

# Human Rights Council Interactive Dialogue on Belarus: Joint Statement on Media Freedom in Belarus

Thank you,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on media freedom in Belarus on behalf of 42 states.

We reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of the targeting, harassment and detention of journalists and media workers. We are deeply concerned by the excessive use of force by the authorities against journalists, including reports of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In a statement on 19 November, UN human rights experts strongly condemned large scale violations in Belarus, and said that peaceful protesters and journalists remain unprotected from disproportionately violent actions of security forces.

Journalists in Belarus are facing unprecedented levels of harassment. On 20 November, independent journalist Yekaterina Bakhvalova had criminal charges brought against her after filming police firing stun grenades during a memorial for murdered opposition supporter, Raman Bandarenka. A further 23 journalists were detained while covering this event. Since May, 390 journalists have reported some form of persecution. Punishing journalists for doing their job is unacceptable, and we call on Belarus to immediately release all those detained and drop all charges against them.

We strongly urge Belarus to respect the freedom of expression for all, including for journalists and media workers. We urge Belarus to implement OSCE Moscow Mechanism report recommendations on freedom of expression and the media.

The increasing restrictions on independent media actors must stop.

Thank you.

Joint Statement on media freedom in Belarus

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## **Marketing bosses dupe shareholders into £3.5m investment**

Lee Anthony Skinner (60) has been banned for 10 years, while Karen Ferreira (60) has been disqualified for 7 years. The pair are banned from acting as directors directly or indirectly being involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

The pair were directors of an online affiliate marketing company, Our Price Records Ltd, which remained dormant until 2014 before Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner attempted to raise funds from the sale of shares in the company.

The company, however, entered into administration in April 2017 before being referred to the Insolvency Service for further enquiries.

Investigators established that Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner sold shares to 260 investors and secured almost £3.5 million. The pair, however, secured the investment under false pretences and breached financial regulations.

Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner created promotional material duping prospective shareholders into believing that their brand was well known, despite having their application to register Our Price Records as a trademark opposed by the original owner.

Our Price Records sold the shares through a third party but neither had the authority to engage in investment activity, breaching financial regulations.

The pair also failed to tell investors that Our Price Records had entered into agreements to pay up to 50% of total funds raised to the third parties selling the shares. In total, Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner paid at least £1.58 million in commission to third parties.

Investigators uncovered that Karen Ferreira was a director of two other companies which had entered into general service agreements with Our Price Records. But investors were not made aware of this nor that Our Price Records paid the company in total more than £750,000.

One of the companies that Karen Ferreira was a director of entered into a commercial loan agreement with Lee Skinner and granted a loan of up to £1 million on the understanding he would pay for Our Price Record's administrative and marketing services. A total of more than £760,000 was paid to Lee Skinner and no repayments have been made.

The funds raised remain outstanding to the investors in the administration and the investors are not protected under the UK Financial Services Compensation Scheme

The [FCA secured a restitution order](#) in the High Court earlier this year against Lee Skinner, Karen Ferreira and the company. The Court found that individuals and the company were in breach of Financial Services and Markets Act.

On 28 September 2020, the Secretary of State accepted a disqualification undertaking from Lee Skinner, after he did not dispute that he had caused Our Price Records to breach the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, used the 'Our Price' brand at a time that the 'Our Price' trade marks were subject to dispute and caused the distribution of false and/or misleading information to investors regarding the use of the investment funds. His ban is effective from 16 October 2020 and lasts for 10 years.

Karen Ferreira's 7-year disqualification was accepted by the Secretary of State a few days later on 5 October 2020. In her undertaking, Karen Ferreira, did not dispute that she allowed Our Price Records to breach the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, allowed Our Price Records to use the 'Our Price' brand at a time that the 'Our Price' trade marks were subject to

dispute and allowed the distribution of false and/or misleading information to investors regarding the use of the investment funds. Her ban is effective from 26 October 2020.

Robert Clarke, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

Using an agent, Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner made false and misleading promises to prospective investors when they were trying to entice them to invest into Our Price Records. Not only did this breach financial regulations but investors were totally unaware of other agreements Our Price Records made, which saw millions of pounds being handed over to third parties.

