

Ghana Mission visit Tokyo for Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop on 28-31 January 2020

During the workshop, arranged by the British Embassy, the six members of the Ghana delegation were able to exchange expert level analysis with a number of Japanese Ministries, Agencies and Civil Society organisations (i) on the current state and challenges of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Ghana and Japan.

Led by Hon. Eric Nana Agyemang-Prempeh, Director-General of the Ghana National Disaster Management Organisation, the delegation was made up of officials from the Ghana Ministry of National Security, the Kofi Annan International Peace Training Centre, and the Ghana Armed Forces (ii).

In addition to exchanging best practice, the workshop explored possibilities for developing future cooperation in support of efforts to build disaster resilient societies in Africa. This was a key pledge by Japan during the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) 7 in August 2019. It also complements UK and Japanese efforts to partner African countries to meet the challenges they face.

Hon. Eric Nana Agyemang-Prempeh observed that while Ghana had DRR policies and legislation in place, the challenge was implementation. He looked forward to further partnership with Japan to build capacity in Ghana to prepare for and respond to disasters. Japanese interlocutors meanwhile expressed their wish to strengthen Japan-Ghana cooperation on DRR. The Ghana delegation was grateful to Japanese counterparts for sharing their experience and expertise.

The delegation held detailed sessions with the Office of Disaster Management in the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Fire and Disaster Management Agency, the Ministry of Defense, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, and the Japan Voluntary Organisations Active in Disaster.

The Ghana Delegation Members were Hon. Eric Nana Agyemang-Prempeh, Director-General, NADMO; Mr Richard Odei Appiah, Ministry of National Security; LtCol Frank Cofie Adzasu, LtCol Emmanuel Kojo Appiah and Maj Blessed-Mary Quashigah of Ghana Armed Forces and LtCol Reuben Dela Klutse of KAIPTC.

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Plans for major expansion of dormant assets scheme to benefit good causes

- New plans to expand dormant assets scheme could free up hundreds of millions of pounds
- The money will be redistributed to benefit communities across the UK
- To date over £600 million from dormant bank and building society accounts has gone to good causes

The Government has today signalled its intention to expand the scheme from dormant bank and building society accounts to also cover insurance, investment and wealth management, and securities products.

Since its launch in 2011, 30 firms – including all major high street banks – have voluntarily transferred dormant funds into the scheme. So far over £600 million has been redistributed to good causes helping young people on the path to employment, encouraging investment in products that benefit social causes and tackling financial exclusion.

Consumer protection will remain at the heart of any expanded scheme, with the priority continuing to be reuniting customers with their money. Only where this is not possible, following rigorous, unsuccessful efforts to locate the asset owner, will funds be released to support good causes.

If at a later date a consumer discovers that they had a dormant account and their funds have been transferred into the scheme, they will also always be able to reclaim the full amount transferred.

Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran said:

The dormant assets scheme is making a real difference to people across the nation. This includes helping to tackle youth unemployment, addressing financial exclusion and growing the social investment market.

That's why we are now seeking views on expanding the scheme to include even more unclaimed assets, in a way that continues to protect customers whilst potentially unlocking millions more pounds for good causes.

Over £400 million has been used to establish Big Society Capital, an independent financial institution, launched in 2012, with the aim of growing the social investment market in the UK.

To date, [Big Society Capital](#) investment has supported more than 2,000 vulnerable people to move into appropriate housing, 26,000 disadvantaged young people to benefit from job and training opportunities and 250,000 people to live in a home with access to community energy. For example, in 2018 £30 million was invested in the Bridges Evergreen Vehicle to create The Ethical Housing Company, which buys and rents out affordable properties for people with housing needs in Teesside.

In March 2019, [Fair4All Finance](#) was established with an allocation of £55 million from the dormant assets scheme to support the financial wellbeing of vulnerable people. It works to increase access to fair, affordable and appropriate financial products and services, working with partners across the private and social sectors. Their programme aims to improve the access and availability of affordable credit helping smaller lenders to scale up.

At the same time, the [Youth Futures Foundation](#) was allocated £90 million to help unemployed, disadvantaged young people across the country into jobs. They will do this by providing funding and advice to youth employment organisations and will work with employers and businesses to create jobs with tailored support.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen, said:

Through this scheme we have channelled hundreds of millions of pounds into causes to help those most in need.

