

Progress is still needed if a political settlement is to be reached in Syria

Thank you very much, Mr. President. And may I thank the Special Envoy for being here today and for his comprehensive briefing, as always.

Mr. President, we remain concerned about the security situation in Syria. Now whilst we're not seeing the levels of violence in the north-west that we saw at the beginning of this year, we know recent clashes between armed groups and regime forces south of the M4, as well as ongoing regime shelling into the Idlib de-escalation zone. The cease fire in Idlib, as well as that in the north-east, must be upheld in practice and not in name only. And we also fully condemn continued attacks by extremist forces, including by Daesh.

We remain concerned about a rise in violence in the south of the country and the risk that this violence causes reconciliation agreements there to fall apart. And we'd be grateful for an update, including from our Russian colleagues, on implementation of those reconciliation agreements reached in summer 2018. It remains vital colleagues that localised ceasefires lead to a nationwide ceasefire, as called for by the United Nations Special Envoy and the Secretary-General. This is necessary not only to bring an end to this devastating conflict in accordance Resolution 2054, but to enable full attention to be devoted in the fight against COVID-19.

Now on that, we're continuing to support efforts led by the World Health Organization to confront the real risk posed by COVID-19. to all parts of Syria. We recognise the efforts made by authorities across the country, and we urge practical cooperation between them all to confront a disease which knows no boundaries.

There remains an urgent need for medical supplies and other necessary humanitarian aid to reach recipients in need without hindrance. And we should not be dogmatic about the modalities of doing so, including by renewing cross-border assistance to all areas which need it. And we'll have an opportunity to discuss this, of course, further tomorrow.

Let me just say a note on sanctions, in support of what some others have said, goods and medical supplies used for humanitarian purposes are not subject either to EU sanctions or to UK national sanctions. And additional exemptions from sanctions are available for humanitarian activity in Syria. I'd just like to note that the United Kingdom and our US and European partners are the leading donors for humanitarian aid in Syria, including in regime held areas. The problems facing the Syrian health sector and the economy are a result not of sanctions, but of the Syrian regime's actions through its cronyism, corruption and its brutal conduct of the war which includes, I am afraid, politically motivated punitive restrictions on humanitarian aid. If the Syrian regime and its allies want to see removal of

sanctions, then they know what they have to do. Engage seriously with the Special Envoy and the UN led political process to achieve a peaceful end to the Syrian conflict.

Now, regarding the political process, we are disappointed that notwithstanding the urgent humanitarian needs, the deteriorating economy and the continued threat of COVID-19, there still appears to be no urgency in working with the UN Envoy to achieve political progress towards a political settlement. Like others, we welcomed the formation of the Constitutional Committee last year. But it's been over a month since the agenda for the Constitutional Committee was agreed and nearly six months since its last meeting. We cannot let hard won progress on this front be lost because of lethargy and disinterest from Damascus. I call on Russia to bring its influence to bear on its Syrian clients.

In order to maintain momentum and keep the progress alive. We encourage at least the co-chairs of the Committee to convene urgently by video conference to discuss issues including how a full meeting can work in practice.

And we also urge the regime to make widespread releases of political prisoners and vulnerable people and ensure medical care is available for those still in detention. While we welcome negotiated releases, we would note that One for One releases are insufficient in a context where the regime holds far more detainees than opposition forces. And I'd like to emphasise once again and for the record, that there cannot be any reconstruction funding from the United Kingdom without the regime's genuine engagement with a credible and sustainable political process.

Let me conclude colleagues, by reiterating what I believe we all have said that the deliberate targeting of humanitarian infrastructure and civilians is never acceptable. Whether through ground attacks, barrel bombs, air strikes or chemical weapons. We note Amnesty International's recent report detailing 18 attacks on medical facilities and schools between May 2019 and February 2020, which only adds to the evidence provided by the Board of Inquiry and Commission of Inquiry. As with the chemical weapons attacks carried out by the Syrian regime and detailed in the OPCW IIT report.

Those responsible must and will be held to account. In the meantime, such disregard for international humanitarian law must cease.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PM call with Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed: 18 May 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, UAE.



The Prime Minister spoke to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, UAE, today.

He expressed his gratitude to the United Arab Emirates for their support and cooperation in the fight against coronavirus.

The two leaders also discussed how to further develop the UK and UAE's close economic and security ties.

The Prime Minister invited the Crown Prince to participate at the upcoming virtual Global Vaccine Summit, which the UK is hosting on June 4th.

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[Everyone in the United Kingdom with symptoms now eligible for coronavirus tests](#)

- Anyone experiencing a new, continuous cough; high temperature; and now also a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste can book a test by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus
- 21,000 contact tracers in England now recruited

The government has today announced that anyone with symptoms of coronavirus is now eligible to book a test, ahead of the rollout of the test and trace service.

