

UN Human Rights Council 45: Statement for Item 3 General Debate on Russia

Thank you Madam President.

As this Council has repeatedly affirmed, States have the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of all human rights.

The UK is therefore gravely concerned by the poisoning of Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny on 20 August. The UK supports the findings of Germany, France, and Sweden that Mr Navalny was poisoned with Novichok. Such use of a banned chemical weapon is abhorrent, and unacceptable.

This follows a long pattern of violence against Russian opposition politicians, including multiple poisonings. A second use of Novichoks, after the attempted assassinations and murder in Salisbury, and after their listing by the OPCW, is a shocking event, the preserve of rogue states. The refusal to investigate this most recent poisoning would be a clear dereliction by the Russian authorities. They must conduct urgently a full and transparent investigation into both the poisoning and the use of a banned chemical weapon.

This is the latest example of the serious and deteriorating human rights situation in Russia, and the intolerance of legitimate opposition. Civil society, human rights defenders and the media face severe repression and persecution. Russia must fulfil its international human rights obligations, including to its own people.

Thank you Madam President.

British Embassy Athens supports Climate Week NYC

This week, as part of Climate Week NYC, which runs alongside the UN General Assembly, UK is sharing its ambitious commitments for the environment, the climate and clean energy:

- 22 regions, 452 cities, 1,101 businesses, 549 universities and 45 of the biggest investors have now joined the Race to Zero, the global campaign for a zero-carbon world, including Facebook and Ford
- UK Government launches the COP26 Energy Transition Council, which brings together political, financial and technical leaders in the global power sector to accelerate the transition to clean energy

- £50 million UK Government funding invested in a new Clean Energy Innovation Facility, which aims to support innovative clean technologies in developing countries

These announcements were made by COP26 President and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Alok Sharma.

He confirmed that major new companies have joined the Race to Zero campaign to accelerate net zero commitments from businesses, cities, regions and investors, including Ford, the first US automotive company to join; LafargeHolcim, the world's largest cement company; and global social media company Facebook. Their decision demonstrates the clear momentum behind the shift towards a decarbonised economy.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Lord Callanan, presented the next decade of clean energy cooperation. Lord Callanan announced the launch of the COP26 Energy Transition Council to bring together leaders in the power sector across politics, finance and technology to speed up the transition from coal to renewables in developing countries. The UK will chair the Council alongside the co-chair Damilola Ogunbiyi, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL). Together, members will drive the shift to green energy ahead of COP26.

The launch of the Council came as the UK Government announced a £50 million investment in a new Clean Energy Innovation Facility (CEIF) under the UK's International Climate Finance.

This funding will help developing countries more easily access innovative clean energy technologies to foster clean growth, focusing on key sectors such as industry, cooling, smart energy and storage.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President and UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, said:

Climate change affects every single one of us and we all have a part to play to champion climate action ahead of COP26.

Through the Energy Transition Council and the UK's ambitious climate finance commitments, I hope to drive the transition to cleaner energies, and I urge all businesses, cities and regions to join the Race to Zero coalition.

Damilola Ogunbiyi, CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL), said:

We cannot achieve the promise of the Paris Agreement or Sustainable Development Goal 7 – access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all – without a clean energy transition that leaves no one behind.

Today, just under 800 million people globally lack access to electricity and we must close these gaps with renewable, efficient and affordable solutions.

The COP26 Energy Transition Council will play a leading role in supporting countries to move away from fossil fuels and unleash a prosperous, equitable and clean energy transition as they recover better from the pandemic.

Ahead of COP26, the UN High Level Dialogue on Energy will support this vision, including through Energy Compacts and multi-stakeholder partnerships that aim to accelerate universal energy transition and access.

Patricia Espinosa, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, said:

Those involved in the Race to Zero have made a commitment to build that future and to achieve specific goals and will be held to those promises.

The world cannot afford to be let down. Nor can this campaign become something that allows nations to defer action until a later date. It's about needing more climate ambition and climate action now—in 2020.

British Embassy Athens supports the climate agenda and encourages dialogue and best practices on this issue. Anyone interested can find out more about our initiatives via our social media accounts: [UK in Greece on Facebook](#), [@ukingreece on Twitter](#) and on the [Twitter account of HM Ambassador Kate Smith CMG @KateSmithFCDO](#).

