

UK statement in response to Dr Claus Neukirch, head of the OSCE mission to Moldova

Thank you Mr Chair,

I'd like to thank Ambassador Neukirch for his report to the Permanent Council. The UK supports a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognized borders, and with a special status for Transnistria.

Ambassador Neukirch, thank you for the work of the OSCE Mission to Moldova and your effective leadership. We welcome your open and cooperative manner which has allowed you to build up relationships of trust with the respective Chief Negotiators, all partners in the 5+2 process and other relevant actors.

Your report makes clear the unique challenges which the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented to the Mission since mid-March. We commend the way you have adapted to the new and evolving situation. Thank you for the creativity and energy you have shown while helping the parties address several issues which have arisen. In this context, we welcome the spirit of collaboration shown by Chisinau and Tiraspol over testing for cases of COVID-19 in the initial phase of the crisis.

Whilst noting this positive cooperation, we urge the parties to re-double their efforts to resolve several outstanding issues which have been generated by COVID-19. In particular, we refer to the challenges set out in your report around free movement of those resident in Transnistria who need to cross the de facto internal boundary line on a regular basis. This includes for work in the healthcare system and to access their bank accounts.

We believe that the Working Group on Health and the sub-Working Group on Banking could be convened to facilitate discussion of these issues.

Furthermore, we support the idea of a joint OSCE Mission-World Health Organisation visit to Transnistria to increase understanding of the impact of the pandemic in that region.

We regret the establishment of ad hoc check-points within the Security Zone following the outbreak of the viral pandemic. Although these have not prevented the Mission from undertaking its work, we must note that they represent a breach of the ceasefire agreement. It is regrettable that the Joint Control Commission (JCC) has not met in recent weeks and we hope that it will begin to do so again as a matter of priority.

Thank you also for the information you shared on developments related to the

Cobasna ammunition depot. We call on the Russian Federation to involve the OSCE in the process of removal and destruction of Russian ammunition from Transnistria. This will ensure transparency, in accordance with the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration and subsequent extension of the mandate of the Mission to Moldova. We also recall the importance of the withdrawal of the Operational Group of Russian Forces as part of the framework of commitments undertaken in the Summit Declaration.

Ambassador Neukirch, we welcome the cooperation you reported with other OSCE executive structures, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media. We also value the Mission's efforts to promote an inclusive, open and tolerant society and respect for human rights. We would be interested to hear more about the Mission's efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into its work, including its mediation efforts.

Ambassador Neukirch, we agree with you that the way in which the parties manage the current COVID-19 challenges could set the tone for a successful resumption of negotiations on the outstanding Berlin Plus Confidence Building Measures. In the interest of all citizens of the Republic of Moldova, the United Kingdom urges the parties to work together to resolve current differences in a collaborative manner.

[UK reiterates support for Libya's legitimate institutions](#)

News story

We continue to urge Libyan parties to cease fighting, engage in constructive dialogue and commit to an inclusive political solution.



In light of recent statements, the UK reaffirms its support for Libya's internationally recognised and legitimate institutions, as agreed in the 2015

Libyan Political Agreement and ratified by the UN Security Council.

These institutions are the Presidential Council, the Government of National Accord, House of Representatives and High Council of State. The UK is clear that any changes to these structures must not be taken unilaterally, but reached through dialogue, consensus and democratic principles.

We continue to urge Libyan parties to cease fighting and engage in constructive dialogue. An inclusive political solution – as set out by the Berlin Conference – offers the best hope for the stability and future prosperity that the Libyan people need and deserve.

The UK reaffirms its support for the efforts of Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General, Stephanie Williams and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and renews its call for the parties to commit to a truce over Ramadan.

Further information

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New tech will help keep the criminal justice system moving during COVID-19 pandemic

- New video technology to support remote hearings in criminal courts
- Secure system can be accessed by a wide range of devices
- First phase of new video platform to be rolled out to more than 100 courts

HMCTS is bringing in a new video platform to enable all parties in a criminal hearing to take part remotely – allowing all magistrate and crown courts in England and Wales to hold secure hearings, making it easier to make sure justice continues to be served.

Most criminal cases are heard in magistrate courts and this technology – available for cases such as remand, custody time limit, and sentencing hearings – will help move people through the criminal justice system in these unprecedented times.

