

PM call with President Nicos Anastasiades: 27 October 2020

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with President Nicos Anastasiades of the Republic of Cyprus.



The Prime Minister spoke to President Nicos Anastasiades of the Republic of Cyprus this evening, reaffirming the enduring ties between the UK and Cyprus.

They discussed their shared concerns over tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the crisis in Libya. The Prime Minister expressed his support for Cyprus's position and offered the UK's help to deescalate the situation and reduce tensions.

President Anastasiades updated on the latest developments on the Cyprus settlement and the Prime Minister urged the resumption of settlement talks.

They agreed to continue to strengthen the UK-Cyprus relationship and to work together to address the global challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

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The need for a political settlement to solve the crisis in Syria

Thank you very much, Mr President. Let me also thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings today. We once again express our full support for their tireless work on Syria and commend the

ongoing efforts of UN actors to address the needs of the Syrian people in dire circumstances on the ground.

I am also grateful to the humanitarian co-penholders for the statement delivered by the Belgian ambassador. And I want to agree with him that we should ensure that we focus separately on the humanitarian situation going forward in our programme of work.

Mr President, let me also at the outset express some concern about reports of a significant Russian airstrike on opposition fighters in Idlib province yesterday. This appears to be the largest single attack in Idlib since the 5 March ceasefire came into effect. And we call on all parties, particularly the principal actors, to refrain from escalatory actions which risk undermining the fragile ceasefire.

Mr President, this Friday, 30 October, marks one year since the Constitutional Committee first convened. When it was first launched, this Council expressed its determination, in our PRST of 8 October 2019, that this would be the beginning of the political process to end the conflict in line with resolution 2254 that met the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians.

But since 30 October, the Committee has convened on only two further occasions – once in November 2019 and once in August this year. In that time, not only has no substantial progress made, it appears that it remains difficult even to get the regime to agree to attend meetings. This month should have seen a further round of talks, and we regret that the regime's insistence on an agenda not in line with the Committee's mandate has meant this has not happened.

Without a new constitution, free and fair elections with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate, cannot take place as envisaged in resolution 2254. Elections which do not meet these requirements will deny millions of Syrians the opportunity to take part in deciding the future of Syria and to share in ownership of the political process as endorsed by this Council.

Mr President, there unfortunately appears to be an equal lack of progress on other aspects of UNSCR 2254. The release of arbitrarily detained persons has not happened in any meaningful number, despite the Security Council's and the United Nations' continued calls. And the conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees have not yet been met, not least because the regime continues to threaten the security of returnees. On this I want to echo the remarks of my United States colleague and to say that the United Kingdom will not attend any conference, especially in a non-neutral location such as Damascus, which intentionally ignores this fundamental requirement, and which denies the participation of those whose return it purports to discuss.

Mr President, it is clear that humanitarian assistance still does not reach those in need. The Secretary-General's report of 20 October makes clear that nearly two-thirds of healthcare facilities in North East Syria, which depended on cross-border aid, have not been reached by cross-line aid in

2020. We commend the UN's efforts in north west Syria, including urgent road repairs and scaling up the Bab al Hawa operation, to help reduce the damage caused by the needless removal of Bab Al Salam from the cross-border aid resolution. That aid access is desperately needed. Most of the almost one million people who fled the Russian-backed regime offensive on Idlib last winter are still displaced, living in squalid makeshift camps. And as November nears, the Secretary-General's report confirms that 3.1 million people require additional winterisation support. News of fuel shortages, which delayed aid convoys in Homs and Hama in September, are of grave concern as temperatures drop.

We are also still deeply concerned about the impact of COVID-19 in Syria. Water is urgently needed, including in Al Bab, to enable the good hygiene that helps prevent this disease from spreading. And healthcare facilities are necessary to treat those affected. Some are already unable to absorb all suspected COVID cases. The United Kingdom has committed £33 million (\$43.1 million) additionally to address COVID-19 in Syria. But the 24 attacks this year affecting healthcare and killing 13 health workers only add to the pressure and worsen the humanitarian situation.

Mr President, these attacks highlight again – if we needed it to be highlighted again – the need for a political settlement, in line with resolution 2254, to resolve the crisis. So let me end by urging all those with influence in Damascus to press the regime to engage meaningfully.

Thank you, Mr President.

[Section 28 for vulnerable victims and witnesses in Crown Courts](#)



Section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 enables the recording of evidence and cross-examination prior to trial, subject to judicial discretion.