Unfortunately, investors have suffered significant financial losses. However, these bans should serve as a warning to other directors tempted to raise funds by illegitimate means that we will investigate and remove them from the business environment.

Lee Skinner is from Essex and his date of birth is November 1960.

Karen Ferreira is from Essex and her date of birth is July 1960.

Our Price Records Ltd (Company number 04792445)

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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## [UK doubles up efforts to tackle climate change in Kenya](#)

The UK is stepping up to drive climate action in Kenya, British High Commissioner Jane Marriott announced today. During a visit to Lake Baringo, she reaffirmed that the UK is doubling its commitment to providing international climate finance by KES 1.7 trillion over the next 5 years.

During the visit, High Commissioner Jane Marriott met with businesses, schools and community leaders affected by the rise of Lake Baringo. The lake

has risen by over 42 inches since May, impacting jobs, education and health services. The UK is committed to tackling climate change in Kenya, and the related issues that have driven the flooding.

As shown by Lake Baringo, the impacts of climate change are being felt all over Kenya, but these effects are felt the most by the communities directly impacted. Next year the UK will host the global climate change talks, and today Ms Marriott launched a new initiative inviting Kenyans to submit their photographs depicting how climate change is affecting the country.

Photographs can portray the very real challenges people face in Kenya. Winning photographs will cover the following categories: nature based solutions to climate change, climate technology and innovation, and adapting to climate change in the community.

Speaking on the shores of Lake Baringo, British High Commissioner to Kenya Jane Marriott said:

Climate change is already a daily reality for people across Kenya. Vulnerable communities that rely on their natural environment for survival are most at risk, least able to prepare and hardest hit. The UK will provide a platform for Kenyan voices and experiences in the run up to the climate change conference next year in the UK, to build a brighter, greener, future.

Vice President of the World Resources Institute and Friend of COP26 Wanjira Mathai said:

Without support to locally led measures to adapt to climate impacts and increase the resilience of economic activities, communities will sink further into poverty and hopelessness. The need for urgent climate action is clear. We need to re-set our relationship with nature and through our collective action reverse the damage we have done to mother earth.

The initiative comes during a Year of Climate Action in Kenya, a partnership to celebrate the leadership that Kenya has shown in areas such as climate policy, clean energy, and green finance.

Edouard Wenseleers, Globeleq's Business Development Director for East Africa said:

Globeleq's mission is to power Africa's growth. As a responsible investor and power producer, Globeleq is committed to grow its business in a manner that is sustainable and respectful of the environment and the communities. Our Malindi Solar project in Kenya is a testimony of that commitment and we are delighted to sponsor the 'Climate Changemakers Photography Competition' launched by the

British High Commission in Nairobi.

Last month, the UK announced a KES 1.2 billion (£8m) package of UK initiatives to support climate action in Kenya and Africa.

The UK is also backing new pioneering satellite projects that will apply British expertise to tackling development problems in Kenya. UK academics will work on data solutions to manage natural resources and protecting wildlife. In Kenya, these projects will protect biodiversity, and increase climate change resilience:

- Sat4Wildlife – to protect wildlife habitats in Kenya, using innovative sensing and monitoring technologies to boost the capacity of conservationists, including Ol Pejeta Conservancy to tackle threats to people and wildlife.
- gEothermalKenya – working with Kenya's National Environmental Management Authority to support the sustainable growth of the geothermal sector, through a combination of satellite data insights and community consultations
- Earth Observation for Sustainable Aggregate Supply – supporting sustainable management of sand resources

The competition is open from Friday, 4 December 2020 and will close at midnight Sunday, 31 January 2021. Winners will be notified on Wangari Maathai Day on 3 March 2021

