

OSCE Mission in Kosovo: UK Statement

Thank you Chair

The UK welcomes Ambassador Braathu to the Permanent Council. We thank you and your team for the comprehensive Report.

Ambassador Braathu – we recognise that the Mission's progress has been achieved during the exceptional circumstances of a global pandemic. Your continued support and advocacy during these unprecedented times is highly valued. We recognise that the Mission has helped to enable all communities in Kosovo gain access to information through the Mission's monitoring and assisting with language compliance. This is of crucial importance at any time, but even more so in relation to COVID-19.

We also welcome that the Mission raised awareness on the new laws on access to public documents and protection of personal data. At the same time, we recognise that the Mission has needed to adjust its own working methods as a result of the global pandemic, whilst continuing to provide support in Kosovo.

I would like to reiterate our appreciation for the Mission's timely reporting on key developments, and the value we attach to your spot reports, as part of the OSCE's Early Warning.

I will now turn to three areas in your Report – on displaced persons and property rights, gender and democratic institutions and oversight, including through freedom of media.

Firstly – on displaced persons, including your engagement with other international actors. And, here I would mention the work with UNHCR on the needs of displaced persons in the context of COVID-19. This occurred through facilitating bilateral meetings with representatives from Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristine, and Skopje. We hope that a housing and solutions process for the Kosovo displaced can be found.

Your Report also mentions the Mission's advocacy work on protection of property rights for non-majority communities, displaced, and vulnerable communities. This resulted in the approval of two legislative acts to further strengthen property rights, which we welcome. We also welcome the extensive monitoring carried out by the Mission in the Decan/Decani Special Protective Zone during this period. And we refer to the Quint statement of 27 August, as noted in the Report.

Secondly – we commend the efforts of the Mission in promoting gender equality and in addressing gender-based and domestic violence. A highlight of your advocacy and support in this period includes the vote by the Assembly of Kosovo to incorporate the Istanbul Convention into the Constitution.

The range of other work undertaken on gender is also welcome, including to overcome gender stereotypes, as well as in facilitating the sustainability of

domestic violence shelters and increasing awareness of how victims can seek help, particularly relevant given the increased number of incidents during the pandemic. We would welcome hearing some of the lessons learnt and best practice from the roundtables to combat gender stereotypes.

Thirdly – Your support for democratic institutions and oversight arrangements is critical. Media literacy and Safety of Journalists rightly receives your attention. We welcome the Mission's support to improve media literacy, including through broadcasts on the role of the public in countering disinformation and assessing media, as well as through lectures on media literacy to students.

However, as your Report notes, there has been an eight per cent increase in threats or attacks committed against journalists in the period from March to September, bringing the number for this period to 19. It is essential to continue addressing impunity for crimes committed against journalists, including those killed or missing since the conflict, as well as measures to prevent threats and violence against journalists. Such attacks are wholly unacceptable. We appreciate that the Mission takes action, such as in your joint statement with RFOM that condemned the physical attack on the Director of TV Puls on 27 April.

On 14 October, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Local Government Administration, briefed us in Vienna. This was an excellent opportunity for delegations to hear first-hand from one of your interlocutors about the value of your work on the ground. We look forward to further briefings from Kosovo interlocutors during the next reporting periods.

I would like to reiterate that the UK continues to support Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. We welcome the relaunch of the EU-led Dialogue facilitated by EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajcak, as well as recent progress achieved in Washington towards greater economic cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia. Progress in the Dialogue and towards wider reconciliation between Kosovo and Serbia will require both parties to take steps to implement agreements reached, and establish and protect a rational and calm atmosphere to allow cooperation.

The UK is clear that all, but particularly those in positions of power and authority, have a responsibility to refrain from provocative and/or harmful rhetoric. The UK stands ready to support a comprehensive and sustainable normalisation agreement between Kosovo and Serbia that respects territorial integrity, and benefits the people of both countries. All here I am sure, will share the determination to help bring the Dialogue to a successful conclusion, working in good faith and in a spirit of compromise between the two sides.

In concluding, I would like to thank you personally, Ambassador Braathu, for your outstanding leadership of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo over the last four years, and to wish you all the best in your next endeavours.

Natural England unveils plans for coast path in Essex

Once established this final stretch of the path will complete a 295 mile (474 kilometres) coastal route along the Essex coast. Which would start at the landing jetty for Tilbury Ferry and finish on the Essex/Suffolk border near Manningtree.

An 8 week period for the public to have their say on the England Coast Path proposals starts today Wednesday, October 14, 2020.

The route would become [part of the England Coast Path](#) which is a 2,700 mile long distance walking route. It is also England's newest National Trail which is currently being developed around the entire English coast by Natural England.

The coastline between Salcott and Jaywick follows the estuaries of the River Colne and part of the Blackwater. This path would be the first continuous route around these estuaries.