[Opportunities for clean energy in the future Philippines: op-ed by Daniel Pruce](#)

Like the rest of the global economy, the energy sector has been tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, with its unprecedented slow-down challenging traditional growth thinking. It has had to recalibrate to become more efficient and accommodate increasingly frugal investors and consumers. This was also true in the Philippines, especially during the first three months of lockdown, when electricity demand dropped by 17% from pre-ECQ levels. During this period, electricity generation from biomass increased, while production from

geothermal hydro, solar and wind slightly decreased (~2-4%). Notably, coal's share dropped by almost 19% (Wholesale Electricity Spot Market, 2020).

These changes in supply and usage further illustrate the need borne out of the science and profound opportunity thanks to advancing technology and evolving consumer choice to rethink energy generation.

In the Philippines, coal remains a significant source for energy generation – 41% of the total compared to renewables' 30% (DOE, 2019). While coal has been the conventional source for 'baseload' (providing steady supply of electricity throughout the entire day) there is growing evidence that direct renewables are a better option for power supply globally.

First, the cost of renewable energy has fallen off a cliff. Since 2010, the cost of solar power has fallen by 85%, and wind power by 49%. In fact, the construction of solar facilities is now cheaper than constructing new coal power plants in two thirds of the countries of the world, and in all ASEAN countries. Solar is also quicker than coal to get up and running.

Second, the risk of investing in dying fossil fuel technology. Carbon Tracker study suggests that by 2030, it will be cheaper to build new renewable energy sources than continuing to use existing coal in South East Asia. In China, source of much of the region's coal imports, Bloomberg modelling suggests this tipping point will arrive in 2024. When that happens, coal plant assets will become 'stranded', and their continuing operation will simply be a drain on resources. An earlier Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) study projected USD9.5 billion in new stranded assets if investment in coal continues. So if you're an investor considering coal, I urge you to think again.

Third, given the Philippines has a balance of trade deficit (USD 37 billion in 2019, of which 7% from coal importation), a shift to clean power is good for energy security, and ensures businesses and consumers are not held hostage to the global price volatility that has become synonymous with fossil fuel supplies.

Fourth, renewables have the potential to create employment in the industries of the future (50% more jobs than coal), attract international investment, and improve public health.

The good news? With the Philippine's vast renewable sources, investors have the opportunity to accelerate transition to clean energy by investing in solar, onshore/offshore wind and storage, especially that electricity demand will increase as the country's economy begins to reboot from the COVID-19 pandemic. Renewable energy technologies, with their numerous advantages, have great potential to meet the needed capacity of 43,765MW by 2040.

As the first major economy to legislate for net-zero (by 2050), the UK has seized the opportunity. We have committed to ending use of coal power by 2024. In 2012, our electricity generated from coal was also 40%. In 2019, it was down to 2.2%. Between April and June 2020, the UK went 67 days without using coal power.

We can truly say that energy transition is attainable, and can contribute to a competitive power sector that can enable socio-economic development with co-benefits of an improved environment. In the process, the UK's power generation shifted to renewables – wind (offshore and onshore) and biofuel – as well as gas. Now, our clean power industry supports over 400,000 jobs, and is growing faster than our GDP.

On 12 December, we celebrate the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement and also fire the starting gun on the count-down to the next UN global climate change review hosted by the City of Glasgow in November 2021. We are all in a race to seize the opportunities for energy transition, for a green recovery from the pandemic, and to net zero. It is a race none of us can truly win alone nor one that as a global community we can afford to lose. So, on behalf of the British Government, I restate our commitment to working in partnership with all Philippines' stakeholders, unwavering in our support towards a clean, resilient, sustainable, and brighter future.

PM: 'Climate action cannot be another victim of coronavirus'

The Prime Minister will call on nations to make ambitious commitments to secure the planet for the next generation today (Thursday 24 September), as he addresses a UN Climate Action Roundtable hosted by the UN Secretary-General.

Boris Johnson is attending the virtual roundtable this afternoon to push for action on climate change and to chart a path to a green and sustainable recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

He will announce that the UK will co-host an event with the UN on December 12th to mark the five-year anniversary of the landmark Paris Agreement, which committed all countries to work to limit further rises in global temperatures.

The summit will be an opportunity for world leaders to announce new and enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and net zero targets.

As part of the Paris Agreement, all countries are due to submit ambitious new NDCs by the end of this year. NDCs set out what each country will do by 2030 to help limit global warming and achieve net zero emissions, from boosting renewable energy to investing in green transport.

The Prime Minister will call on world leaders to announce genuinely transformational net zero targets and bold climate finance pledges at the December 12th event.