#### **Notes to editors:**

- The photography competition, sponsored by Globeleq, will see up to three Kenyans win KES 200,000 each and a chance to visit and photograph the Globeleq Malindi Solar project once in operation
- Winners will be selected by a panel comprising of the British High Commissioner to Kenya, Jane Marriott, the Principal Secretary Ministry of Environment and Forestry Dr. Chris Kiptoo, Vice President and Regional Director for Africa, World Resources Institute, Wanjira Mathai and a representative from the competition sponsor, Globeleq
- The Terms and Conditions can be found here [Terms and Conditions](#) (ODT, 19.9KB)
- The recent 1.2 billion KES package of UK support to tackle climate change in Africa includes:
  - The UK PACT Green Recovery Challenge Fund programme to Kenya and other countries with KES 770 million (£5.3m) available to support low-carbon transitions through clean energy and nature-based solutions;
  - A new UK funded partnership between Cambridge University, the Eastern & Southern African Management Institute, the International

- Institute for Environment and Development and FSD Africa to build capacity to access climate finance across Africa;
- UK support to the FlipFlopi Project, in partnership with UNEP, to combat plastic waste and water pollution in Kenya and Lake Victoria, and work by BBC Media Action to train and mentor journalists to report on pollution issues and local solutions including recycling
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## Government redefines treasure to increase protection for archaeological finds

- For the first time, the official treasure definition will not be based solely on the material qualities of an artefact
- Changes will make the treasure process more transparent and efficient for museums and the public

More of the most important archaeological finds will be protected for the public under plans to develop a new definition of treasure, Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage has announced.

The move is one of the biggest changes to the Treasure Act since it came into effect nearly 25 years ago.

Under the existing definition, objects are designated as treasure if they are found to be over 300 years old, made of gold or silver or found with artefacts made of precious metals. Once officially identified as treasure, artefacts become the property of the Crown and are available for acquisition by local or national museums to go on public display.

However this historic view of treasure, which stretches back to the medieval period, does not capture the full extent of important finds reported to the scheme in the twenty-first century. The growing popularity of metal detecting since the inception of the act in 1996 has brought to light an increasing number of finds from Roman Britain that do not meet the current treasure criteria because they are often made from bronze and not precious metals.

Some items of national importance have been lost to the public or at risk of sale into private collections.

Recent finds include a bronze-enamelled horse brooch from between the second and fourth century AD which resembles earlier designs of the Iron Age period.

As a rare example from this era, the national and local significance of this object could be recognised under a new definition of treasure. However, when it was discovered earlier this year, the brooch was not recognised under the Treasure Act. Thanks to the generosity of the finder in this instance, the brooch is currently on display at the Collection at Lincoln, however the planned proposals published today will secure the future of objects like this one.

Another exceptionally rare Roman figurine wearing a cloak known as the Birrus Brittanicus would also have been lost to the public. The figurine was found near Chelmsford in 2014 but, despite being an extremely unusual example of a British character being depicted in Roman portable art, the artefact's copper alloy composition did not meet the current definition of treasure. Due to a deferred export licence delaying the sale, Chelmsford City Museum were able to raise the funds to purchase the figurine to display for the local community.

Under the new plans announced today, a new definition will be developed to ensure that major finds can be designated as treasure if they are historically or culturally significant. This will be the first time the official treasure definition will not be based solely on the material qualities of an artefact. This will allow local and national museums to acquire more objects of national importance for public collections.

### **Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage said:**

The search for buried treasures by budding detectorists has become more popular than ever before and many ancient artefacts now see the light of day in museums' collections.

However it is important that we pursue plans to protect more of our precious history and make it easier for everyone to follow the treasure process.

Finders, landowners, museums and members of the public were invited to comment on the proposals in a consultation and their views informed the government response published today. The changes will bring the treasure process into line with other important legislation to protect cultural heritage and collections, including the listing process for historically significant buildings and the export bar system.

A specialist research project running next year will inform the new definition and there will be opportunities for detectorists, archaeologists, museums, academics and curators to contribute to options in development.

As a result of the public consultation, the government will also introduce new measures to improve the experience of the treasure process which include a new time limit to streamline some stages of the process, limiting the number of times the Treasure Valuation Committee can review a case and developing a mechanism to return unclaimed rewards to museums.