It applies to vulnerable complainants of a crime (commonly referred to as victims) and witnesses, regardless of offence, and includes:

- all child witnesses
- any witness whose quality of evidence is likely to be diminished because they:
 - a. are suffering from a mental disorder
 - b. have a significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning
 - c. have a physical disability or are suffering from a physical disorder.

The provision of this service has been made possible with the support of the judiciary, legal professional associations, and victim and witness support services.

How it works

Where the judge directs, s.28 allows vulnerable victims and witnesses to have their cross-examination video-recorded before the full trial, away from the court room. This evidence is then played during the live trial, which, in most cases, means the vulnerable person does not need to attend in person.

The s.28 recording is completed close to the time of offence through an expedited timetable, aiding memory recall and to reduce the distress experienced by some witnesses when giving evidence to a full courtroom at trial.

Both the defence and prosecution lawyers are present in court during the pre-recording, as well as the judge and the defendant.

Pre-recorded cross examination does not impact a defendant's right to a fair trial.

Courts offering the s.28 service

Following a successful pilot in Kingston-upon-Thames, Leeds and Liverpool and subsequent rollout to additional sites, the scheme has been available for vulnerable witnesses in at least one court in every region since earlier this year.

The measure is [now in place in all Crown Court locations across England and Wales](#).

Intimidated witnesses

Last year we commenced a pilot of the technology for intimidated witnesses (victims of adult sexual offences and modern slavery offences) in three early adopter courts (Liverpool, Leeds and Kingston-upon-Thames).

There may be wider rollouts to intimidated witnesses pending the evaluation of this pilot.

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Last updated 26 November 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 26 November 2020

Added translation

2. 23 November 2020

Updated now that measure is available in all courts in England and Wales.

3. 27 October 2020

First published.

[Finalists for International Space Pitch Day revealed](#)

The finalists of the first [International Space Pitch Day](#) innovation competition were today announced.

Fifteen tech start-ups and innovative companies from across the world have won the opportunity to pitch their novel solutions to a panel of top military figures with the aim of winning a share of £800,000 (\$1M).

They will now pitch their ideas to the panel and a global audience with International Space Pitch Day taking place during Day 1 of the virtual [Defence Space Conference 2020](#) hosted from London on 17 November.

If successful in persuading the judges, contracts worth up to £53,000 (\$66,000) to fast-track the development of their innovations will be awarded the same day.

More than 100 firms registered interest in the competition.

Announcing the finalists at [SpaceCom Conference & Exposition](#) today, UK MOD Head of Space Capability, Air Commodore Julian Ball OBE said:

We are delighted to have 15 fantastic proposals make the final of International Space Pitch Day – representing the best of global space innovation.

There was a terrific response to this innovative and collaborative initiative and I congratulate those making it through to Pitch Day.

All eyes are now on London and 17 November when those winning

contracts to accelerate their innovations will be chosen.

[Air Commodore Julian Ball congratulates finalists of International Space Pitch Day](#)

Six of the finalists are from the United Kingdom, six from the United States, and one each from Australia, Canada and India.

The finalists:

- 114 AI Innovation LLP (India)

Title: Spacewise

Exploitation toolset to visualise, access and analyse multiple input streams of data for advanced Space Command and Control using Cognitive AI. This toolset enables space operations with allies and commercial partners by allowing visualization and analysis of multiple different sources of data in real time.

- Clearbox Systems Pty Ltd (Australia)

Title: AI-enabled decision support for satellite service selection

To enhance a distributed satellite spectrum monitoring tool to incorporate AI-enabled decision support for satellite service selection. Applying AI techniques to the data and decision space can assist in improving prioritisation and selection of satellite services based on the Radio Frequency (RF) environment.

- Clutch Space Systems Limited (United Kingdom)

Title: Space Resources Operational Availability Tool (SROAT)

The tool will be provided to operators to enable efficient and autonomous utilisation and assessment of the space assets for planning, and during operations. A prototype will include weather forecast interfaces, and orbit propagation, provide the satellite and payload simulations, automated mission planning code to support advanced queries, and provide the visualisation and AI modules.

- Cognitive Space, Inc. (United States)

Title: Multi-level security through partitioned blockchain

Extending an AI-driven cloud satellite mission planning solution to include segregated access for multi-level security through the use of blockchain technology. This solution will provide a common operational picture of space assets across multiple security levels while providing means of filtering accessible data and actions based on security clearance and need to know basis.

- Consortium of L3Harris, NORSS and Intelligence Fusion (United Kingdom)

Title: Space Domain Awareness (SDA) blockchain platform

Using blockchain technology to gather, verify and present multiple, varied sources of terrestrial and SDA data to produce a single space picture dashboard of events occurring in near earth orbit. The results will enable simple event visualisation for at-a-glance decision making in the Space environment.

