

# Opening Session of the UN General Assembly Fifth Committee

Mr Chair,

I would like to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election. We are confident that you will guide this Committee towards a successful and timely conclusion this session. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

Our sincere thanks to the members of the Secretariat and the ACABQ for your continued dedication and support to this Committee during these unprecedented times. And to Lionel Berridge, Acting Secretary of the Fifth Committee and his team, and the support staff who make possible our deliberations.

This is an important year for the United Nations as it marks its 75th anniversary. Yet, as a result of the coronavirus, 2020 has been a more extraordinary and challenging year than any of us could have imagined. We need a United Nations that can respond effectively and agilely to the challenges that lie ahead and deliver for the people it serves; not just this year, but over the next 75 years and beyond. The United Kingdom will continue therefore to be a strong proponent of a strengthened, effective and efficient United Nations.

Mr Chair,

This session we will consider progress made on implementing the Secretary-General's management and peace and security reforms. We look forward to hearing how these reforms are helping realise his vision of a reformed, responsive and accountable United Nations. And, how they are making a difference, including enabling a more effective response to COVID19 in support of many Member States around the world.

We will also consider for the second time an annual programme budget. We have a responsibility to the United Nations and the people it serves to ensure that the Organisation has the right level of resource needed to carry out the mandates given to it by Member States. But we also expect the United Nations to use those resources efficiently and effectively, and with a clear focus on delivering results.

We look forward also to engaging on the Common System, strengthening accountability and transparency in the Organisation, and special political missions, alongside a range of other important issues.

Mr Chair,

COVID19 continues to present significant challenges, including to how this Committee carries out its task. This Committee has risen to the challenge in its two recent resumed sessions and demonstrated to the wider General Assembly that it is possible to complete complex negotiations successfully and on time, operating remotely through online platforms. As I noted at the

closing of the last session, we recognise that this was possible due to the goodwill shown by many delegations agreeing to work without interpretation. We hope that new technology and innovation can rectify this situation for this session, and that we can continue to take a responsible approach to the health and safety of delegates and their families while completing our work.

Once again, the task before us is significant. We are confident that through our collective commitment, constructive engagement and genuine efforts towards consensus-based decisions, we will reach a good, timely outcome.

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## **UK Note Verbale on continued extension of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to BIOT**

The United Kingdom Mission of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to a Note Verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations to the Secretary-General dated 9 January 2020 (N<sup>o</sup> 03/20 (NY/UN/395)), contained in a Communication by the Secretary-General on 31 January 2020. This concerns the United Kingdom's extension of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

The United Kingdom rejects the claims contained in the Note Verbale of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius. The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the territory of BIOT, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the islands that now form BIOT and the United Kingdom does not recognise its claim.

The United Kingdom's position in respect to our continued sovereignty over BIOT is set out in more detail in the United Kingdom's submission to the report of the Secretary-General (A/74/834) dated 18 May 2020.

The United Kingdom therefore continues to extend the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to BIOT and apply its provisions.

The United Kingdom kindly requests that the present objection to the Note-Verbale be duly recorded, circulated and published, including in any relevant publication issued by the United Nations.

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

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# Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 12 October 2020

Good evening everyone.

We are entering a new and crucial phase of our fight against Coronavirus.

Because the number of cases has gone up four times in four weeks and it is once again spreading among the elderly and vulnerable.

There are already more Covid patients in UK hospitals today than there were on 23 March when the whole country went into lockdown

and deaths, alas, are also rising once again.

These figures are flashing at us like dashboard warnings in a passenger jet.

And we must act now.

So we are giving local authorities across England around a billion pounds so they can protect vital services as they fight the virus.

Nightingale Hospitals across the North of England are being prepared for service.

And so we can squash this virus wherever it appears

we are today simplifying, standardising and in some places toughening local rules in England by introducing three levels of Covid Alert.

Medium, with existing national measures such as the Rule of Six and the closure of hospitality at 10pm.

High, with extra measures including a ban on indoor social mixing between households or support bubbles.

And Very High, for places where, without further action, the NHS will swiftly be under intolerable pressure.

Areas within the Very High Alert category will be reviewed every four weeks and nowhere will be shut down indefinitely.

And the exact restrictions at this level, Very High, will be worked out with local leaders, along with tailored packages of support.

But at a minimum they will, sadly, include a ban on all social mixing between households in private places, including gardens

and pubs and bars must close unless they can operate solely as a restaurant, serving alcohol only as part of a main meal.

We will also ask people not to travel into and out of Very High alert level areas.

Nobody affected by this will be left to fend for themselves.

And we will expand our unprecedented economic support to assist those affected by these decisions,

extending our Job Support Scheme to cover two-thirds of the wages of those in any business that is required to close,

and providing those businesses with a cash grant of up to £3,000 a month, instead of £1500 every three weeks,

and extra funding too for those in the Very High category for local test and trace and enforcement.

