

Foreign Secretary travels to Riyadh to discuss Yemen response

The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia will continue to work together to tackle global challenges and help to resolve the devastating humanitarian crisis in Yemen, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said ahead of his first official visit to the country.

Mr Raab will hold talks with the leadership of Saudi Arabia and senior government counterparts including Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and National Security Adviser Dr Musaad Al Aiyban, in Riyadh on Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 March.

They will discuss our commitment to resolving the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, security and regional stability, and ways of combating the threat posed by climate change.

He will also hold talks with Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Hadi during his visit.

The Foreign Secretary will continue to drive progress on the Yemen peace process, following the recent surge in Houthi violence and constraints on getting humanitarian aid to those in need.

The Foreign Secretary will also raise issues where we have differences, including on human rights and values.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Saudi Arabia is one of our closest trade partners and plays an important role in keeping Britain safe.

As a valued partner, we have to work closely together to tackle the crisis in Yemen, terrorism and climate change as well as pursuing reform and engaging on human rights issues.

The visit is also an opportunity to cooperate on an ambitious climate agenda ahead of climate summit COP 26 and during Saudi's Presidency of the G20 this year. It comes as the UK steps up its efforts to tackle combat climate change, diversify our economy and protect the planet.

During his two-day trip to the country, the Foreign Secretary will also be shown around Diriyah, the historic capital of the first Saudi state which has been transformed into a UNESCO World Heritage site as part of a restoration project involving British companies and expertise.

Earlier this week, the Foreign Secretary [was in Oman](#), where he held bilateral talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Omani Foreign Minister His Excellency

Yusuf bin Alawi.

He then [travelled to Turkey](#), where he held talks with his counterpart Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and reiterated the UK's staunch support for Turkey's efforts to negotiate an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Syria.

Further information

[False fears preventing smokers from using e-cigarettes to quit](#)

Public Health England's (PHE) sixth independent e-cigarette report, commissioned from researchers at King's College London, is published today (Wednesday 4 March 2020) alongside new PHE advice on vaping in NHS mental health trusts.

The report provides an update on the use of nicotine vaping products among young people and adults, and public perceptions of the harmfulness of vaping. It also takes an in depth look at the evidence on e-cigarette use in people with mental health conditions and pregnant women.

Current vaping use has remained stable in adults and young people since the last report. Of concern is the increasing number of smokers that now believe vaping is more harmful than smoking. This is out of line with expert reviews from the UK and US concluding that using regulated nicotine vaping products is far less harmful than smoking.

PHE's advice remains that smokers should switch to e-cigarettes to help them quit smoking, but non-smokers should not take up vaping.

E-cigarettes are much less harmful than tobacco but are not completely safe. They contain significantly less harmful chemicals which cause diseases related to smoking but the long-term impact of using e-cigarettes will remain unknown for some time.

The mistaken belief that e-cigarettes are more harmful than smoking increased rapidly among UK smokers following the US lung injury outbreak in autumn 2019. US authorities have now confirmed that vitamin E acetate, a thickening agent added to cannabis vaping products, was a primary cause of the US outbreak. This substance is banned from UK-regulated nicotine vaping products.

The report identifies a need for continued monitoring of public perceptions, as the researchers fear that smokers are being deterred by safety fears from using e-cigarettes to quit, which will ultimately cost lives. The report also

warns that a ban on flavoured liquids could also deter some smokers from switching to e-cigarettes completely.

Smokers should continue to be encouraged to try regulated nicotine vaping products along with other stop smoking aids and behavioural support, to increase their chances of successfully stopping smoking.

The report also reviews the evidence on vaping among people with mental health conditions and pregnant women, two of the groups among whom the government is focusing its efforts to reduce smoking rates, as set out in the [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#).

The researchers reviewed the literature on vaping among people with mental health conditions and found a small amount of research showing vaping products may reduce smoking, though further research is needed.

They also found health professionals need better information and training to support people with mental health conditions to use e-cigarettes to quit smoking. PHE has today published [advice on vaping in NHS mental health trusts](#). To promote consistency in smokefree policy and practice across such trusts, the advice recommends being clear about where people can and cannot vape in hospital grounds and buildings.

The researchers also reviewed the available literature on vaping among pregnant women and found that more research is needed to understand the prevalence, safety and effectiveness of using e-cigarettes in pregnancy. In the meantime, health professionals should use the [currently available advice on using e-cigarettes during pregnancy](#).

The report recommends that:

- proof of age at sale of vaping products needs to be better enforced to protect young people
- health professionals should use advice on using e-cigarettes during pregnancy
- more research is needed into vaping among smokers with mental health conditions and pregnant smokers
- more research is needed into e-cigarette flavour preferences among young people

Professor John Newton, Director of Health Improvement at Public Health England, commented on the review:

It is concerning to see how much the US lung disease outbreak has affected smokers' views on e-cigarettes here in the UK. Safety fears may well be deterring many smokers from switching, leaving them on a path to years of ill health and an early death due to their smoking. The US authorities have now confirmed that vitamin E acetate, a thickening agent added to cannabis vaping liquid, was a primary cause of the US outbreak. This substance is banned in UK-regulated nicotine vaping products.

