

Our commitment to the Syrian people and the aid community

The UK remains deeply concerned that COVID-19 continues to compound the humanitarian crisis across Syria and, as I mentioned before, we're doing what we can to support and we provided \$30 million to tackle the threat of COVID-19 in Syria. That's alongside almost \$400 million this year in humanitarian support.

This support is a clear demonstration of our commitment to the Syrian people, but also to the aid community. And that commitment remains unwavering. And I want to in particular, as others have, express our steadfast support to OCHA and the World Health Organisation, both of whom are playing critical roles in the coordination of the humanitarian and the health response in Syria.

And this support is all the more important as aid workers continue to work in incredibly challenging circumstances, dealing with obstructions to their vital work and threats to their health and to their safety now on a daily basis.

In particular, I want to condemn the attack against the Turkish Red Crescent in Al Bab on Monday, which resulted in the death of an aid worker and the wounding of another. The deliberate targeting of aid workers is a clear violation of international humanitarian law, and such attacks are abhorrent. We call on all parties in Syria to uphold their obligations.

We also remain concerned about the lack of adequate PPE and medical equipment, and the continued rise in cases of COVID-19 among U.N. staff and aid workers.

This increased pressure on aid workers comes against the backdrop of devastating reports of avoidable civilian deaths, which further add to the humanitarian caseload. As we heard from USG Lowcock, the combination of the devastated health system and the challenges of COVID-19 can result in many more unnecessary deaths and illness. We were also deeply saddened to hear of the 11 deaths as a result of the car bomb in Afrin. It's unacceptable that pro-regime forces continue to launch indiscriminate attacks, which result in the death of civilians.

As the Commission of Inquiry makes clear again this week in their latest report, these attacks may amount to war crimes. Indeed, that report further shines a light on the brutal crimes against humanity that the regime continues to commit through enforced disappearance, murder, torture, and imprisonment. If we ever needed evidence that this is a regime that does not have the best interests of its people at heart, then this is it.

As we also heard today, access problems persist in North East Syria with a continued lack of cross-line access into the regions where vulnerable people need it most, and it was striking to hear the example from USG Lowcock of al

Tabqa. This is especially galling – 100 aid trucks being delayed from crossing into North East Syria because of bureaucratic procedures. This is another sign that despite the assurances of the allies of the Syrian regime in this Council that we could make cross-line access work, obstruction just continues. And the obstruction, let's be clear, is calculated. It's also unacceptable. The UN must be given unfettered access and must be allowed to deliver aid to those who need it most.

As others have said, we also remain concerned by persistent water and electricity shortages and disruptions to supply around the Alouk water station. We urge all parties to take steps to swiftly resolve water supply disruptions and to deconflict and minimize further conflict-related damage to civilian infrastructure.

At the last Council session, we talked about the 9.3 million people who are currently food insecure. Fires have since then ripped through North West Syria. And given that October and November are the sowing seasons for wheat and barley, and with the fires destroying large swathes of arable land, there is a risk now of devastating famine and further impacts on people's livelihoods. So, the picture is bleak.

It is vital that the Council comes together to prevent a worsening of the humanitarian disaster as we approach the winter months in Syria. As a priority, civilians and aid workers need to be urgently given the access and tools they need to alleviate suffering while there is still time to prepare for the coming months ahead.

Finally, I'm glad Christoph raised the ongoing trial in Germany. The reality is that the testimony there represents the tip of the iceberg. The Syrian regime, as we know, is willing indiscriminately to bomb innocent civilians in schools and hospitals. So one can only imagine what they are capable of in Assad's dungeons.

Before supporters of this regime raise the question of sanctions and the lifting of sanctions, let us again reiterate that the path to the removal of sanctions is clear. Rather than interfering with aid, bombing schools and hospitals, detaining and torturing people, the Syrian regime must heed the calls of its population and engage seriously with Special Envoy Pedersen and the UN-led political process to achieve a peaceful end to this conflict.

Thank you, Mr President.

Foreign Secretary statement in Washington DC, 16 September 2020

It is always a real pleasure to be back in Washington. There is a lot going

on from Hong Kong to Libya.

I always come away from these meetings with a really reinforced sense of just the length and breadth of the work we do together, and our 2 countries and administrations are doing together, both in terms of the scale and range, but also the value it adds as a force for good in the world.

No 2 countries do more together to further the cause of peace and security, to advance democracy or to alleviate poverty.