- KISPE Space Systems Limited (United Kingdom)

Title: Interactive app prototype for a decisional Space Domain Awareness (SDA) Tool

An interactive prototype app of a decisional SDA tool for use by military stakeholders in diverse settings, with the capability to deliver operational Blue, Red and Grey knowledge and tasking capability for space-based assets at operationally-relevant timescales. This tool is important to allow operators in the field to develop and plan tactical operations; analysts to understand satellite patterns of life; and commanders to make prioritisation and strategic decisions based on tailored and appropriate information.

- NorthStar Earth & Space (Canada)

Title: Space Domain Awareness (SDA) warfighter training simulator

NorthStar Earth & Space will deliver a sophisticated space environment simulator to support the analysis of NorthStar's constellation as part of a combined operation training exercises. The baseline tool will help fulfil the challenge of providing training against realistic threats and opportunities, incorporating live data, and integrating space across multiple domains.

- precursor SPC (United States)

Title: 4D space weather impact tool

A space weather impact tool that delivers high-fidelity visualization of current, near-real time space weather conditions and forecasts of space weather conditions utilizing beacon satellites, multiple data sources, and ionospheric calibration systems to add the time dimension to space weather observations with an AI platform for forecasting. This novel approach improves ionospheric observation granularity by +10X while enabling space weather forecasting, and, delivering asset availability and management knowledge for mission readiness.

- Riskaware Limited and Telespazio Vega UK (United Kingdom)

Title: SpaceAware resilience

A comprehensive multi-tier modelling and visualisation tool aimed at supporting battlefield and business operations with risk and threat analysis to mission critical space assets and the impact on the operational theatre.

- Rocket Communications (United States)

Title: Space:ACME – 4D visualization solution for Space Awareness, Communication, and Manoeuvre Evaluation

SpaceACME will provide intuitive and visual system for operators to envision system status, orbits, and predicted events; easily create multiple manoeuvre options and view/compare them to help decision-makers quickly grasp implications and improve decisions. Standardised visual language/formats will enable communication of status/alternatives across operation centres.

- Slingshot Aerospace, Inc. (United States)

Title: Slingshot orbital ensemble catalogue

Slingshot Aerospace and its partner CGI Federal, propose to deliver an active data curation capability that uses machine learning to create an ensemble catalogue using all individual provider catalogues. This proposed solution will enable space warfighters to build and maintain data trust for space safety and sustainability.

- Spire Global UK (United Kingdom)

Title: Space weather as a service

The ability to produce a space weather recognised environmental picture and to convert that into operational action requires an underpinning sensor/modelling capability and a well-defined machine-to-machine Application Programming Interface (API). This project will demonstrate a new ionospheric scintillation service targeted at Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), satcom and missile defence users.

- SQR Systems (United Kingdom)

Title: Secure collaboration platform across classification levels

This proposal outlines a Proof of Concept (PoC) to enable secure collaboration across networks operating at different classification levels. A new architecture will be developed for securely exchanging data between different classification levels in a seamless and instantaneous way.

- Swim.ai, Inc. (United States)

Title: Real-Time Orbital Situational Awareness Platform (ROSA)

ROSA will analyse multiple real-time and relational-data sources, create live digital twin models of all satellites, and provide real-time situational awareness including location, attributes, trajectories, and impact of space weather. Alerts will notify operators and commanders of threats of intercept, weather risks, changes in pattern of life, overflights, and resources available for battle-planning. Both will see results in real-time on a common operating picture, tailored for mission.

- Zoic Labs (United States)

Title: ZyncMatrix

ZyncMatrix is an innovative prototype software solution, informed by space operators, that will enhance space planning and execution situational awareness while filtering information across multiple security levels. ZyncMatrix is a web-based, comprehensive, self-aligning and self-resizing tool that will aid decision-quality planning and execution data while streamlining documentation and portion marking.

Notes to editors:

International Space Pitch Day is a joint UK-US initiative that aims to find, fund and fast-track innovation and technology that gives advantage to military personnel and operations in the space domain.

[The competition](#) was open to innovators and entrepreneurs from all over the world delivered through the UK [Defence and Security Accelerator \(DASA\)](#), assisted by [Starburst Accelerator](#).

It is specifically designed to bolster tech start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and harness the power of their ingenuity and innovation.

The endeavour is jointly funded by the UK's [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory \(Dstl\)](#), [Royal Air Force](#) and the [US Air Force](#).