You will shortly be able to type in your postcode into Gov.UK and see exactly what restrictions apply where you live.

The majority of the country will, for now, be at medium.

Most areas currently under local intervention will be at High,

and Nottinghamshire, including Nottingham itself, East and West Cheshire and a small area of High Peak will also move to this level.

Over the weekend we have been working with local leaders in areas where the data are most worrying.

And from Wednesday, local authorities in the Liverpool City Region will move to the Very High alert level.

In addition to pubs and bars we have agreed with Liverpool City mayor Steve Rotherham that gyms, leisure centres, betting shops, adult gaming centres and casinos will close.

We are still working with other local leaders to determine how best to tackle the resurgence of the virus in their areas.

But tackle it we will.

No one, least of all me, wants to impose these kinds of erosions of our personal liberty,

but I am as convinced as I have ever been that the British people have the resolve to beat this virus

and that, together, we will do just that.

With that I'll hand over to the Chancellor, who has some more details on how we'll be supporting these businesses, employees and areas affected by today's changes.

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## Joint Statement Following Covid-19 Quad Meeting

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney today jointly chaired a conference call with the First Minister Arlene Foster, deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Health Minister Robin Swann and Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly to discuss the ongoing response to COVID-19 on the island of Ireland.

All participants noted that the recent increase in cases of COVID-19, including in border areas, has reinforced the immense importance of coordination and cooperation to address the virus across both jurisdictions.

Participants agreed that, as this virus does not respect borders, there is a clear need to cooperate effectively North-South and East-West to respond to COVID-19, and take a coordinated approach wherever possible to public health measures and messages.

They welcomed the ongoing contact and cooperation between the respective Health Ministers, working in close conjunction with the Chief Medical Officers.

There was agreement to intensify further the regular and ongoing contact between the UK Government, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. North South cooperation on the island and, where possible and practical, consistency of approach, in response to COVID-19, will be essential for the mutual benefit of everyone on the island of Ireland.

They also agreed to issue the following joint public appeal:

"We would like to appeal to everyone to strictly adhere to the public health guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We all have the power to stop this virus taking hold in our communities and towns.

"We would like to sincerely thank the public for playing their part in following the public health advice. We owe it to our health workers and, above all, to the most vulnerable in our communities, to continue to do our part.

"We have suppressed this virus once, and we can do it again.

“Follow the public health advice. Stay safe and help save lives”

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## Liverpool City Region to move into ‘very high’ local COVID Alert Level following rise in coronavirus infections

Following discussions over the weekend, the government and local leaders have agreed the need for further action to reduce the spread of coronavirus in the Liverpool City Region.

From Wednesday, Liverpool City Region will be placed onto the ‘Very High’ Local Covid Alert Level. The Liverpool City Region includes the local authority districts of Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral, as well as the City of Liverpool.

Under the country’s new three tiered Local Covid Alert Level system, the Very High alert level applies in the areas of greatest concern.

The new restrictions for the Liverpool City Region include:

- Pubs and bars will close. They can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant – which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal
- Indoor gyms and fitness/dance studios, sports facilities, leisure centres, betting shops, adult gaming centres and casinos will close
- Wedding receptions will not be permitted
- People should try to avoid travelling outside their local area, or entering another area rated Very High other than for work, education, accessing youth services, or to meet caring responsibilities
- People should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK if they are resident in the Liverpool City Region and avoid staying overnight in the Liverpool City Region if they are resident elsewhere

The Prime Minister chaired COBR this morning, which was attended by Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram. COBR confirmed the new restrictions and the PM has announced these in a statement to the House of Commons this afternoon.

It follows a briefing earlier today by Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van Tam, Medical Director of NHS England Steve Powis and Dr Jane Eddleston, Medical Lead for the North West, where they set out the latest data on the rising infection rates across the country.

The latest figures show that the North West has around 40% of all Covid-19 cases, with an eight-fold increase in patients being admitted to hospital. Currently, 30% of the North West's intensive care capacity is taken up with Covid-19 patients.

They warned that in in four weeks' time the North West could see more patients in intensive care than at the peak of the first wave unless action is taken.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I am hugely grateful to local leaders in the Liverpool City Region for the constructive discussions this weekend over the further steps we will take together to combat coronavirus. They will be critical to save lives and protect the NHS – so it can continue to provide the essential services that so many of us rely on.

This is a vital moment in our national effort against the second wave of the virus. We will continue to work closely with other local leaders in the days ahead.

The government has also confirmed £14 million for the Liverpool City Region to enhance enforcement and NHS Test and Trace. Local leaders will be able to use this for a range of activities including compliance and enforcement, enhanced contact tracing and support for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

They will also be able to call on the armed forces to provide additional logistical support if necessary.

The support is in addition to the package announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak last week to protect jobs and support businesses required to close their doors as a result of coronavirus restrictions.