

Human Rights Council 45: Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of The Human Rights Council

Madam President,

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.

We convene as the world continues to tackle COVID-19. This pandemic has had a significant impact on women and girls, exacerbating gender inequalities and the intersectional nature of disadvantage they experience.

Measures to contain the virus are putting women and girls at greater risk of gender-based violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, unintended pregnancy and early and forced marriage. COVID-19 has further underscored the urgency of ending violence against women and girls.

COVID-19 threatens decades of progress towards securing universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including adequate maternal care and access to sexual and reproductive health services. This results in millions of unintended pregnancies and inhibits women and girls' bodily autonomy. States must ensure that comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights remain a priority.

The disruption to quality education and prolonged school closures will have a lasting effect on future opportunities for youth, particularly girls. Malala Fund estimates 20 million more secondary school age girls could be out of school after the crisis has passed.

We have an obligation to address intersecting forms of discrimination and violence that impede the full realisation of women and girls' rights. With only 10 years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, urgent action is needed. We must ensure the full and meaningful participation of women and girls at all levels of decision-making and integrate gender perspectives in COVID-19 responses that consider all dimensions of intersectionality.

We support all efforts by the Council to integrate a gender and intersectional perspective into its work and its mechanisms. Only by taking a holistic approach will the Council be able to tackle gender-based discrimination in all its forms. We ask all governments to join us in putting women and girls' rights at the forefront of their responses to COVID-19.

Thank you.

Support service for Northern Ireland trade goes live

The new Trader Support Service is now live for business, providing education and guidance for traders moving goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol, including between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Tens of thousands of traders will start to receive emails and letters from today (28 September 2020), with details on the launch of the Trader Support Service and its benefits for UK businesses.

The free-to-use digital service will help businesses and traders of all sizes to navigate the changes to the way goods move once the Northern Ireland Protocol comes into effect on 1 January 2021.

Traders who [sign up to the Trader Support Service](#) will be guided through the new processes under the Northern Ireland Protocol and can also use it to complete digital declarations.

The service will:

- provide a free end-to-end support package to manage import and safety and security declarations on behalf of traders.
- educate businesses on what the protocol means for them, and the steps they need to take to comply with it. This will include online training sessions and webinars, with information being continually updated as we move closer to 1 January 2021
- be available to businesses moving goods into Northern Ireland under new processes in the Northern Ireland Protocol that start from 1 January 2021

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove MP, said:

The new free-to-use Trader Support Service, launching today, will provide crucial support and guidance to businesses moving goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Backed by up to £200 million of UK government funding, it reflects our deep commitment to support the Northern Ireland economy and protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

With little over 3 months to go until the end of the transition period, it is vital that traders sign up and take advantage of the scheme, so that they can continue to trade seamlessly and seize new opportunities on 1 January 2021.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, said:

Today's launch of the Trader Support Service underlines the UK government's continued commitment to ensuring Northern Ireland's businesses get the support they need as we approach the end of the Transition period.

I urge traders to sign up to this free service to take advantage of import processes being dealt with on their behalf, to seek advice on what the Northern Ireland Protocol means for their business and to understand what steps they need to take.

Seamus Leheny, Policy Manager, Logistics UK, said:

We are delighted to see the launch of the Trader Support Service, which should help Northern Ireland business transition to new trading arrangements, protect continuity of trade and help ensure EU Exit is a success for the Northern Ireland economy.

The Trader Support Service will be delivered by a consortium led by Fujitsu, which was selected as the supplier following an open and transparent procurement process.

Traders choosing to [sign up for Trader Support Service](#) can do so at GOV.UK. They will receive full guidance and support on the next steps to take ahead of January 1, 2021.

The consortium delivering the Trader Support Service has expertise across the range of services needed to make it an effective and successful service. This includes the Institute of Export & International Trade, an existing provider of customs education, and the Customs Clearance Consortium, an established customs intermediary.

Recruitment is now commencing for a range of positions to deliver the Trader Support Service, creating employment and training opportunities across the UK.

Educational material will also be available via the Trader Support Service to those importing goods into Northern Ireland from the rest of the world.

Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, all Northern Ireland businesses will continue to have unfettered access to the whole UK market.

Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary Letter to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

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Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee on 28 September

News story

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster co-chaired a meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee on 28 September in Brussels.



The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee met today, 28 September, in Brussels.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP and European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, and attended by the alternate Joint Committee co-chairs; representatives of the First Minister and deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive; and Member State representatives.

The Committee undertook a stocktake of Specialised Committee activity since the second meeting in June and was updated on implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement more generally, including the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The UK reiterated the importance of commitment by both sides to upholding obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all respects.

The UK underlined the need for timely and proper implementation of citizens' rights commitments by the EU and Member States. The UK reiterated its commitment to supporting EU nationals in the UK, as well as UK citizens in the EU, whilst remaining clear that measures undertaken by the UK must supplement and support the work done by the EU.

The UK reiterated that the measures set out in the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill are designed to create a 'safety net' to ensure the communities of Northern Ireland are protected. The UK is clear that those measures would not be withdrawn.

The UK remains committed to ongoing constructive engagement with the EU through further Joint Committee meetings and looks forward to making progress on all issues.

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Letters to businesses in Northern Ireland about new processes for moving goods from 1 January 2021

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