

G20 Finance and Health Ministers – statement on COVID-19 response: 17 September 2020

News story

G20 Finance and Health Ministers made a statement on the COVID-19 response after a virtual meeting.



1. Our urgent collective priority is to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and alleviate its health, social and economic impacts. We continue to act upon our Leaders' commitments made at their extraordinary summit on 26 March 2020, and the progress achieved since. We will continue to use all available policy tools to safeguard people's lives, jobs and incomes, support the global economic recovery, and enhance the resilience of health and financial systems, while safeguarding against downside risks.
2. We recognize the positive impact of investment in health system strengthening on economic resilience and growth, both in overcoming the current crisis and in the long term. We remain committed to investing in an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic to bring the spread of the virus under control and prevent further transmission; thereby minimizing the economic and social disruption while reinforcing our support for returning to strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth.
3. We have mobilized resources to address the financing needs in global health to support the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and encourage joint efforts including further voluntary contributions to relevant initiatives, organizations and financing platforms. We emphasize the need for a global response and the importance of taking forward our collective action to accelerate the research, development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, including through the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A)

initiative and its COVAX facility and voluntary licensing of intellectual property, with the aim of supporting equitable and affordable access for all, which is key to overcoming the pandemic and supporting global economic recovery. Further actions are needed to meet the financing needs. We ask the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to swiftly consider ways to strengthen the financial support for countries' access to COVID-19 tools. We recognize the role of extensive immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good for health in preventing, containing and stopping transmission.

4. We continue to take collective action as a part of the G20 Action Plan – Supporting the Global Economy through the COVID-19 Pandemic. We reiterate our commitment to respond promptly to the evolving health and socio-economic situations and drive forward international economic cooperation as we navigate this crisis and look ahead to a strong, sustained, balanced and inclusive global economic recovery. We will reflect the outcomes of today's meeting in the updated G20 Action Plan that will be presented at the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meeting in October 2020 and to the G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2020. We call on International Organisations (IOs), notably IMF and OECD, to continue to integrate available pandemic data in elaborating different scenarios as for the economic impact of the health crisis going forward.
5. We take note of the assessment of gaps in pandemic preparedness that the World Health Organization (WHO) undertook in cooperation with relevant international organizations as requested by G20 Leaders in March 2020. We look forward to the work of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR) on evaluating the international health response to the COVID-19 pandemic as outlined in the World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution on COVID-19. We acknowledge the important role of the United Nations' system and agencies, including the WHO, while considering the ongoing evaluations and the need to strengthen its overall effectiveness, in coordinating and supporting the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the central efforts of Member States therein, as outlined in the World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution on COVID-19. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to strengthen health systems and has shown vulnerabilities in the international community's ability to prevent, detect and respond effectively to pandemic threats. This reinforces the need to deliver on commitments to strengthen health systems, particularly enhancing preparedness, prevention, detection and response capacities.
6. We will intensify our efforts to support pandemic surveillance and epidemic intelligence, strengthen health system capabilities, and support platforms to accelerate research and development, to proactively identify and address new and reemerging infectious pathogens. We reaffirm our commitment to full compliance with the International Health

Regulations (IHR 2005), to improve their implementation and to the continued sharing of timely, transparent and standardized data and information including on health measures and the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical interventions. We encourage innovative ways of capturing and sharing user- and decision-friendly information.

7. We re-emphasize the importance of well-functioning, value-based, inclusive and resilient health systems that can sustain equitable and affordable access to essential and quality health services for all, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable. We reemphasize our commitment to the G20 Shared Understanding on the Importance of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Financing in Developing Countries to improve the resilience, prevention, detection, preparedness and response of health systems through protecting and investing in public health. We recall our commitment to move towards achieving UHC and the important role of countries' following their own paths in line with national contexts and priorities to UHC. We will continue to address the disproportionate economic and social impact of the crisis on women, young people and the most vulnerable segments of society.

8. Although current measures are critical, major gaps still exist in global pandemic preparedness and response. Therefore, we will work together to lay the foundation for targeted actions to help respond to the most immediate challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that the world is better prepared to curb the impact of future health-related crises in line with the One Health Approach. This includes delivering on previous G20 commitments to tackle antimicrobial resistance. We will integrate the economic risks of pandemics, drug resistant infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and high-impact tail risks more systematically into the G20's global risk monitoring and preparedness. We will, with the support of relevant IOs, build on key findings, lessons learned and propose recommendations to address existing gaps in global pandemic preparedness and response ahead of the G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2020.