The nature of the route gives views of familiar places from different angles this includes the coast.

Views across the River Colne to Ballast Quay, Fingringhoe.

At Point Clear and near Jaywick, the open coast directly borders the sea with extensive areas of sandy beach. Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe and West Mersea are popular centres for sailing and other water sports.

In the creeks along this stretch there are many shellfisheries, with Mersea Island in particular being renowned for oysters.

The extensive intertidal mudflats, sandflats and saltmarshes, together with adjacent grazing marshes and arable farmland, are very important for migrant waterbirds.

These habitats often support large flocks of birds during the winter months and the spring/autumn migration periods. This provides a birdwatching spectacle as the birds add movement and variety to the open landscape.

During autumn and winter, dark-bellied brent goose, black-tailed godwit, redshank and grey plover are often present in internationally important numbers on this stretch. As well as nationally important numbers of shelduck, avocet, dunlin and several other wader and wildfowl species.

The stretch is also a good place to see a variety of raptors particularly

during the winter. It also provides nesting habitat for several unusual breeding birds including marsh harrier, barn owl, nightingale, terns and ringed plover.

Views at Alresford Creek looking west towards Fingringhoe.

Aidan Lonergan, Natural England's area manager for Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, said:

We are delighted to be publishing today our eighth full and final set of proposals for the England Coast Path in Essex.

Once established, the trail will give people an opportunity to enjoy the unique nature, landscape and history that this part of the coast offers.

We would like to thank everyone for their time and input in to this process so far. Over the next 8 weeks, we are inviting all organisations, farmers, local residents, visitors and businesses to have their say.

It's important that all responses are taken into account, and we look forward to hearing people's views.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, deputy leader of Essex County Council and cabinet member for infrastructure, said:

We wholeheartedly welcome today's proposals. To improve the access to our beautiful Essex coastline, so that more people can see and share in the rich landscapes the county has to offer.

Anyone may make representations to Natural England about the reports during the 8 week period.

Owners and occupiers of affected land may make objections about the reports on specified grounds. Objections will be considered by a planning inspector before the secretary of state makes a final decision.

All representations and objections must be received by Natural England no later than midnight on Wednesday 9 December 2020.

The full reports and all the forms and guidance on how to make a representation or objection within the next 8 weeks are also available on the [GOV.UK website](#): search for 'Salcott to Jaywick'.

Human rights violations in Belarus: UK statement

World news story

Delivered by Nicola Murray, Deputy Head of Delegation, at the OSCE Permanent Council on 15 October 2020.



Mr Chair,

We join others today in expressing our concerns – again – about the current situation in Belarus.

Since the last meeting of the Permanent Council we have, unfortunately, witnessed a deterioration of the situation. Peaceful protesters have been met with water cannons, stun grenades and rubber bullets. Pepper spray, tear gas and flash grenades have also been used against elderly participants of the Pensioners March. Many peaceful protesters have been injured by the actions of the security forces.

Reports from local Human Rights groups suggest that many were seriously injured at last weekend's protests in Minsk – at least 16 ambulances were spotted leaving detention centres. Large numbers, estimated at over 700, of protesters and journalists have been detained in just the last week alone. Protests across every walk of society have been overwhelmingly and indisputably peaceful. Meanwhile, the Belarusian Ministry of Interior announced on 12 October that security forces are authorised to use lethal weapons against so called “extremely radical” protesters.

These are not the actions of a government seeking to resolve this crisis.

The extensive number of alleged human rights violations perhaps makes it tough to single out individual cases above others but we share the concerns of the EU and US colleagues about the spurious detentions of Marfa Rabkova and of Vitali Shkliarov – two examples from the many credible reports of arbitrary detentions by the Belarusian authorities.

We continue to be concerned by the Belarusian authorities' lack of

willingness to engage with the offer from the Chair in Office to help promote a national dialogue. We urge the Belarusian government to reconsider their current position.

However, the first steps towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis are clear – the Belarusian authorities must cease their campaign of violence against peaceful protesters and release all those unjustly imprisoned.

Thank you.

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[Sellafield Ltd: Still leading the conversation on the international stage](#)

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference demonstrates the importance of international collaboration and cooperation and showcases our organisation as a leading voice on the global stage.

Now in its 64th year, the conference brings together officials and representatives from its 171 member states to consider a range of issues, share learning and exhibit new technologies and techniques.

Traditionally held in Vienna in Austria, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that this year's event included a combination of physical and virtual attendees.

Sellafield Ltd's head of external affairs, Roger Cowton said:

The UK plays a leading role in the IAEA and we were extremely pleased to take part in a number of virtual events to showcase the innovative work being done at Sellafield and demonstrate how we are performing with passion, pride and pace.

