

# UK Statement for the Virtual Informal Conversation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Madam President, High Commissioner,

First of all, thank you for taking this initiative and for arranging today's informal briefing.

I want to take this opportunity to express my condolences and sympathies to friends and colleagues in Geneva whose countries have been so seriously affected – and to express my thanks for the expressions of support following the hospitalisation of our Prime Minister.

With your permission, I want to make three points this morning.

First, I want to reiterate the UK's support to the UN, its Funds, Programmes and Agencies, in their effort to tackle these enormous health and humanitarian challenges. The world has never been faced with such a comprehensive and collective challenge as this global pandemic, and we will only get through it together, and by supporting and reinforcing the international institutions that have stepped up to deal with it. The United Kingdom has already provided \$900 million to the UN to fight COVID-19, and we will provide more.

Second, while States are rightly focused on doing everything necessary to bring this pandemic under control in their own countries, in line with WHO guidance, we need to be alive to the wider consequences of our actions, and the need to minimize the long-term damage to our economies, societies and politics. We are already facing the prospect of the worst global recession of our lifetimes, as a result of the measures we are taking, with all of the consequences for people's lives around the world, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.

Which brings me to my third point. We should all seek to ensure that the measures we take are necessary, proportionate, time-bound and transparent, and regularly reviewed. Scrutiny of our actions as governments and international agencies has never been more important than it is now, given the unprecedented actions we are taking, and we need to ensure that our parliaments, media and civil society are all able to play their role.

In that context, High Commissioner, I would like to thank you and your office for the role you are playing in ensuring that we do not lose sight of the international human rights frameworks and considerations that we need to take into account as we respond to this crisis. Your independent voice, at the apex of the UN human rights system, will be vital in helping to ensure that, as we battle this common enemy, we don't inadvertently take a step backwards on human rights, and the hard won progress we have all made in recent

decades.

Thank you.

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## **Called-in decision: land bounded by Wandsworth Road, Parry Street, Bondway and Vauxhall Bus Station (ref: 3229531 – 9 April 2020)**

- 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.

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## **Recovered appeal: land to the east of the A1301, south of the A505 near Hinxton and west of the A1301, north of the A505 near Whittlesford, Hinxton (ref: 3210008 – 9 April 2020)**

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## Border Force prioritising checks on medical equipment

This month, Border Force has introduced a new process for prioritising checks on medical equipment to ensure it reaches the NHS more quickly.

The new process ensures critical shipments are flagged to Border Force in advance by the NHS so that officers can stand ready to process them as soon as possible.

Border Force officers then process the shipments quickly, whilst continuing to conduct thorough security checks.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

I will do whatever necessary to help the national effort to tackle this virus, that is why Border Force are prioritising medical equipment so that it can enter the UK as soon as possible.

This will ensure that the NHS and frontline workers can get the equipment they need as quickly as possible so they can continue saving lives and fighting the virus.

The process has been in place since the beginning of April, with Border Force working closely with suppliers, the NHS and HMRC to ensure all relevant shipments are flagged.

In addition, last week, the Treasury announced that it was waiving import taxes on medical equipment crucial to the fight against coronavirus – reducing red tape to ensure equipment gets to frontline health workers faster.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Jesse Norman, said:

We have already waived import taxes on crucial medical equipment coming to the UK, such as protective gear, tests and ventilators. Today's announcement will further support the NHS, so that frontline workers get the supplies they need to save lives.

All shipments remain subject to the same controls including checks against illegal immigration, prohibited and restricted items and revenue fraud.

Border Force will continue to support the essential services provided by the NHS during this period for as long as is required.

This is one measure being brought in by Border Force in response to coronavirus and is part of wider robust contingency plans in place to ensure there is no disruption to their efforts to maintain security.

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## **Letter to the Loan Charge All-Party Parliamentary Group about communications with HMRC customers**

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