This technology will not be used for jury trials, and a judge will decide whether it is appropriate to use in any other hearing on a case-by-case basis. In addition, no defendant is appearing from their own home and sentencing is not taking place unless the defendant is in custody or

physically present in the courtroom. If physically present and sentenced to custody, this will be dealt with in the usual way.

If people are unwell and can't come to court for a hearing, they must contact the court for that hearing to be rearranged.

Thanks to dedicated HMCTS staff, courts continue to prioritise all hearings relating to custody, detention and bail, and urgent applications for matters such as domestic violence, and statistics released today show that 90% of all cases since 14th April have been held remotely to ensure the vulnerable are protected.

Courts Minister Chris Philp, said

It is essential that justice continues to be served in these difficult times and this new platform will help equip courts across England and Wales with secure and robust video technology to enable them to carry out more of their vital work.

I am extremely impressed at the way all those within the justice system have adapted so well to the unprecedented challenges we face

We have already seen a huge rise in the number of cases being heard remotely, and this innovation will ensure the wheels of justice continue to turn.

His Honour Judge Guy Karl QC, Senior Circuit Judge at Leeds Crown Court, said:

In times of uncertainty, confirmation that the rule of law endures and justice will be served is a source of profound reassurance to us all.

This secure video conferencing technology is versatile and provides the functions essential to deliver a range of criminal hearings: I am delighted to be involved in its successful introduction.

The Kinly Cloud Video Platform (CVP) is initially being rolled out to 60 magistrates' courts and 48 crown courts currently open to the public, with others to follow as soon as possible. It is also being introduced to the Civil and Family courts.

CVP connects securely to the existing justice video network which links police stations and prisons to courts, and can be accessed by any internet-enabled device with a camera and a microphone.

Magistrates' courts in London, the South-East, the South-West and the Midlands have already begun using CVP, with the first going live earlier this month.

It has also been introduced in Crown Courts in Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle and Hull, with more courts in the South-East set to go live. The aim is for 16 magistrates' courts and nine crown courts to have access to CVP by the end of next week.

So far, HMCTS has run 412 remand hearings using CVP, brought on line 26 police custody suites, and connected 95 advocates, 42 Crown prosecutors, 20 Probation officers and two translators.

Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar Council, said:

We must keep the justice system going in the public interest. Barristers, along with the judiciary, court staff and many others, are determined to adapt quickly to delivering justice during Covid-19, including delivering it remotely. The new CVP platform is crucial to these efforts, enabling more cases to be heard without everyone having to gather in a physical courtroom. We have heard positive feedback from barristers involved in hearings where CVP has already been used. I am keen to see it rolled out widely to try and ensure that as far as possible, effective justice is delivered, not delayed.

DCC Tony Blaker from Kent Police and National Police Chief's Council lead for Courts, said:

Policing is adopting this innovative technology and building on our existing partnership with HMCTS; helping to protect the public and people working in criminal justice agencies. By holding court hearings remotely during this crisis, we can help to reduce the spread of the virus and ensure that the Criminal Justice System continues to operate effectively. We are working at pace with our partners to increase the use of technology, providing continued benefit to the public and keeping people safe.

Notes to editors

- This technology will not be used for jury trials, and a judge will decide whether it is appropriate to use in any other hearing on a case-by-case basis
- Many hearings continue to be conducted by judges sitting in court and the aim is to re-open courts which have been temporarily suspended as soon as practicable
- Connection to a hearing is easy and straightforward: participants simply click on a link in an email invitation or in the Crown court digital case system to join
- Audio and video technology has long played a role in courts and tribunals, and HMCTS has significant experience in this field. Many courts, custody suites and prisons are already connected to the secure Justice Video Service (JVS) network, which enables communication between

fixed end points

- The use of audio and video technology in court hearings has rapidly increased in response to the Covid-19 emergency
- To enable the criminal justice system to operate safely and flexibly during the pandemic, the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) has provided for the use of video within the criminal jurisdiction. The use of video hearings remains always subject to judicial discretion. Video is not being used to run jury trials
- On 24 April 2020, courts and tribunals reported that the estimated use of audio in hearings increased to around 2,800 a day. Currently around 90% of cases in England and Wales have used audio and video technology to some extent
- [Guidance on how to connect to a criminal hearing using CVP](#) is available on GOV.UK, and we plan to publish short videos demonstrating how to access the system. There is also a helpline number offering technical support to participants in hearings: 0330 808 9405
- Over the coming months we will continuously improve our approach to the use of audio-video alternatives during the coronavirus outbreak

[More than 3,000 extra officers join police in recruitment drive](#)

Police ranks across England and Wales have been bolstered with an additional 3,005 officers since the government launched a major recruitment drive, according to figures released today (30 April).