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[Grenfell Tower safety works: write-up and Q&A from 27 July online event](#)

In early July, we published and sent out information about upcoming safety works in Grenfell Tower. Contractors will install new 'props' – aluminium,

weight-bearing supports that are commonly used in buildings – to supplement those that were installed shortly after the fire. The Tower is safe, and these works will ensure its stability until a decision is made about its future.

At an online event on 27 July, panel members – including a member of the Grenfell Tower site management team and one of the external contractors responsible for safety on site – took questions from the community. These questions have been summarised, grouped into themes and responded to in this document.

If you were unable to attend the online event, you can watch the event video:

[Grenfell Tower safety works event on 27 July](#)

Government to boost capacity in employment tribunal system, giving quicker outcomes for employees and employers

- New reforms to help employment tribunal system hear more cases and open up court space – ensuring a speedier resolution of cases for businesses and employees
- enables deployment of a greater range of judicial expertise including non-employment judges into tribunals
- rules will be amended to allow greater use of virtual hearings

A raft of changes to boost hearing capacity in employment tribunals has been introduced into Parliament by Business Minister Paul Scully today (Thursday 17 September). The reforms will give the system more flexibility in light of the global COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. They will also allow tribunals to deal with increasing caseloads, following the abolition of employment tribunal fees in July 2017.

The government is changing employment tribunal rules to allow more flexibility for remote hearings and reduce the burden on courts, claimants and defendants. These changes will help tribunals hear more cases and make courts space available for other urgent cases, an important step in addressing the impacts of COVID-19.

The reforms will assist tribunals in ensuring the speedier delivery of justice for businesses and workers.

Business Minister Paul Scully said:

The employment tribunal system has held up very well in the face of an increased caseload and the impacts of COVID-19 – but these changes will boost its capacity further.

These reforms will provide further flexibility to the system to ensure workers and businesses receive quick and fair resolutions to disputes, both at this critical time and in the future too.

Courts Minister, Chris Philp, said:

These changes will provide speedier resolutions for businesses and employees alike, and are the latest step in our plan, backed by £80 million of funding and an additional 1,600 staff, to reduce delays and deliver justice.

We are pursuing every available option including increasing the use of technology, rolling out further safety measures to ensure our courts recover from the effects of the pandemic as quickly as possible.

One of the changes being made will allow the judiciary the option of deploying non-employment judges into employment tribunals, if certain criteria on suitability are met. This will help the employment tribunal system deal with demand, reducing unnecessary delays.

The government is also changing employment tribunal rules to allow more flexibility over virtual hearings. The change will reduce the need for physical hearings in the future making it easier for claimants and respondents, who, for example, will not need to pay travel costs.

This follows a recent £80 million boost for HM Courts and Tribunal Service to meet the unprecedented challenge presented by the pandemic to:

- employ 1,600 new staff to support the recovery
- set up more temporary Nightingale Courts
- and a further rollout of technology across the estate to hear more cases remotely

This is on top of a major £142 million investment across the courts system announced in July to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms.

Other changes being implemented include:

- allowing legal officers to carry out administrative tasks currently performed by employment judges
- refining the early conciliation and employment tribunal rules to allow greater flexibility in handling minor errors
- changing the rules to allow multiple claimants and respondents to use the same forms where reasonable, to avoid multiple certificates and time

limits in what is essentially the same dispute

The measures for the employment tribunal rules, use of legal officers and cross-deployment of judges will come into force on 8 October. The measures on early conciliation will come into force 1 December.

Joint statement: Invoking the Moscow Mechanism in relation to serious human rights violations in Belarus

Mr Chairperson,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following delegations: Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the UK, and the United States.

We have all been following the situation in Belarus very closely and with increasing concern. Many of us expressed our concerns at the Special Permanent Council convened on 28 August, and again at the Permanent Council on 3 September.

We have all repeatedly called on the Belarusian authorities to engage in a genuine and inclusive national dialogue and to end the violence against the Belarusian people. We continue to support the offer by the CiO to help facilitate such a national dialogue and we hope that the authorities in Minsk will accept it as a constructive step.

So far, the response of the Belarusian authorities has been to systematically target those who would engage in dialogue, and to continue its violent repression of peaceful protestors, including women and young people.

Mr Chairperson,

The Presidential elections on 9 August were neither free nor fair: there were restrictions on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the run-up to the elections including intimidation and persecution of political activists, candidates, journalists, media activists, lawyers, labour activists, and human rights defenders; and on election day there were credible reports of serious irregularities at polling stations. Nor were the elections appropriately transparent. Restrictive measures prohibited local independent observers, and the lack of a timely unconditional invitation from the Belarusian authorities meant ODIHR were prevented from undertaking a credible and effective mission and were therefore unable to observe the election process.