Today's announcement builds on vital work by industry to broaden the scheme. By expanding it beyond bank accounts to include assets like insurance products, we will be able to unlock even more funds for worthy causes up and down the country.

The [public consultation](#) follows an [industry-led](#) report by four business leaders which made a series of recommendations on how to broaden the current scheme beyond bank and building society accounts.

Given the significant changes to the pensions landscape in recent years and the Government's commitment to pensions dashboards, it is minded to exclude pensions from an expanded dormant assets scheme at this stage. However, it encourages views on this as part of the consultation process.

Notes to editors

The government is consulting on expanding the scheme to the following sectors:

Assets proposed to be within the scope of the expansion include:

- Dormant insurance policy proceeds
- Dormant share proceeds
- Dormant unit proceeds
- Dormant distributions and proceeds from investment assets
- Other dormant security distributions

Customers will always be able to reclaim the same amount they would have had if their assets were never transferred, as they do in the current scheme, and companies would continue to participate on a voluntary basis.

There are over 30 participating firms including HSBC Bank plc, Lloyds Banking Group, Nationwide Building Society, Royal Bank of Scotland, The Co-operative Bank plc. A full list can be found [here](#).

The definition of a dormant bank or building society account is in the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act 2008: an account is 'dormant' at a particular time if the account has been open throughout the period of 15 years ending at that time, but during that period no transactions have been carried out in relation to the account by or on the instructions of the holder of the account.

The firm also agrees with Reclaim Fund Ltd, which administers the scheme, to undertake tracing exercises before transferring dormant accounts.

The full report The Dormant Assets Scheme: A Blueprint for Expansion can be found [here](#). It builds on a report from the Commission on Dormant Assets, which was published in March 2017.

Under the scheme, funds are held by Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL). RFL is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, and holds sufficient money to cover any reclaims while distributing the surplus to The National Lottery Community Fund for social or environmental initiatives across the UK.

Early years apps approved to help families kick start learning at home

Parents are set to benefit from new technology to support their children learning at home, with 6 new apps available to improve reading, writing and speaking.

Following a competition to find the best educational apps for parents to engage young children in learning at home, a panel of experts has approved 6 with a focus on early literacy, language and communication.

These apps cover activities ranging from interactive story books, handwriting exercises using Artificial Intelligence, and educational video games.

The technology announcement comes as new data reveals three quarters of children aged five and under have used smartphone or tablet apps at least once in the last six months to learn.

The 6 apps – published on the [Hungry Little Minds website](#) – are part of the government's drive to help parents make informed decisions about the use of technology in creating positive learning environments at home.

The expert panel who accredited the apps, chaired by Professor Jackie Marsh of the University of Sheffield and appointed by the Department for Education, included children's digital media consultants, early learning charities and researchers at universities.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The first few years of a child's life are crucial in equipping them with the skills needed for the classroom, and we are working with families to make it easier to weave early learning into daily activities.

We know that the majority of families are using technology in fun and visual ways to support their child's early education, but it can be difficult for busy parents to work out what content is best.

This list of expert-approved apps helps them make confident decisions that benefit their child's language and literacy skills.

The approved apps all meet agreed criteria, including elements of play, interaction and ranging levels of difficulty. The list of accredited apps builds on the Hungry Little Minds campaign, by helping parents across England choose from hundreds of apps already available on the market.

The 6 apps published on the Hungry Little Minds website include:

- Lingumi (For children aged 2-5): Sets of learning games, speech recognition games and video-based games to help with a child's grammar and getting them speaking their first words early on.
- Kaligo (For children aged 3-5): The first digital handwriting exercise book using a stylus and tablet, built using AI and co-created with teachers, occupational therapists and neuroscientists.
- Phonics Hero (For school-aged children): Over 850 fun, varied and motivating games take a child step-by-step through the 44 sounds, the reading and spelling of words, and how to conquer sentences.
- Teach Your Monster to Read (For school-aged children): Covers the first two years of learning to read, from matching letters and sounds to enjoying little books, designed in collaboration with leading academics.
- Navigo Game (For school-aged children): Focuses on developing skills that underpin reading, including phonics, letters and sounds, designed by UCL Institute of Education and Fish in a Bottle.
- Fonetti (For school-aged children): The world's first 'Listening Bookshop' interacting with children by giving visual cues in real-time as they read aloud and highlighting where the most support is needed.