E-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking, which causes 220 premature deaths a day in England. Our advice remains that for anyone who smokes tobacco, the most important thing is to stop smoking altogether and e-cigarettes can be an effective way to help smokers do that.

Our new advice on vaping in mental health trusts is an important step forward in empowering healthcare professionals to talk more confidently with their patients about the benefits of using e-cigarettes to stop smoking. This advice is another step towards the overall goal of a smokefree generation.

Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Chris Whitty said:

The best thing a smoker can do for their health is stop smoking completely. Electronic cigarettes can help some people quit smoking and are a safer alternative.

This report is a further welcome contribution to building the evidence around an important area of public policy and highlights the challenge of maximising the opportunities e-cigarettes present while managing the risks associated with nicotine.

Professor Ann McNeill, Professor of Tobacco Addiction at King's College London, and lead author of the report said:

It is currently very hard for smokers to make sense of the many contradictory reports on the impacts of vaping and smoking. In our review we present evidence that suggests in England, vaping has not undermined declines in adult smoking, and for youth, vaping is mainly concentrated in those who were already dabbling in cigarette smoking. However, we need to remain vigilant and ensure that vaping products, alongside regular cigarettes, are not easily accessible to young people.

PHE has commissioned a full review of the evidence on the safety of e-cigarettes, which will be published in 2022. King's College London will work with a number of different researchers from the UK and US (including some who contributed to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's e-cigarette report in 2018) to conduct this review.

Background

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) said:

There are over 6 million smokers in England and smoking is still the leading cause of premature death and disease particularly among the most disadvantaged in our society. Helping more smokers quit is vital if we're to achieve the government's vision of a smokefree society by 2030, and vaping has a role to play. Vaping has helped many thousands of smokers quit to date. But many thousands more could benefit if they were not put off by the persistent, worsening and inaccurate beliefs the public hold about vaping. Smokers should be reassured by today's authoritative and detailed report which shows that the UK's e-cigarette regulations are effective and vaping remains a safer alternative to smoking. I urge smokers to have confidence in our regulatory system and not be put off by alarmist headlines about the risk of vaping which are not backed up by the evidence.

George Butterworth, Cancer Research UK's Senior Policy Manager, said:

E-cigarettes are a relatively new product, they aren't risk free and we don't yet know their long-term impact. So we strongly discourage non-smokers from using them. But research so far shows that vaping is less harmful than smoking tobacco and can help people to stop smoking. This report gives further reassurance to smokers about the relative harms of e-cigarettes compared to smoking tobacco, and also shows the UK is not seeing a rapid uptake in vaping among non-smokers and children, which is good news.

1. [Link to full report](#)
 2. [Smoking Toolkit Study](#)
 3. [Towards a Smokefree Generation: A Tobacco Control Plan for England](#) Department of Health, July 2017
 4. NHS Digital, [Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England 2018](#)
 5. NHS Digital, [Statistics on Smoking: England, 2019](#)
 6. US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (January 2018) [Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes](#)
 7. Royal College of Physicians, [Nicotine without smoke: tobacco harm reduction](#) (April 2016)
 8. A. McNeill et al, [E-cigarettes: an evidence update. A report commissioned by Public Health England](#) (August 2015)
 9. [Progress towards smokefree mental health services](#), ASH 2019
 10. [NHS Long Term Plan](#)
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PM call with Turkish President: 3 March 2020

The Prime Minister spoke to President Erdogan of Turkey today.

He expressed his condolences for the loss of Turkish life in Syria last week and underlined the UK's continued support for Turkey. He noted that the Foreign Secretary has travelled to Ankara today to discuss the situation in more detail.

President Erdogan thanked the Prime Minister for the support the UK has shown Turkey at NATO and at the UN Security Council.

The leaders discussed the situation in Syria and the Prime Minister acknowledged the heavy burden that Turkey continues to shoulder in supporting Syrian refugees. He highlighted the UK's announcement today of additional humanitarian aid for those affected by the ongoing conflict in Idlib.

They agreed on the importance of the bilateral relationship between our countries and resolved to stay in touch.

Minister Wendy Morton in Argentina

[Wendy Morton MP](#), Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas, travelled to Buenos Aires on Monday 2 March for discussions with key members of the new Argentine Government, who came to power in December 2019.

Minister Morton arrived to Argentina after visiting Uruguay, where she the Presidential inauguration of Luis Lacalle Pou on Sunday 1st March.

Ahead of the visit, Minister Morton said:

This trip emphasises the UK's commitment to working with Governments across Latin America, broadening our relations across trade, climate change and global security.

While in Argentina, the Minister held a series of meetings with the Government of Alberto Fernández. She met new Deputy Foreign Minister Pablo Tettamanti to discuss the strengthening of UK-Argentina ties and working together on climate change and human rights, while she discussed boosting trade with Production Minister Matías Kulfas.