Before the election, Belarusian authorities arrested opposition politicians and prevented them from registering their candidacies for office. Since the election, we have seen the continued detention of key opposition figures, and the intimidation, detention and expulsion from Belarus of political activists. We have also seen repeated deliberate internet shutdowns preventing the dissemination of information.

We strongly condemn the post-election mass detentions and arrests brutally carried out with impunity by Belarusian authorities against peaceful protestors and the intimidation and detention of local journalists and other media actors, lawyers, human rights defenders and labour and political activists.

We are alarmed by the allegations of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in detention centres. We remind the Belarusian authorities that the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute.

We are not alone in expressing these concerns and in criticising the actions of the Belarusian authorities. A majority of participating States have spoken clearly in support of the need for Belarus to abide by its commitments and to engage in Dialogue. UN human rights experts have called on Belarus to stop torturing detainees, to bring to justice those responsible and to put in place safeguards against enforced disappearances.

As a participating State in the OSCE, Belarus has freely committed to holding genuinely free and fair elections and to upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Belarus has also committed to engaging with fellow participating States and the institutions of the OSCE on its commitments, and has signed up to the various mechanisms through which the OSCE's human dimension commitments are strengthened and upheld. Those mechanisms are designed to provide support for participating States and ensure participating States act in accordance with their human dimension commitments.

Mr Chairperson,

We continue to support efforts by the OSCE Chair to facilitate an open and constructive national dialogue in Belarus. To date, there is no indication that the Belarus authorities are willing to engage in such a dialogue. Today we take the step of invoking paragraph 12 of the 1991 Moscow Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the OSCE (Moscow Mechanism) to establish a mission of experts to look into and report on the ongoing concerns we have identified as particularly serious threats to the fulfillment of the provision of the OSCE human dimension in Belarus, and provide recommendations and advice. As noted, those concerns centre around credible reports of human rights violations and abuses, including intimidation and persecution of political activists, candidates, journalists, media actors, lawyers, labour activists and human rights defenders, as well as the detention of prospective candidates; election fraud; restrictions on access to information, including Internet shutdowns; excessive use of force against peaceful protesters; arbitrary or unlawful arrests or detentions; beatings; sexual and gender based violence; abductions and enforced disappearances; torture and other

cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and widespread impunity for all of those actions.

In addition to establishing the facts and reporting on them, we encourage the mission of experts to offer recommendations and give advice to Belarus, to the OSCE, and to the international community on possible solutions to the concerns raised.

We look forward to working with ODIHR and the Belarusian delegation in the coming days on arrangements for the mission. An expert mission, one member of which may, in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Moscow Document, be chosen by the Republic of Belarus, should give an objective and unbiased report, recommendations and advice on these issues.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

[US exports drive home success for UK golf trolley manufacturer](#)

As the golfing world looks to the US Open in New York state on Thursday, it's not only Britain's golfers that are crossing the pond.

Gloucestershire's Stewart Golf has seen US sales soar to reach \$2 million in the first half of 2020, four times higher than the same period in 2019.

Social distancing has meant many golfers in the US have been unable to use shared golf carts or rental trolleys, but Stewart Golf's electric trolleys enable players to take to the course safely and without the need to shoulder the weight of a golf bag.

To meet demand, the company has grown its staff count from 14 to 23 since the Coronavirus lockdown, bolstering its Cotswolds factory where all trolleys are built by hand.

Stewart Golf CEO Mark Stewart said:

The US has been an important market for our business in recent years, but the last 6 months have laid bare the importance of exports to our company's growth and resilience.

Sales to the US have enabled us to continue expanding and we already have plans to increase our production space even further over the year ahead.

Since establishing a base in Gloucester over a decade ago, Stewart Golf has been exporting its golf trolleys to more than 40 countries around the world.

In 2019 it became a net exporter for the first time with 60% of sales coming from outside the UK. As of June 2020 that figure stood at 78%, with 60% of total output going to the US.

Minister for Exports Graham Stuart MP commented:

Stewart Golf's success is a fantastic example of British innovation in the sports sector and it is great to see their increased trade creating further employment.

UK expertise and craftsmanship is in high demand in the US and elsewhere. This, combined with a future trade agreement, should encourage fellow businesses to look to the US market for export opportunities.

The fourth round of trade negotiations between the UK and US is continuing this week, with the aim of agreeing a deal that benefit British companies like Stewart Golf by easing trade restrictions for small businesses.

Government analysis shows a free trade agreement between the nations will provide a £3.4 billion boost to the UK economy, as the trade deal will increase transatlantic trade flows by £15.3 billion.