Speaking at today's UN Climate Roundtable, the Prime Minister is expected to say:

As the world continues to deal with coronavirus we must look ahead to how we will rebuild, and how we can seize the opportunity to build back better.

The UK will lead by example, keeping the environment on the global agenda and serving as a launch pad for a global green industrial revolution. But no one country can turn the tide – it would be akin to bailing out a liner with a single bucket.

We cannot let climate action become another victim of coronavirus. Let us be the leaders who secure the very health of the planet for our children, grandchildren and generations to come.

The Paris Agreement anniversary event will kick off a year of action in the run up to the global climate summit COP26 in November 2021, which will be hosted by the UK in partnership with Italy in Glasgow.

COP26 President and Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The eyes of the world will be on COP26 when the UK hosts it in November next year. But tackling climate change cannot wait.

That's why we are setting the stage now with a call to all those who are ready to step forward this December and set out bold new Nationally Determined Contributions for a clean and prosperous future. The responsibility to act lies with each of us and together we can drive forward action.

The COP26 and COP25 High Level Champions for Global Climate Action will also be convening a series of virtual dialogues across the world in November to bring cities and states, businesses, civil society and others together to drive forward the race to net-zero. They will discuss action on areas including transport, nature and energy to maintain momentum on tackling climate change at a global scale.

The UK has already doubled its International Climate Finance funding to £11.6 billion over the next five years and committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

NHS COVID-19 app launches across England and Wales

- NHS COVID-19 app launches nationwide to help control COVID-19 transmission alongside national and local contact tracing
- Features of the app include contact tracing using Bluetooth, risk alerts based on postcode district, QR check-in at venues, symptom checker and test booking – with user privacy and data security at its heart
- Businesses are now required by law to display the official NHS QR code posters from today so people can check-in at different premises with the app

People across England and Wales are being urged to download the NHS COVID-19 app to help control the spread of coronavirus and protect themselves and their loved ones as case numbers rise.

The app launches today, and after positive trials and rigorous testing is an important new tool to work alongside traditional contact tracing to help reduce the spread of the virus.

It will be available to those aged 16 and over in multiple languages. It forms a central part of the NHS Test and Trace service in England and the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect programme – identifying contacts of those who have tested positive for coronavirus.

As part of a major campaign to encourage downloads of the app a new advertisement will launch on primetime TV tonight with the strapline ‘Protect your loved ones. Get the app.’

Today the UK’s major mobile network operators, including Vodafone, Three, EE and O2, Sky and Virgin, have confirmed that all in-app activity will not come out of customers’ data allowance.

The contact tracing element of the app works by using low-energy Bluetooth to log the amount of time you spend near other app users, and the distance between you, so it can alert you if someone you have been close to later tests positive for COVID-19 – even if you don’t know each other.

The app will advise you to self-isolate if you have been in close contact with a confirmed case. It will also enable you to check symptoms, book a free test if needed and get your test results.

The app has been designed with user privacy in mind, so it tracks the virus, not people and uses the latest in data security technology to protect privacy. The system generates a random ID for an individual’s device, which can be exchanged between devices via Bluetooth (not GPS). These unique random IDs regenerate frequently to add an extra layer of security and preserve anonymity.

The app does not hold personal information such as your name, address or date

of birth, and only requires the first half of your postcode to ensure local outbreaks can be managed. No personal data is shared with the government or the NHS.

UK government Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are at a tipping point in our efforts to control the spread of this virus. With infection rates rising we must use every tool at our disposal to prevent transmission, including the latest technology.

We have worked extensively with tech companies, international partners, and privacy and medical experts – and learned from the trials – to develop an app that is secure, simple to use and will help keep our country safe.

Today's launch marks an important step forward in our fight against this invisible killer and I urge everyone who can to download and use the app to protect themselves and their loved ones.

From today certain businesses in England are required by law to display NHS Test and Trace QR codes so customers with the NHS COVID-19 app can use them to check-in. QR codes will help businesses meet their legal requirement to log contact details and allow public health leads to send alerts based on whether people have checked in at venues. So far, more than 160,000 businesses have already downloaded QR codes. Venues in Wales that are legally required to collect and keep a record of visitors will still need to do so.

The NHS Test and Trace team behind the app has worked closely with major tech companies, including Google and Apple, scientists within the Alan Turing Institute and Oxford University, Zuhlke Engineering, medical experts, privacy groups, at-risk communities and teams in countries across the world using similar apps – such as Germany, to develop an app that is safe, simple and secure.