A grand coalition of Dstl, DASA, Royal Air Force, UK Strategic Command, the US Air Force, US Space Force, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has been assembled to find, fund, and fast-track the best ideas from start-up innovators to the front line.

Starburst Aerospace is acting as an industry partner to the International Space Pitch Day and carry out specialist training and mentoring on its behalf through an Allied Defence Accelerator.

The format is the first of its kind in an international collaboration between two international allies.

This competition focuses on commercial innovation that could give solutions to six challenges set by the UK and US Space teams:

1. Visualisation of key events and information for combined space operations with allies and commercial partners.
2. Understanding current satellite systems relevant to the operations of a particular commander.
3. Understanding the present and potential impact of space weather on users across all domains.
4. Provision of training against realistic threats and opportunities, incorporating live data, and integrating space across multiple domains.
5. Enabling common and user-defined operational pictures to support multi-national space domain awareness and command and control.
6. A verification and comparison tool for Space domain awareness, which can take orbital observation data from a variety of sources and in a variety

of formats and produce a single, reliable operational picture.

About Defence Space Conference 2020

International Space Pitch Day is taking place as part of [Defence Space 2020](#).

Defence Space 2020 will explore the opportunities and disruptive possibilities for the future of military space on 17-18 November.

[For more information and to book tickets for the conference click here.](#)

International Space Pitch Day pitches are also being broadcast for free but require separate registration. [To register click here.](#)

UK Agri-Tech start-up lassoes deal with US ranchers

Innovative animal tracking collar Herdsy has secured its first US deals forecast at £1.4 million over the next five years.

The business will supply its technology to ranches in Texas and Oregon, in what is a game-changing opportunity to access the Texan market of over 12 million beef cattle. Herdsy will improve the decision-making process by providing ranchers with profit-focused, data-driven insights.

Herdsy has developed a collar equipped with advanced sensors and machine learning artificial intelligence (AI) to measure biomedical and activity data, such as heart rate, weight gain, and grazing patterns. This data provides livestock farmers with a complete overview of their cattle via the Herdsy website or app, alerting them in the event of atypical behaviour that could be detrimental to the value of the animal or its wellbeing. The information is then analysed against industry benchmarks, advising farmers on the ideal time to send animals to market, which in turn reduces time on farm per animal, costs whilst improving cash flow and profit margins.

Richard Hobson founded Herdsy in 2016 after coming up with the idea on his family's farm. A former IBM software developer and accountant, Richard then was mentored by his friend Dmitri Zaitsev, a Professor of Mathematics, to refine the technology.

After reaching out to the Department for International Trade (DIT) for export advice, Herdsy accelerated its entry to the US market, securing two partnerships in just 6 weeks. The business will co-develop a new product with the Texas Agriculture & Mechanical University, one of the biggest cattle names in the US. It has also gained a place with the Austin Technology Incubator to address one of the biggest issues facing the beef industry:

sustainability.

Founder and CEO of Herdsy Richard Hobson said:

When lockdown started, one of our orders to South Africa was put on hold and I immediately began thinking of how we were going to be able to get through this difficult time. I realised with more people than ever having to work remotely that businesses all over the world were having to remodel, and “virtual” business meetings were necessary to do deals. So, I took the opportunity to set up video calls with high profile ranchers and partners in the United States and it worked!

Having worked with the Department for International Trade for a few years, they were pivotal in our success in Texas. We managed to secure calls and introductions that otherwise could have taken us years to get.

We saw the appetite for Herdsy when one rancher from Oregon contacted us to order over 5000 collars to manage against wolf attacks.

Herdsy started exporting in 2016 and is currently used in four countries around the globe. The business is now planning to open an office in Texas to assist its expansion into neighbouring US states and South America.

In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2020, the US was the UK’s largest trading partner with total trade between the two nations worth £221.6bn, an increase of £790m on the same period in the previous year.

Minister for Exports Graham Stuart said:

It is fantastic to see innovative companies such as Herdsy thriving in new markets, helping farmers on both sides of the Atlantic to monitor their animals and their profits more easily.

This is a great example of the US’s strong appetite for British technology which will be boosted further when we strike a free trade agreement with the US.

Last month, for the first time in over two decades, UK beef made its way to the US, marking a historic moment for UK farmers and food producers.

The UK is currently negotiating a free trade deal with the US set to create a host of export opportunities for British goods and services trade, supporting small businesses from all around the UK. The fifth round of negotiations between the two nations got underway last week, 19 October 2020.