

British High Commission Cyprus webinar series: technology and women

The British High Commission in Cyprus continues its insightful webinar series with an interview with Amanda Pinot QC, who shares her views on the effects COVID-19 has had on the world. The webinar reveals how elements of the UK adapted to the pandemic and how a #DynamicUK continues to innovate to face challenges.

Pinto, who is chairing the Bar Council for 2020 was interviewed by acclaimed lawyer Christophoros Christophi, about the challenges that the legal sector faces, from a legal practitioner's point of view.

Pinto's webinar covers two highly insightful and important topics. The first topic analyzes technology, legal technology, the impact of COVID-19 in the legal profession and where the balance lies in justice for the future.

Pinto speaks about the impact of COVID-19, on the ways in which courts and tribunals practice justice and how technology has better enabled access to justice.

When we talk about technology and court or justice and ways of working, particularly post COVID-19, I think that the overriding principle that we must have at the forefront of our minds, is access to justice- in conducting the business of courts and tribunals, from the starting proceedings to obtaining and enforcing judgements. Because if people cannot access the structures that will enable them to exercise their rights and they don't have access to justice, their rights are underused and maybe even worthless. We have seen that technology and remote access to courts and tribunals is a way of limiting the ways that COVID-19 has been a barrier to access to justice.

In the second part, she focuses on women at the Bar, and highlights the importance of their presence in justice and how to ensure that women do have a chance to reach to the top of their profession.

As the fourth female president of the Bar Council, Pinto explains the various efforts that the Council is undertaking to ensure the representation of women at the top of the profession.

If we don't keep and nurture the women all the way through their careers to the point where they can become QC's but also where they become potential judges of the future, then the judiciary will not change; and at the moment there is very poor representation of women in the judiciary.

Pinto has chaired the International Committee from 2014 to 2018 and was called to the Bar in 1983. She specialises in business wrongdoing, international fraud, corporate crime, bribery and money laundering. Moreover, she is a Trustee of the Slynne Foundation, working to improve justice systems and the rule of law globally. Her practice led her to become the Champion of the First 100 Years project, celebrating women being admitted to the legal profession.

Discover more and understand how technology can enable better access to justice, by watching the entire webinar below.

[#DynamicUK – Amanda Pinto](#)

This is the second of six webinars with highly innovative British professionals from various industries to discuss, inform and share their knowledge and expertise on how the current pandemic has affected their fields. Check out our social media channels for more upcoming discussions and if you've missed our previous webinar you can find out more about it in the following link:

[#DynamicUK – Sir Geoffrey Vos](#)

Baroness Goldie speech at 25th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention

Director-General, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, congratulations Mr Chairman on your election. Many thanks to you, Director-General Arias, and the OPCW Technical Secretariat, for your herculean efforts to support the convening of the Conference amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Like you, I look forward to a time when more of us can gather in person.

2020 has been a challenging year on many fronts. I want to pay particular tribute to the OPCW Technical Secretariat staff who have adapted to deliver more capacity-building programmes on-line; sought to maintain a programme of industry inspections; and addressed the use of chemical weapons.

The international community's revulsion at the use of chemical weapons remains undimmed. Great strides have been taken towards eliminating these abhorrent weapons, and the Chemical Weapons Convention is rightly heralded as a global success. But it is not a success that we can take for granted.

In recent years, we have seen chemical weapons used in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia,

the UK, and now Russia. This poses a clear threat to the security of us all. It must be addressed.

The UK welcomed the publication of the first report from the Investigation and Identification team in April, a very robust document, and its clear findings. In July, the Executive Council set out very clear steps for Syria to take to come into compliance with the Convention. Regrettably, the Syrian regime's response was to ignore the Executive Council and to continue a campaign vilifying the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

As recommended by the Council the issue will now be taken up at the Conference. The United Kingdom is co-sponsoring the draft decision condemning the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons and suspending certain rights and privileges, until they come into compliance with the Convention.

We cannot stand by in the face of incontrovertible evidence that chemical weapons have been used and that a State Party is flouting its obligations under the Convention. The decision proposes an approach which adheres closely to the provisions of the Convention, and we urge all States Parties to support it.

Mr Chair,

The UK was appalled to learn of a second confirmed use of a Novichok nerve agent to attack the Russian opposition figure, Alexey Navalny, in August. It is less than three years since my own country experienced the deadly consequences of the use of Novichok as a chemical weapon. We wish Mr Navalny well for a swift recovery.

Let us be clear, any poisoning with a nerve agent constitutes a use of a chemical weapon under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Technical Secretariat has shared with States Parties the findings of independent sample analysis, confirming German, Swedish and French laboratory analysis. The evidence is undeniable.

The UK considers that there is no plausible explanation for Mr Navalny's poisoning other than Russian involvement and responsibility for this appalling attack. We call on the Russian Federation to fully declare its Novichok programme to the OPCW.

Russia must fully explain to the Conference how a chemical weapon of a type developed by the Soviet Union came to be used against a Russian opposition politician on Russian territory. Those responsible must be held to account.

Mr Chair,

The OPCW must have the resources needed to fulfil its mandate. The United Kingdom will be supporting the Director-General's proposed programme and budget for 2021, as recommended by the Executive Council. It is proportionate and reasonable whilst maintaining assessed contributions at their previous level. The budget will enable all capacity building programmes to be sustained and support the organisation's resilience amidst the challenges posed by Covid-19. We encourage all states to join consensus on adopting the budget proposals.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom was pleased to be able to provide an additional £1.9 million in voluntary contributions in 2020. This funding will help support the establishment of the new OPCW Chemistry and Technology Centre; build laboratory capacity in Africa and Latin America; build capacity in Africa to respond to the use of chemical weapons; as well as enhancing the OPCW's cyber security and addressing Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Mr Chair,

Recent events have highlighted the imperative of States Parties continuing to come together to reject all use of chemical weapons. We need to remember why we are all here. Upholding the Convention and supporting the work of the Technical Secretariat is central to safeguarding our collective security. It is as important now as it was when we first came together to implement the Convention and establish the Technical Secretariat.