Chair of the expert panel Professor Jackie Marsh, Professor of Education at University of Sheffield, said:

The panel is delighted with the approved apps, as they all offer valuable opportunities to support children's early literacy development. Apps that are of most educational value to children contain a number of features, such as a design which makes the app easy to use and also offers guidance and support for parents, enabling the content to be adjusted for individual children. Apps should also be engaging and fun to use, with clear learning goals and the use of feedback that can be reassuring and motivating for children. All of the approved apps contain these features, and we are confident that they can have a positive impact on children's early literacy learning.

Jonathan Douglas, Director at the National Literacy Trust, said:

Early language skills are the foundation of all literacy and

learning and parents have a uniquely powerful role in developing these skills in their children through talking and reading together. Technology is now such a powerful component of the home that it's important to recognise the powerful resource it can be in enriching these interactions. We believe that the apps which we have chosen will help parents feed their children's hungry little minds with great stories, exciting and fun experience of language and offer the support for the early reading experiences which provide the foundation for a lifetime of learning.

In new research published today by the Department for Education, early education at age two for disadvantaged children is found to have a positive impact on their speaking ability, with learning at home contributing to this.

Over half of parents surveyed (52%) say they played pretend games together or took turns playing fun activities with their child every day.

The data highlights the important work by the government to tackle the barriers some parents face in supporting their child's learning at home, including time, confidence and ideas of things to do.

The Hungry Little Minds campaign gives parents access to video tips, advice and suggested games to help with early learning for their children from age 0 to five.

This also includes work with businesses and organisations offering a range of initiatives to drive vital early skills, part of a national, society-wide effort.

The campaign is one part of the government's work to give every child the best start in life, adding to a record investment in childcare and early years education – reaching £3.6 billion in 2020-21 – and giving parents the flexibility they need to be able to balance their work and family lives.

[Peacekeeping transitions in Haiti](#)

Thank you very much, Mr President, and thank you very much to both of our briefers this afternoon.

The UK welcomes the Secretary-General's first report on BINUH's activities. The United Kingdom is encouraged that BINUH is making a good start, in spite of the complex and challenging operating environments that the SRSG and many other council members this afternoon have described.

Firstly, with regard to the transition from MINUJUSTH to BINUH, we welcome the pace at which BINUH has staffed up and the steps taken towards greater UN

integration. We are looking forward to the finalisation of the integrated strategic framework, which is an opportunity to translate the global UN reforms into a more strategic approach on the ground in Haiti – one more able to support Haiti to address the root causes of instability.

With respect to the benchmarks and targets, we welcome the UN's efforts to establish baselines and to incorporate the benchmarks and targets into the integrated strategic framework. Clear delineation of responsibilities will be critical.

Mr President, turning to the substance of the SG's reports, the ongoing political impasse in Haiti remains a source of enormous frustration for this council and, above all, for the Haitian people. It is vital that all parties now re-engage in direct talks to find a solution to the political deadlock. The issues of constitutional reform and credible, transparent elections should be a fundamental element of these talks.

With other state institutions paralyzed, maintaining the functionality of the Haitian National Police is absolutely critical. We welcome the progress made in this area by previous UN missions. But as other speakers have noted, significant challenges remain. In particular, sustainable solutions are needed to resourcing the Haitian National Police, and we encourage the Haitian leadership to address this challenge as a priority.

On the humanitarian front, the United Kingdom is relieved that there have been no new cases of cholera reported since February 2019. However, we remain deeply concerned by the broader humanitarian situation and especially the acute vulnerability of women and children.

Mr President, the UK welcomes the validation of the National Action Plan for Human Rights. However, we also remain deeply concerned about the overall human rights and rule of law situation in Haiti, in particular with regard to prison conditions, pre-trial detention, court functionality and the scant progress in pursuing accountability for recent violations. We also share South Africa's concern regarding incitement to violence on Haitian media. Such incitement risks undermining prospects for progress on the political front and puts Haitian lives at risk.

Mr President, in conclusion, this new UN configuration provides, as we see it, the opportunity for a fundamentally new era of UN cooperation with Haiti – one geared at sustaining peace and advancing developments. We urge all parties to do everything possible to ensure that this opportunity is not lost.

Thank you.