After her meeting at the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister

Morton said:

An important meeting today with Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister Pablo Tettamanti. We are both determined to work together on the issues that affect us both. Our co-chairing of the Equal Rights Coalition is a testament to our strong and growing relations.

In 2019, the United Kingdom had taken on the role of co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC), in partnership with Argentina. The Equal Rights Coalition is the first intergovernmental network formed to promote and protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people around the world.

In the meeting with minister Kulfas they spoke about opportunities to boost investment, especially on technology and startups, and about how to support low carbon growth, in line with COP26 goals.

The minister also hosted a dinner with business and civil society representatives, and held a meeting with Sergio Chodos, Argentine representative to the IMF, and Maia Colodenco, Director of International Relations at the Ministry of Economy.

“There is space for hope and for a brighter future for the Iraqi people”

Thank you very much, Mr President, and let me join others in welcoming you to the Presidency and saying that the United Kingdom looks forward to working with you and your delegation. And our thanks to the Belgian representative for an excellent stewardship of the month of February and the Council’s business.

Let me start by thanking the Special Representative for her briefing, but also for her continued efforts and those of your mission to support and advise the Iraqi government. Your work is important and, as we’ve all heard, it’s a difficult time. So you have our staunch support.

While Iraq has made notable progress in recent years, as many speakers, including the Special Representative, have said, the past few months have been challenging. And with the latest setback about the resignation of the Prime Minister, I agree with Dominican Republic: we need to appeal to Iraq’s leaders at this time to put the Iraqi people and the sound governance of the country first. The delays in forming a new government, commanding the confidence of the Iraqi parliament and people is regrettable. The United Kingdom calls on all Iraqi leaders to put the national interests first and to

work together constructively to support a new Prime Minister. Iraq urgently needs an inclusive and representative Government committed and able to deliver on the demands of the Iraqi people.

This aim is all the more important, given the clear dissatisfaction with the status quo shown by the large scale demonstrations in Iraq since October last year. Thousands of Iraqi citizens have protested to voice legitimate demands for political, economic and social reforms. But hundreds have been killed and thousands injured. The Iraqi people have the right to protest peacefully, and we are deeply concerned by the disproportionate use of force by security forces, including the use of live fire and human rights abuses, including attacks on journalists. The UK urges the Iraqi authorities to follow through on their commitments to conduct credible investigations into the violence and hold those responsible to account. And we also unequivocally condemn attacks on diplomatic premises. It is vital that protests remain peaceful.

I would like to say to the Iraqi ambassador, the United Kingdom stands ready to support you in Iraq in delivering crucial reforms which address popular concerns. We welcome the progress made on electoral reforms and we urge the Government of Iraq to continue engagement with UNAMI and the international community to ensure that the new electoral reform law delivers on protesters' demands, including for credible, free and inclusive elections.

As the report from the Secretary-General highlights and as the Special Representative outlined, Daesh remain a persistent threat to Iraq's security as well as to the region and the wider world. We therefore hope that Iraq and the international community can continue to work closely together to address this common threat. The Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh continues its support to and close partnership with the Iraqi security forces in full respect for Iraqi sovereignty. And I am proud that British troops in Iraq have trained over 100,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Militia groups continue to threaten Iraq's stability and risk escalating regional tensions. We condemn the storming of the US Embassy in Baghdad on 31 December and continued attacks by militia groups on military bases and diplomatic premises. The Government of Iraq has a duty to ensure the safety of all diplomatic premises in Iraq. But we urge all parties – and I want to stress that includes Iraq's neighbours – we urge all parties to show restraint and to avoid dragging Iraq into a conflict, which is not what the Iraqi people need.

We are deeply concerned that 1.4 million Iraqis remain displaced and over 4 million Iraqis will need some sort of support and assistance this year. Reports of forced and undignified returns of displaced persons are troubling. And I take this opportunity to recall that under international conventions, all returns must be safe, dignified and voluntary.

Mr President, the United Kingdom is ready to support Iraq, deliver durable solutions, including on reconciliation, reconstruction and provision of services. It's particularly important that political instability and protests don't distract from or prevent action being taken to address the grievances which drove the rise of Daesh.

We all know, Mr President, having heard the briefings today, recent months have been difficult for the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people. There's been progress on key issues, including regional outreach discussions between Baghdad and Erbil and reconstruction through the funding facility for stabilisation. As the SRSG said, there are grounds for hope and we should not overlook this progress. But I want to echo what was said by the German Representative in particular about corruption and the importance of tackling this.

My last point, Mr President, relates also to the Iraq-Kuwait file. I pay tribute to the work of the Kuwaiti Representative who is in the Chamber. As the American and German Representative's said, the recent developments on this file are very welcome. The United Kingdom remains committed to helping strengthen relations between Iraq and Kuwait through the work of the Tripartite Commission, which we support.

We stand ready, Mr President, to continue to support the next Government of Iraq as it continues to deliver on the legitimate demands of protesters and to implement crucial reforms. We urge maximum restraint and peaceful dialogue from all sides. There is space for hope and for a brighter future for the Iraqi people.

Thank you very much, Mr President.