The app has been through successful trials in the Isle of Wight, Newham and among NHS Volunteer Responders. Lessons learned have informed the final version that is launching today.

Dido Harding, Executive Chair of England's NHS Test and Trace Programme, said:

We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone to engage with England's NHS Test and Trace service. The NHS COVID-19 app enables the majority of people with a smartphone to find out if they are at risk of having caught the virus and need to self isolate, order a

test if they have symptoms, and access the right guidance and advice.

The features of this app, including QR code check-in at venues, work alongside our traditional contact tracing service and will help us to reach more people quickly in their communities to prevent further spread of the virus.

This is a welcome step in protecting those around us.

Simon Thompson, Managing Director of the NHS COVID-19 App, said:

We have worked tirelessly to develop the new NHS COVID-19 app and we are incredibly grateful to all residents of the Isle of Wight, London Borough of Newham, and NHS Volunteer Responders, the learnings and insight have made the app what it is today. We are now ready to roll-out the app across England and Wales.

This new version is so much more than just a contact tracing app – it has a range of features which will quickly alert you if you're at risk of coronavirus. The more people who use it, the better it works.

We are confident that every person who downloads the app will be helping to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Wales' Health and Social Services Minister, Vaughan Gething, said:

The launch of the NHS COVID-19 app is an important part of Wales' coronavirus response, bolstering our Test, Trace, Protect programme. The more people who download and use this app, the more it will help us to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We have worked closely with the app development team to ensure it works seamlessly across England and Wales, providing people with the right advice based on where they live. In Wales, the app will complement our existing contact tracing and testing services and will further support our co-ordinated response to COVID-19 at both a local and national level.

I strongly encourage everyone in Wales to download and use the app to keep Wales safe.

In a joint statement Apple and Google said:

We built the exposure notifications system to enable public health authorities in their efforts to develop apps to help reduce the spread of the virus while ensuring people can trust in the privacy-preserving design. We are committed to supporting the government's effort to launch an app based on this technology.

Hamish MacLeod, Director at Mobile UK, said:

The mobile industry welcomes the opportunity to support the government's efforts to combat the global COVID-19 pandemic by zero-rating access to the new NHS COVID-19 app. Customers can be reassured that all in-app activity will not come out of their data allowance.

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive of the British Retail Consortium, said:

The NHS COVID-19 app is a great addition to the safety measures already being put in by retailers. We hope it provides extra reassurance for customers and their families all across the country.

As well as contact tracing, the app has a range of additional, enhanced features that will help to reduce personal and public risk from COVID-19 as part of the wider testing and contact tracing service:

- alert: letting users know the level of coronavirus risk in their postcode district
- QR check-in: enabling users to check-in at a venue and alerting them if they have recently visited somewhere they may have come into contact with someone who later tests positive for COVID-19
- symptoms: allowing users to check if they have coronavirus symptoms and see if they need to order a free test
- test: helping users book a free test through the app and get results to know whether they have COVID-19
- isolate: if a user is told to self-isolate, a timer feature will help count down that period and access will be provided to relevant advice

More [information on the NHS COVID-19 app App explainer video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCH__yEHa4s&) [App privacy video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCH__yEHa4s&)

When someone reports symptoms through the app, it will detect any other app users that the person has been in close contact with over the past few days,

including unknown contacts such as someone they may have sat next to on public transport. The app will be able to anonymously alert these contacts and provide advice, including how to get a test if they have symptoms.

The mobile industry has committed to supporting the new app with the major operators Vodafone, Three, EE and O2 (including giffgaff and Tesco Mobile), Sky and Virgin, 'zero-rating' data charges for all in-app activity. This means customers will not be charged for data when using the in-app functions, or if they are directed out of the app to information on nhs.uk websites. If a customer is directed to other web pages outside of the app, this may use data from their allowance.

1. Customers will need data in order to download the Test and Trace app initially, this cannot be zero-rated.
2. In-app activity has been zero-rated by mobile operators. From the app, customers may be directed to nhs.uk websites, which have also been zero rated. However, if a user is passed from the app to websites on gov.uk, data charges will apply.
3. O2, Three UK and Virgin Media have zero-rated the subdomain .gov.uk for [registering a COVID-19 test](#)
4. A full [list of compatible devices](#) is available.

Those who may not have access to the app, or the ability to use a smartphone should continue to use traditional contact tracing services provided by NHS Test and Trace or, NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect.

Find out more information about [how businesses can prepare for the NHS COVID-19 app](#).