Standing behind Ukraine and supporting Ukrainian sovereignty

The United Kingdom welcomes this discussion on the situation in Ukraine. I would like to start by reiterating the United Kingdom's unwavering support to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, including within its internationally recognised borders and territorial waters.

Madam President, today we remember those who tragically died during Ukraine's 2014 Euromaidan protests. The United Kingdom assures the families who lost loved ones that their sacrifice is not forgotten.

Today also marks six years since Russia seized the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol from Ukraine. On 16 March 2014, Russian 'de-facto' authorities in Crimea organised a so-called 'referendum'. On 18 March, President Putin signed a treaty which formalised Russia's illegal acquisition of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Let us be clear: by forcibly seizing 10,000 square miles from Ukraine, Russia broke the first principle of international law, that countries may not acquire territory or change borders by force. Russia's actions flagrantly violated its own international commitments including in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Budapest memorandum.

Through Resolution 68/262, the UN General Assembly responded to Russia's actions by affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and the illegality of Crimea's change of status.

Madam President, the UK's position is clear: we do not and will not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. Crimea is part of Ukraine and we cannot ignore Russia's attempt to redraw boundaries in Europe.

The Russian Government continues to commit serious human rights violations beyond its borders, on the Crimean peninsula. The widespread persecution of ethnic and religious groups, including Crimean Tatars, must stop.

The release of Oleh Sentsov and other political prisoners, while welcome, was long overdue. It is appalling that approximately 89 Ukrainian political prisoners remain in detention in Crimea. Some are denied urgent medical assistance: Arsen Dzhapparov for his hearing, Viktor Shur (SHOOR) for his heart. The UK calls on Russia to immediately release all Ukrainian political prisoners.

It is deplorable that Russia continues to ignore General Assembly resolutions calling for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Crimea, to provide a full, independent assessment of the human rights situation. We call on Russia to grant access, in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 73/263.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about Russia's ongoing militarisation of Crimea and the Sea of Azov. In line with the General Assembly's resolution 74/17 on the militarisation of Crimea, the UK calls on Russia to withdraw its military forces from the peninsula and to stop restricting access to the Sea of Azov.

Russia's actions in November 2018 violated the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and had no basis in international law. It is inexcusable that Russia persists with daily restrictions on Ukrainian vessels passing through the Kerch Strait. This is clearly a brazen attempt to de-stabilise Ukraine's economy.

The international community must continue to stand united and focus on Russia's behaviour and consolidation of its illegal annexation of Crimea through the railway bridge across the Kerch Strait and local elections on the Crimean peninsula.

Madam President, the Russian-led conflict in eastern Ukraine remains volatile. Russia has incited and supported military activity by armed formations, including through the deployment of Russian troops and military equipment on Ukrainian territory. As recently as this week, there has been a sharp increase in ceasefire violations near to the Zolote disengagement area, with heavy weaponry proscribed under the Minsk Agreements, which has caused further casualties. The Ukrainian people deserve peace and we will continue to hold Russia to account to this end.

The United Kingdom condemns continuing threats to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission; Russia's repeated refusal to allow the SMM to implement its mandate within non-government controlled territories threatens the security of Ukraine and the wider region. We call on Russia to ensure safe, unconditional and unimpeded access in areas outside Ukraine's effective control.

The continued fighting is having a tragic impact on the lives of ordinary men, women and children. Over 13,000 people have now lost their lives, almost 30,000 have been injured, 3.4 million are in need of humanitarian assistance and approximately 1.4 million are registered as internally displaced people. Russia bears a heavy responsibility for the ongoing suffering.

Let us be clear: this conflict is not frozen. Russia created this conflict and Russia continues to use its influence over the separatists to service its agenda: attempting to suppress Ukraine's independence. In contrast, President Zelensky has shown a clear commitment to end the conflict.

The United Kingdom calls on Russia to abide by its Minsk Agreement commitments and to deliver on the actions agreed at the Normandy Format Summit in Paris on 9 December: a full and comprehensive ceasefire; further disengagement; further prisoner exchanges; and full and unimpeded access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and humanitarian organisations to the Non-Government Controlled Areas. This is the only way to end the fear and suffering of ordinary people in Ukraine.

Madam President, the United Kingdom once again calls on the international

community to stand behind Ukraine, united, and oppose Russia's continued attempts to destabilise Ukraine, undermine her sovereignty and steal her territory.

Thank you.