Sellafield Ltd's chief operating officer, Rebecca Weston, joined a high-profile panel of nuclear sector representatives and policy makers to discuss the second anniversary of the UK's Nuclear Sector Deal and its key objective of reducing costs in nuclear decommissioning and waste management.

The all-female panel discussed progress towards all the sector deal targets. Recognising one of those is 40% female nuclear workforce by 2030, from 22% today.

Rebecca has been speaking about the significance of this target and the importance of inclusivity starting at the top, as part of National Inclusion Week.

Rebecca said:

Female representation on our executive is not quite 50/50 but we're now not far off with new recent appointments. I think people are more motivated when they see a diverse mix that includes people like themselves in top positions.

Gender is but a proxy for all forms of diversity and the most important thing is delivering diversity of thought by encouraging different personalities and ideas. Inclusivity helps deliver a breadth of thinking and allows everyone to recognise they can be the best they can be.

Rebecca also appeared at an IAEA scientific forum event discussing innovation in nuclear spent fuel management; showcasing the innovations being applied in Thorp's storage pond to enable decades of safe interim wet storage of spent fuels.

The changes being made to Thorp's pond chemistry, accessibility and inspection techniques will help support the UK's wider long-term nuclear waste storage strategy and help create a safer, cleaner environment for future generations.

Elsewhere in the conference Sellafield Ltd's Gina Vickers from The Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant (SIXEP) Technical Team shared a platform with representatives from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and National Nuclear Laboratory to talk about innovation in decommissioning and the challenges of asset care in nuclear facilities.

Gina demonstrated the collaborative work we've been doing with [Gamechangers](#) – an initiative providing support to early-stage research and development – and Rawwater – a technology company that specialises in alloys and application techniques for high-integrity seals – in support of improving repair techniques in SIXEP.

Rawwater were able to build on similar work they'd done with the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in Japan, and TEPCO's willingness and ability to share development work it had already undertaken saved the organisation considerable rework.

Gina said:

This serves as a powerful example of the opportunities for mutual sharing and spirit of international nuclear community and cooperation that makes events like the IAEA Conference so valuable and vital, even against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

We should be proud of our continued presence at such events and the due recognition we receive from our peers for the progress we are making in our unique and internationally significant mission.

[Keith Skeoch to be interim Chair of the Financial Reporting Council](#)

Keith Skeoch has been appointed as interim Chair of the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) by the Business Secretary Alok Sharma.

Mr Skeoch – who was previously a non-executive director at the FRC – will take on the role while a recruitment round is carried out to find a permanent replacement for former chair Simon Dingemans, who stepped down in May this year.

The FRC is responsible for regulating auditors, accountants and actuaries, and setting the UK's Corporate Governance and Stewardship Codes.

Mr Skeoch will serve as interim Chair from 12 October 2020 for a period of up to 6 months.

Mr Skeoch is currently Chair of the Investment Association, and a member of the Takeover Panel. He was formerly CEO of Standard Life Aberdeen plc and CEO of its asset management business, Aberdeen Standard Investments.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Keith has a wealth of knowledge and experience in his field, and I am delighted to appoint him as interim chair of the Financial Reporting Council while a permanent replacement is sought.

Interim Chair of the Financial Reporting Council Keith Skeoch said:

I am pleased to be re-joining the FRC Board as Interim Chair and am looking forward to working with Sir Jon Thompson, the Board and all of the FRC as it enters the next phase of its transformation programme to deliver its ambitious reform agenda.

A permanent Chair will be recruited and announced in due course.

Mr Skeoch started his career in the UK Government Economic Service before moving into financial services with James Capel (HSBC Securities) where he

became firstly Chief Economist and then Managing Director of International Equities.

Mr Skeoch joined Standard Life Investments (SLI) in 1999 as Chief Investment Officer and was appointed Chief Executive of that division in 2004 and to the main board of Standard Life plc following demutualisation in 2006. Mr Skeoch led the exponential growth of SLI in terms of assets under management, geographic footprint, revenue stream, organisational capability and brand strength. He was appointed CEO of Standard Life plc in 2015 and sole CEO of Standard Life Aberdeen (SLA) in 2019 having led the separation of the life business to Phoenix in 2018 and the subsequent formation of a global, focused and capital light investment house.

Mr Skeoch stepped down as CEO of SLA in September 2020. He is currently Chair of the ASI Research Institute and a member of The UK Takeover Panel.

Mr Skeoch holds a degree from the University of Sussex, a MA from the University of Warwick and in recognition of his wider contribution to the financial services industry, and particularly his work in response to the global financial crisis, he was awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Sussex and Teesside University.

Mr Skeoch is a Fellow of the Society of Business Economists and a Trustee of Edinburgh International Festival. Mr Skeoch is married to Andrea with whom he has two sons and divides his time between London and Edinburgh.