**Michael Lewis, Head of Portable Antiquities Scheme and Treasure at the British Museum, said:**

The British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) has been essential to the working of the Treasure Act 1996 since its implementation in 1997 and the British Museum, alongside our colleagues in Wales and Northern Ireland, in the effective administration of Treasure. We are very proud that so many important archaeological finds have been acquired by museums across England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the public to learn about and enjoy. We very much welcome working with the DCMS as it takes forward its work to reform Treasure law to protect our shared heritage and encourage best practice amongst finders.

**Roger Bland, Chair of the Treasure Valuation Committee, said:**

I welcome the publication of the Government's response to the Review of the Treasure Act, which contained a wide range of proposals intended to build on the great success of the Act. The public response to the Review was very substantial and has raised issues, such as those surrounding the definition of Treasure, which require further work to ensure the most important finds can be protected. This document marks an important step forward in transforming the treasure process so that it continues to meet the aims of the Act. The Treasure Valuation Committee looks forward to working with the DCMS on these.

The full government response to the consultation is available [here](#)

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## **Government to consult on crackdown on unfair employment clauses in a boost for low paid workers**

- Proposed crackdown on restrictive employment contracts will ensure up to 1.8 million low paid workers across the UK can pick up extra work if they want to
- other reforms will remove unfair barriers that prevent workers in technology, legal and other sectors from starting up or joining competing businesses
- plans will give workers more freedom over where and when they work – helping millions boost their incomes during this difficult time

New proposed measures to allow workers' greater freedom to find new or additional work have been unveiled by Business Secretary Alok Sharma today (4 December 2020).

In a major win for the UK's lowest paid workers, the government will consult on banning the use of exclusivity clauses in contracts, which prevent workers from taking on additional work with other employers. This would apply to a worker's whose guaranteed weekly income is below the Lower Earnings Limit, currently £120 a week.

This change will put more power into the hands of an estimated 1.8 million low paid workers across the UK to top-up their income with additional work if they want to – ending an unfair penalty on hardworking Britons who want the freedom and flexibility to make a living and support their families.

It will also greatly expand the pool of talent available for businesses who rely on part-time and flexible workers, as those already in low-paid part-time employment will no longer be bound by restrictive contracts.

Today's plans also look to reform the use of non-compete clauses, which can prevent individuals from starting up or joining competing businesses after they leave a position. The move will ensure talented individuals have the freedom to apply their skills in another role if they wish while unleashing a wave of new start-ups across the country.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

We want to ensure every worker has the freedom and flexibility to work in the way they want, where they want – whether that's topping up their pay packet by taking on additional work, or being able to start their own business with the skills they've gained throughout their career.

Today's reforms are another step on our path to making sure the UK is the best place in the world to work, start and grow a business as we build back better from the pandemic.

Plans involve introducing a mandatory compensation requirement for any employer that wishes to use non-compete clauses, ensuring that workers receive a fair settlement if they are restricted from joining or starting a business within their field of expertise. This aims to discourage the unnecessary and widespread use of non-compete clauses by employers.

The government is also seeking views on whether it is necessary to go further and ban non-compete clauses all together.

Exclusivity clauses were banned for workers on zero hours contracts, where employers are not obliged to provide any minimum working hours and the worker is not obliged to accept any work offered, in 2015.

Andy Chamberlain, Director of Policy at IPSE said:

It is a welcome step in the right direction that the government is consulting on ways to crack down on restrictive contracts.

Paring back restrictive contract features such as exclusivity and non-compete clauses should, we hope, help open up opportunities for the self-employed and support them in adapting to these challenging times.

The 2 proposed reforms form part of the government's plans to build back better, ensuring the UK's recovery from COVID-19 creates new jobs, increases competition and maximises opportunities for the most talented innovators, job creators and entrepreneurs in the UK.

View the 2 consultations:

Other countries have also restricted exclusivity clauses in order to stimulate innovation, including Germany and France.

In Germany, exclusivity clauses are not used in employment contracts, and taking on an additional job (as long as it is not in competition to your first employer) is never prohibited.

Germany have also created mini-jobs, to promote higher employment rates through income tax-free marginal employment, with workers making at most €450 a month in part-time jobs (under the limit for social security contributions and exempt from income tax). All German industries are allowed to offer mini job contracts, but the most common types of mini jobs are in the fields of catering, retail, and domestic work.