At a time when the world faces the huge challenge of a global pandemic, Mike and I are always looking with our teams to find new ways to work closely together for all of the shared values and interests that we prize so highly. Mike and I had a good discussion today on a range of issues.

I also was very pleased to meet with USAID officials following the UK merger of our Department for Development with the Foreign Office, the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, we're keen to work even closer with you right across the foreign policy board.

I look forward in particular to working together with the US in Africa, given the challenges there.

Mike and I discussed the poisoning of Alexey Navalny. That remains a major concern. We welcome the progress towards his recovery and our thoughts remain very much with him and his family.

In the UK, we have seen first-hand the impact and the consequences of a Novichok attack when the Russian intelligence officers used it in an assassination attempt in Salisbury back in 2018.

Needless to say the use of a banned chemical weapon violates the Chemical Weapons Convention, there must be accountability for it. We'll work with all of our allies to that effect.

I think the Russian government is duty bound to explain what happened to Mr Navalny through a full and transparent investigation.

Have to say from the UK's point of view that it's very difficult to see any plausible alternative explanation to this being carried out by the Russian intelligence services but certainly the Russian government has a case to answer.

Mike and I also discussed how we intend to work with our partners to support Germany to ensure justice is done.

We need to work within the OPCW on the issues of attribution and accountability. I can say the UK will not shrink from that.

We also discussed Iran. We absolutely agreed Iran must never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon.

And we also share the view that the diplomatic door is open to Iran to

negotiate a peaceful way forward. That decision is there for the leadership in Tehran to take.

On the Middle East Peace Process, we discussed the normalisation between Israel and the various Arab States.

Huge tribute to American leadership, with the agreements that were celebrated here yesterday.

We fully support the agreements between UAE and Bahrain with Israel.

I want to pay particular tribute to Mike's work and Jared Kushner's work, these are really important steps towards a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East.

We also believe it is an opportunity for dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians, I think that will be ultimately necessary for an enduring 2-state solution. We had a good discussion on all of that.

Mike and I also talked about Belarus, where we share the view that the excessive violence used by the Belarusian authorities, as well as its systematic targeting of opposition leaders is completely unacceptable.

The UK will be pressing with the US and with our partners for an investigation within the OSCE, into both the vote-rigging of the election, but also the assaults on the freedoms and the human rights abuses perpetrated against the protesters.

At the same time we're doubling our support to the independent media, the civil society, the human rights organisations active in Belarus, with an extra £1.5 million over the next 2 years.

We also talked about our shared concerns on Xinjiang and Hong Kong, the people of which are suffering very serious human rights abuses.

We urge China to live up to its international obligations. It is absolutely crucial that the freedoms of the people and the autonomy of Hong Kong are respected in full, and we'll be watching very carefully, not just the enactment, but the application of the National Security legislation and how that plays out in the weeks and months ahead.

China must also end the egregious human rights violations against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang.

Finally we discussed progress in our Free Trade Agreement negotiations since we last met and the importance of a clean, resilient economic recovery from COVID-19.

Like Mike we're willing on the negotiators, I think there's a huge opportunity for a win-win deal. We're confident we can get there.

As we prepare for our G7 Presidency next year, I want to thank our American friends for their stewardship so far this year.

Under your leadership Mike, the G7 nations committed to do 'whatever is necessary' to ensure a strong and coordinated global response to Covid-19.

That shared commitment will remain our guiding principle as we prepare to take up the presidency in January.

And come what may, I know the transatlantic alliance will continue to be not just the bedrock of UK foreign policy, but also an even stronger force for good in these uncertain times.

Maintaining lasting peace and stability in South Sudan

Thank you, Mr President. I would like to also thank SRSR Shearer and USG Lowcock for their briefings, and I'm particularly grateful to Ms Tai for bringing her story and her pragmatic and clear vision to this Council. Between them, they illustrated the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation faced by millions of South Sudanese and the urgent need for the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

I also want to convey the United Kingdom's gratitude for the work of the humanitarian community in South Sudan. We've heard today how challenging the humanitarian environment is; with seven aid workers killed this year alone, it's a sad fact that South Sudan remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an aid worker. But we know that without them, countless more lives would have been lost.