The figures follow the launch of the government's campaign in September 2019 to recruit 20,000 extra officers over the next three years.

They show 3,005 recruits joined the police specifically as part of the uplift programme. In total, forces recruited 6,435 officers from November 2019 to March 2020, including recruitment planned before the government campaign was announced.

The statistics show that forces across England and Wales have successfully accelerated their recruitment plans and are on track to meet their target of 6,000 by March 2021.

There are now a total of 131,596 officers, a 5% increase on March 2019 – of which uplift officers account for approximately half.

This morning, the Home Secretary held a Zoom call with new recruits at Lancashire Constabulary, where she thanked them for stepping up to join the police and protect the public, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Each one of these brave officers will make a difference in helping to cut crime and keep people safe. For many, their first role has been to join the fight to stop the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS and save lives.

Thanks to new digital assessment centres, the doors remain wide open for anyone who wants to join them and make a difference in their community.

Getting more police officers on the streets is an absolute priority for the British people – and this Government.

The College of Policing has announced it is rolling out new online assessment centres, which will ensure that recruitment continues during the coronavirus outbreak.

The college's online assessment process will take candidates through situational judgement tests, briefing exercises and interviews. The first forces, including West Midlands and Hampshire, are already trialling this platform and the service will be launched nationally in June.

New recruits are receiving tailored training so they can be safely deployed to the frontline and support the police's emergency response as soon as possible.

College of Policing CEO Chief Constable Mike Cunningham said:

The recruitment figures released today are extremely encouraging and demonstrate the scale and breadth of the positive work that has been undertaken so far to increase police officer numbers.

The numbers joining the service show that huge progress is already being made to recruit an additional 20,000 officers over the next three years. This investment in the workforce provides a great opportunity to enhance diversity across the service and the College of Policing will equip those joining with the skills and training needed to match the complexity of the job.

The College of Policing is working hard to enable forces to continue to recruit during the current emergency by introducing online recruit assessment and other measures to help get officers on the streets so they can keep their communities safe.

Figures from the NPCC showed that overall crime fell by 28 per cent in the first few weeks of the coronavirus outbreak.

Alongside new recruits the government has recently announced other measures to support the police's coronavirus response.

These include testing for all essential workers, including police officers

and support staff; the relaxation of tax rules to encourage officers nearing retirement and those recently retired to serve; and the unlocking of £84million for forces to use in fight against coronavirus.

National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Chair Martin Hewitt said:

With over 3,000 additional officers already joining policing in the past seven months, we are well on our way to meeting our target of 6,000 by March next year.

Working with the Home Office, we are making every effort to keep recruitment of officers going despite all the challenges coronavirus brings. Creative solutions from the College of Policing will help to ensure this momentum is not lost and that recruitment and training can continue during the pandemic.

APCC Chair Katy Bourne OBE said:

The positive latest figures for police officer recruitment show that police forces are being innovative in the face of adversity, adapting assessment and training procedures to safely manage the onboarding of the maximum number of new recruits.

Although we know that the volume of many crime types has fallen due to travel and social restrictions, crime is like water, it always finds a level and the pandemic has created the circumstances for other crimes to mushroom. When there are more people back on the streets there will, sadly, be more crime so we still need those additional police officers that the public have been calling for.

The government's Uplift programme will ensure that all police forces have the numbers they need for business as usual and the increased demand of policing safe, social interactions.

It also shows that there are plenty of people from all walks of life with diverse skills and experiences who want to become police officers at a critical time for our country and join the frontline in our collective endeavour against COVID-19.

Our citizens quite rightly would prefer to see police targeting criminals and preventing crime rather than moving people on from beauty spots. However, having put so much effort into the stay at home campaign over the last five weeks, we still need a police presence to deter those whose impatience and recklessness could spoil it for us all.

The recruitment drive is at the centre of the government's commitment to back the police with more resources, powers and support to keep communities safe.

Other steps include the biggest funding boost for the policing system in a decade, a new covenant to recognise the service and sacrifice of the police, funding to provide over 8,000 more officers with Taser to keep themselves and the public safe, expanded stop and search powers, and plans to consult on increasing the maximum sentence for assaulting police officers and other emergency service workers.

Rail replacement vehicles: extension of non-accessible period

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.