The expansion in testing eligibility comes after all 4 UK Chief Medical Officers confirmed that anosmia has been added as a symptom of COVID-19. Anosmia is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell, and it can also affect your sense of taste.

This means people should self-isolate immediately if they have:

- a new, continuous cough
- a high temperature, or
- a loss of or change in their normal sense of smell or taste

All members of their household must also self-isolate according to current guidelines, unless the symptomatic individual receives a negative test result.

Testing

The extension in testing eligibility comes ahead of the rollout of the new test and trace service and is possible thanks to increased testing capacity across the country as the government expands total testing capacity towards 200,000 tests a day.

The government has more than doubled the capacity of the NHS/Public Health England (PHE) laboratory network, set up 50 regional test centres and 116 mobile testing units, and introduced home testing kits and 3 Lighthouse laboratories.

The number of tests available for the general population will increase as capacity continues to expand.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Following the massive ramping up of our national testing programme, anybody with symptoms of coronavirus in the United Kingdom is now eligible for a test.

This is a huge step forward in our plan to slow the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and give the peace of mind these tests can bring.

We will continue to give priority to NHS staff and care home residents and workers in order to protect our most vulnerable.

The tracing element of the service in England, due to be launched shortly, will be supported by 21,000 contact tracers who have now been recruited, and will play a vital role working to reach those who have been in close contact with someone who has developed coronavirus.

The new workforce in England of more than 21,000 contract tracers will be overseen by experts from Public Health England and local government.

PHE Deputy Chief Executive Richard Gleave said:

Test and trace will require a huge team effort bringing together PHE and local government leaders, experts in logistics and

thousands of new staff to carry out contact tracing. It's great to see people from a wide range of disciplines coming forward to play their part.

NHS Professionals' CEO Nicola McQueen said:

We have seen a fantastic response to join the virtual frontline of home-based clinical contact caseworkers for the test and trace service. This service is key to the national response to COVID-19. We know that so many of our bank members, as well as other registered healthcare professionals, are keen to help in any way they can and this unique position will allow them to do just that.

Background information

Anyone in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland experiencing a new, continuous cough, high temperature or a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste can book a test by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Those unable to access the internet can call 119 to book a test in England, Wales and Scotland, or call 0300 303 2713 in Northern Ireland.

A team of PHE public health professionals, linking with the local government sector and other partners, will oversee the contact tracing workforce as well as continuing to manage complex cases.

PHE is working with local government colleagues including the Association of Directors of Public Health, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, Local Government Association and UK Chief Environmental Health Officers on this part of the test and trace service.

NHS Professionals, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Business Services Authority are key partners in delivery of the model helping with recruitment, logistics and integration of the various elements of the service.

[Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 18 May 2020](#)

This transcript is for the coronavirus statement delivered on 18 May 2020: [Coronavirus press conference 18 May 2020](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference.

I'm pleased to be joined by Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, our Deputy CMO.

I'll start with the daily update on the latest data on coronavirus.

- 2,682,716 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK. That includes 100,678 tests carried out yesterday.
- 246,406 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 2,684 cases since yesterday.
- 9,408 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus, down 13% from this time last week.
- And I'm very sad to report, of those who have tested positive for covid-19, across all settings, 34,796 have now died. That's an increase of 160 deaths on yesterday.

It goes without saying that we offer our condolences to the friends and family of every individual who has passed away during this coronavirus pandemic.

It is a challenging time and as we chart the right course over the weeks and months ahead, our overriding priority remains to save lives, whilst also preserving livelihoods and allowing people to return, over time and as and when it's safe, to something resembling a more normal way of living.

On 11 May, we set out a road map to provide the information, the advice and the reassurance to businesses, public services, to other organisations, to employees and to citizens up and down the country.

And I want to thank everyone who is making the adjustments and engaging with us in government to forge the path ahead in a sure-footed and sustainable way. We recognise people will have concerns and questions, and we want to work together with them, and with everyone involved to provide the necessary confidence and reassurance in the next steps that we are poised to make.

That approach is summarised in the slides which we have up on the screen.

You'll see from Slide 1, and as people will be aware, we have established a new COVID Alert System, with five levels, each relating to the current level of threat posed by the virus.

The alert level is focused on the rate of infection, known as the R value, as well as the total number of coronavirus cases overall.

The alert level helps us determine the social distancing measures that we need to fight the virus. So the lower the level, the fewer or the less restrictive the measures we will need at any given time.

Since the lockdown began, at the end of March, we have been at Level 4 as indicated on the slide.

Thanks to the hard work and the huge sacrifices across the UK, and the progress that we've made as a result of that, particularly in relation to compliance with the social distancing measures, we are in the process of moving from Level 4 to Level 3 on the slide. We will do that through a number

of very careful and deliberate steps.