Verifying the destruction of all declared stockpiles is now close to completion. The big challenge ahead is to address the undeclared chemical weapons programmes, the covert caches of lethal substances: only then will we fully realise the object and purpose of the Convention and consign these appalling weapons to the history books.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

[New appointments to forge UK's independent trade agenda](#)

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First Singapore – United Kingdom climate change bilateral dialogue

The first meeting of the Singapore-UK Climate Change Bilateral Dialogue was held from 24 to 26 November 2020 by videoconference. The Dialogue covered a wide range of topics including climate ambition and green recovery post-COVID-19, carbon markets, energy transition, low-carbon technologies, green transport, nature-based solutions, and green finance.

The Dialogue advances work in one of four key pillars under the SG-UK Partnership for the Future, which commits both countries to building on our historic links to look to the future, and address shared and global challenges together.

Singapore and the UK agreed that climate action cannot wait. We therefore reiterated our commitment to take strong domestic mitigation actions, including through harnessing renewable energy and low-carbon technologies, in support of the Paris Agreement.

At the Dialogue, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to working in partnership to ensure the success of the multilateral system to address global climate challenges, in particular through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Singapore expressed its support for the incoming UK COP26 Presidency, and both countries agreed to work closely with each other and with other Parties to secure a successful outcome at COP26.

To facilitate the development and deployment of low-emission solutions, such as smart grid systems, green transport, low-carbon hydrogen, and carbon capture, utilisation and storage solutions, both countries agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation on climate science and innovation. This collaboration includes continued exchanges between government, industry, and academia.

Both sides affirmed plans to cooperate within the region to support implementation of the Paris Agreement, and accelerate the energy transition, particularly by enabling greater flows of green finance and supporting the development of carbon markets. To that end, both sides agreed to intensify exchanges between their national experts, and to enable and encourage the cooperation of their respective financial centres.

Both countries agreed to convene the second Dialogue in 2021.

Kara Owen, British High Commissioner to Singapore said:

The UK and Singapore have a long history of close engagement on climate issues. Given that climate action is a top priority for both of our governments, it was an easy choice for us to put climate and sustainability front and centre as a key pillar of the

SG-UK Partnership for the Future, launched last year. As we begin the one year countdown to the UK-hosted COP26 next November, we highly appreciate Singapore's strong support for its vital objectives.

This Dialogue has injected even greater energy into our efforts to drive the agenda forward and across green revolutions in mobility, energy, finance and beyond. By sharing our technical and policy innovations, it is more likely that our work will bring benefit beyond just UK and Singapore. Our partnership can also support the low carbon energy transition across South East Asia, the region that has the most to gain but also to lose in our battle against climate change."

Tan Kok Yam, Deputy Secretary, Smart Nation and Digital Government and Strategy Group, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), said:

Singapore and the UK have a long history of working together to address climate change issues. We see the UK as a like-minded partner to jointly pursue exciting and innovative economic and technological opportunities as we undertake urgent climate action.

During the Dialogue, we had rich discussions on ways to advance our bilateral cooperation, and on how our partnership can accelerate the low-carbon transition, not just in our respective countries, but in the region and the world. We stand ready to work more closely with the UK, in the lead-up to COP-26 and beyond.

Further information

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OPSS launches Christmas online toy safety campaign

A Christmas online toy safety campaign has been launched today (30 November 2020) by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), working in partnership with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, and the British Toy & Hobby Association.

Groups, businesses, and individuals are encouraged to support the consumer awareness messages, on how to shop safely when purchasing Christmas toys online, by retweeting and posting them on social media, using the hashtag #shopsafely, or using the shared campaign materials.

Natasha Crookes, Director of Public Affairs, British Toy & Hobby Association, says; "The British Toy and Hobby Association is pleased to support the OPSS advice to help parents to shop from reputable sellers online, to ensure children get to enjoy safe playtime this Christmas".

Shop for Christmas toys safely online

OPSS has produced safety tips on how to buy Christmas toys safely online.

These are:

Buy toys from a reputable retailer

Check that there is a name and address for the manufacturer on the site and if this information is not available do not buy the toy. Read ratings and reviews to make sure the retailer has a good reputation for safe and reliable toys.

Always read the warnings and instructions

Heed the age restrictions: toys must be marked with age restrictions based on risks such as choking hazards.

Check that the toy is suitable for the intended recipient

Festive novelties can look like toys when they should be kept away from children. If a child has special needs, they may be more vulnerable to certain toys.

Ensure the toy has not been recalled

Check if the toy you are buying has been recalled at [Product Recall](#)

Check for button batteries

If a toy has button batteries make sure they are safely behind a screwed-down flap.

Beware of potential toy hazards

Avoid buying toys with small parts as they can be a choking hazard. Think before buying toys and costumes with loose ribbons as they can pose strangulation risks to young children.

Buy genuine toys

Compare the toy's price with other retailers and sellers. If it is a fraction of the cost, it is likely to be counterfeit.

The campaign materials can be downloaded from the [Consumer safety awareness campaigns materials GOV.UK page](#)