I'd like to touch on three issues, Mr President. The first is the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Two years ago, this Council welcomed the leadership shown by all sides in signing the revitalised Peace Agreement. Despite significant delays, we also welcomed in February the leadership by the parties in forming the revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity. Since then, we have seen some positive steps taken to build state-level institutions. However, the people of South Sudan need to see the dividends of peace. And we've heard this a lot from colleagues today. Implementation of the peace agreement must now be accelerated and we stand ready to support further progress.

But, Mr President, ongoing violence is the key driver of humanitarian need in South Sudan. We're deeply concerned by the increased violence that has led so many civilian deaths in recent months. We call on the government in Juba and all those involved to make concerted efforts to stop the killing and address the root causes of conflict through effective governance and dialogue at a national and local level. This includes addressing outstanding issues under the Peace Agreement, notably the appointment of the Governor in Upper Nile State. We also call on non-signatories to engage in the Rome process and for

all sides to respect the cessation of hostilities. With thousands of South Sudanese lives at risk, compromise and collaboration is needed now more urgently than ever.

Secondly, on the humanitarian situation, Mr President, the stalled peace process and increasing subnational violence have exacerbated the stark deterioration of the humanitarian situation. As we've heard today, the situation is desperate: 7.5 million in humanitarian need, economic deterioration and a growing risk of famine. This has been amplified by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, by desert locusts and by flooding. Already, over half the population face acute food insecurity, and some areas now face the very real prospect of famine-like conditions. This must be addressed without delay. I was impressed by USG Lowcock's innovative approach to dealing with these challenges. But the bottom line is clear: they need more resources.

The other impediment is the limits of humanitarian access that hurt those who need it most. Again, it was good to hear that OCHA are innovating to deal with challenges and provision, but it's also vital that South Sudan's government ensure that humanitarian workers can access communities in need and that UNMISS can carry out its mandate unhindered.

Finally, on the protection of civilians, it was incredibly worrying to hear about the spike in violence, particularly the presence of actors from outside South Sudan exacerbating the problem. Ultimately, the primary responsibility for protecting South Sudan's citizens rests with the government of South Sudan, including the respect to those currently living in the UN's Protection of Civilian Sites. The mission's plan to re-designate PoC Sites should be implemented through close consultation with the affected communities and with humanitarian actors in a transparent process that prioritises safety and security. Again, we were encouraged to hear SRSG Shearer talk about how the mission can adapt to their operating environment and find new ways to deliver its mandate.

As others have said, it's also critical that South Sudan cooperate rather than inhibit UNMISS and ensure the mission can deliver its PoC mandate. I join Kristof and others saying we hope the representative of South Sudan can join us in December to give us the government's perspective on these issues and also to hear directly the Council's concerns and the briefings.

Mr President, the South Sudanese people deserve lasting peace and stability. And we call on all parties to redouble their efforts to realise that aim in the spirit of cooperation envisaged in the 2018 Peace Agreement.

Thank you, Mr President.

[UK warns of Chinese global cyber attacks](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab condemns continued Chinese cyber attacks on telecoms, tech and governments.



Following announcements by the [US Department of Justice](#) and Malaysian law enforcement today (Wednesday 16 September) of criminal charges against Chinese nationals and arrests of Malaysian nationals relating to malicious cyber attacks, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Today we have another example of the Chinese using malicious cyber activity for criminal ends. We condemn the attempted attacks against governments and businesses. This kind of opportunistic and reckless behaviour in cyberspace is wholly unacceptable.

The UK will continue to counter those conducting such cyber attacks, and work with our allies to hold perpetrators to account.

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[UK businesses now eligible to export beef to the USA](#)

News story

First four businesses are now officially listed as eligible to export UK beef to the USA.



UK beef is globally recognised for its provenance, quality and traceability. Image source: 'Food is GREAT'.

A significant step in the collective effort across the UK to restart exports of beef to the US market for the first time in over 20 years has been reached following [access being granted in March this year](#).

The first four food businesses, based in Northern Ireland and Wales, have now been [officially listed by the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service](#), as eligible to export UK beef to the USA.

This means that Kepak Group Limited (Merthyr) in Wales, along with Foyle Food Group (Foyle Campsie), WD Meats and Granville Food Care Ltd. in Northern Ireland, can now start production and export of UK beef for US consumers. It is anticipated that the first exports of UK beef will take place in the coming weeks. It is also expected that in the coming months, more food businesses in the UK will be able to take advantage of this exciting new export opportunity.

More details will be shared in the coming weeks, as the eligible UK food businesses complete the remaining stages of the export process.

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