Last week, the Prime Minister set out the first of three steps, designed to carefully modify the measures that had been put in place.

By gradually easing certain measures, we can begin to allow people to return to something resembling a more normal way of life. The choices we make, what we are asking the British public to do, and what we're asking them not to do, are designed to avoid the very real risk of a second peak that would overwhelm the NHS and of course risk turning a temporary economic painful moment for the country into permanent damage to the UK economy.

At every step, we'll closely monitor the impact of easing restrictions, and in particular the impact on the spread of the virus.

It's only by collecting and monitoring the data will we be able to take the next step, which is indicated as Step 2 on the slides, and that will be no earlier than June 1st.

I understand it's natural for people to question why they can't do one or other thing right now, or why certain distinctions have been made, but in reality you have to look at the package of measures as a whole, mindful of the risk to the R level and taking into account the various economic and social effects combined.

We've adopted a balanced approach, guided at all times by the science, and the overriding need to avoid a second peak that could overwhelm the NHS.

It's true to say making any changes inherently comes with some risk of spreading the virus compared to simply staying at home. But it's also true that staying in permanent lockdown is itself not sustainable on health grounds or economic grounds.

That's why we have only eased measures where it can be done with the lowest risk possible. And that's also why we are watching the impact of every change that we make very closely.

I know the last couple of months have been really tough for families, for businesses, for everyone up and down the UK. But it is only by keeping to the plan, sticking to the rules, even including when those rules change, that we will beat coronavirus for good.

That is why we have asked people to Stay Alert, to Control the Virus to Save Lives as we make changes to the measures in place in England and adjust the government's advice accordingly.

For the vast majority of people, that still means staying at home as much as possible.

For those that can't work from home, they should return to work with the arrangements in place to ensure it can be safely and responsibly done.

We've also adjusted the advice to allow people to exercise more, to visit

public outdoor spaces but staying 2 metres apart from those outside their own household.

As ever, people need to keep washing their hands regularly and carrying out the hygiene measures that we've advertised before.

Our advice is to wear a face covering when you are outside the home in enclosed spaces and where it's difficult to socially distance – for example if going to the shops or travelling on public transport. And if you or anyone in your household develops symptoms, then you still all need to self-isolate.

Now while we're asking the public to do these things, we in government will keep ramping up the effort that we need to see to get the UK back to a more normal way of living.

With that in mind, today, the Health Secretary announced that anyone in the UK with covid-19 symptoms can now get a test by booking online and I can also report that we've now recruited over 21,000 contact tracers and call handlers in England for the implementation of our test and trace programme.

That programme is absolutely key in the next steps we need to take as a country to come through this pandemic safely and responsibly.

Further information

[LLWR awards multi-million pound metal framework contract](#)

LLW Repository Ltd (LLWR) is pleased to announce the award of a 4 year framework contract, worth up to £65 million, for the treatment of radioactive waste to the following suppliers:

- Active Collection Bureau
- Augean Treatment
- Cyclife UK
- Tradebe Innutec
- Urenco Nuclear Stewardship
- Westinghouse

The scope of the new framework is to provide expertise across the full metallic radioactive waste lifecycle including: project management, expert advice, characterisation, site preparations, dismantling, transport, segregation, treatment, and disposal.

LLWR has more than 10 years' experience of successfully working with nuclear industry customers to deliver solutions across the radioactive waste

lifecycle and provide access to the full range of treatment, logistics, and disposal techniques and technology in the UK, Europe, and globally.

David Rossiter, Head of Waste Management Services for LLWR, said: "This new framework increases the capability available to our customers. It enables the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority group, and wider UK nuclear industry, to access the full range of world-class capability required to effectively deal with the UK's nuclear legacy and enhances value for money for the taxpayer. I am very pleased with the breadth of expertise and the calibre of supply chain companies available under this new framework".

LLWR is leading the implementation of the UK Government strategy for the management of solid low level radioactive waste from the nuclear industry and enabling the delivery of the NDA's strategy for hazard reduction and site restoration. LLWR has been involved in several ground-breaking projects, supporting customers by providing innovative waste management solutions.

At the heart of LLWR's mission, to manage all lower activity wastes arising from the NDA's decommissioning programme, is the provision of treatment and disposal services that provide alternatives to disposal and preserve the capacity at the Low Level Waste Repository.

Since 2010, LLWR has recycled over 12,000 tonnes of metal and contributed to significant skyline changes across the nuclear industry and cost savings of £30 million. Safely recycling radioactive metal is a proven technique contributing towards the sustainability objectives of the nuclear industry – already reducing its carbon footprint by over 40,000 tonnes of CO₂ to date.