotiations to engage immediately and constructively without preconditions.

As we've heard throughout 2020, we sadly saw the voices of women sidelined in peace processes. This is a grave problem, not just morally, but also because peace is more sustainable when it meets and reflects the needs of all people, men and women. The UK strongly urges the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and of youth, religious groups and NGOs in peacebuilding. And we must ensure women are able to carry out their work free from threats and violence. No woman should have to risk her safety to heal her community.

Finally, as we know, the Covid-19 pandemic threatens international peace and security. Ending the pandemic requires equitable global access to vaccines. Yet there are particular barriers to vaccine delivery in contexts affected by conflict and insecurity. We welcome the initiative of the Tunisian presidency to do more at this critical time. And building on resolution 2532 the United Kingdom will convene a meeting in our presidency next month to address potential barriers to vaccine access such as ceasefires, logistics and funding for delivery. Thank you, Mr President.

G7 Foreign Ministers' statement on arrest and detention of Alexey Navalny

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning the politically motivated arrest and detention of Alexey Navalny.

We are also deeply concerned by the detention of thousands of peaceful protesters and journalists, and call upon Russia to adhere to its national and international obligations and release those detained arbitrarily for exercising their right of peaceful assembly on 23 January. The violent suppression by police forces of the right of individuals to express their opinion is unacceptable. These events confirm a continuous negative pattern of shrinking space for the opposition, civil society, human rights defenders and independent voices in Russia.

It is deplorable that Mr Navalny is being detained in relation to court decisions which the European Court of Human Rights determined in 2017 to be arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable. We the G7 Foreign Ministers call upon the Russian authorities for Mr Navalny's immediate and unconditional release. Russia is bound by its national and international obligations to respect and ensure human rights.

G7 Foreign Ministers recall their condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the poisoning of Mr Navalny in August 2020 with a chemical nerve-agent of the "Novichok" group, a substance developed by Russia.

We reiterate that any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and contravenes international norms against the use of such weapons. We, the G7 Foreign Ministers, again urge the Russian authorities to investigate and credibly explain the use of a chemical weapon on its soil in the light of Russia's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The confirmed use of chemical weapons against an opposition politician, as well as Mr Navalny's latest detention further undermine democracy, independent voices, and political plurality in Russia. We urge Russia to fulfill its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to guarantee the rights it sets forth, including the right to freedom of expression, to all individuals within its territory and jurisdiction.

We will continue to monitor closely Russia's response to international calls for the immediate release of Mr Navalny and any protesters and journalists who have been detained arbitrarily, as well as a criminal investigation into Mr Navalny's poisoning. We remain strongly committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to our support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Russia, as well as to bolstering our support to Russian civil society.

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 26 January 2021

I am sorry to have to tell you that today the number of deaths recorded from Covid in the UK has surpassed 100,000, and it is hard to compute the sorrow contained in that grim statistic.

The years of life lost, the family gatherings not attended and, for so many relatives, the missed chance even to say goodbye.

I offer my deepest condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one: fathers and mothers; brothers and sisters; sons and daughters and the many grandparents who have been taken.

And, to all those who grieve, we make this pledge: that when we have come through this crisis, we will come together as a nation to remember everyone we lost, and to honour the selfless heroism of all those on the front line who gave their lives to save others.

We will remember the courage of countless working people – not just our amazing NHS and care workers, but shop workers, transport staff, pharmacists, teachers, police, armed forces emergency services and many others – who kept our country going during our biggest crisis since the Second World War.

We will commemorate the small acts of kindness, the spirit of volunteering and the daily sacrifice of millions who placed their lives on hold time and again as we fought each new wave of the virus, buying time for our brilliant scientists to come to our aid.

In that moment of commemoration, we will celebrate the genius and perseverance of those who discovered the vaccines and the immense national effort – never seen before in our history – which is now underway to distribute them, one that has now seen us immunise over 6.8 million people across the United Kingdom.

And when those vaccines have finally freed us from this virus and put us on a path to recovery, we will make sure that we learn the lessons and reflect and prepare.

And, until that time, the best and most important thing we can all do to honour the memory of those who have died is to work together with ever greater resolve to defeat this disease.

And that is what we will do.

Funding for new checks on animal products creates 500 jobs

£14 million in [funding](#) has been given to local authorities across England to help them maintain the UK's high standards on imported animal products, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has today (26 January 2021) confirmed.

Over 500 new port health roles are being created to facilitate the new checks on imports of animal products from the EU from April 2021, with £8.8 million invested in Ashford Borough Council and Dover District Council.

A further £5.2 million is being spent on recruiting staff, equipment and new systems in 19 other local authorities around England, including East Suffolk District Council, Manchester City Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, Portsmouth City Council and the City of London.

Farming, Fisheries and Food Minister Victoria Prentis said:

We are rightly proud of our high standards of animal and plant goods, and we are determined to maintain them, while ensuring that operations at our ports continue to run smoothly.

This funding will allow local authorities to play their part in maintaining standards and efficiency at our borders, while also providing investment in new jobs and infrastructure.

The new checks will be introduced in a phased way, with documentary checks on animal products for human consumption starting from April 2021, followed by additional identity and physical checks at Border Control Posts from July 2021. Together with other checks on live animals, plants and plant products carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), the new port checks will safeguard public, animal and plant health.

Ashford Borough Council, which is receiving the greatest share of the investment to support the upgraded Sevington Inland Border Facility (IBF) built alongside Junction 10A of the M20, will carry out an estimated 124,000 checks on imports a year.

Cllr Peter Feacey, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing at Ashford Borough Council, said:

The new service is an exciting challenge for us. The scale of the task is vast, logistically complex and extremely time sensitive. We are, however, fully committed to implementing the changes that are

necessary and meeting our responsibilities.

I am heartened by the support being provided by Defra, not only from a financial perspective but also practically in terms of designing and implementing this service in just a few months.

I am sure that we will rise to the challenge before us and provide this nationally strategic service.

Toby Howe, senior highways manager at Kent County Council, said:

Getting Sevington operational in time to play its part in traffic management plans for the UK's departure from the EU was a huge undertaking. But the hard work hasn't stopped there and now the focus is on transforming the facility into a fully-fledged Inland Border Facility to help trade flow without disrupting traffic.

It's fantastic to see the site plans moving forward and the job opportunities created for the local community in the process.

Just as we did in preparation for the end of the Brexit transition period, the Kent Resilience Forum, including Kent Police, KCC and Highways England, will work closely with Ashford Borough Council to deliver this challenging, but exciting, project. It puts the town at the very heart of operations for the UK's new trading arrangements with the EU.