

Renewing UNRWA and securing stability for Israelis and Palestinians

Thank you Madam President.

Thank you Special Coordinator Mladenov for your briefing, and for the work you and your team do in difficult circumstances.

Thank you also to Ms Raemer for your briefing and the perspective you shared.

Madam President, three years since the adoption of resolution 2334 by this Council, the United Kingdom notes with concern the Secretary-General's assessment that the situation on the ground since then has only deteriorated.

In light of the continued increase in Israeli settlements, we reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

The United Kingdom notes the Israeli Defence Minister's instructions to act for the advancement of a new Jewish neighbourhood in Hebron. We understand that this does not signal the start of a formal planning process; however, if such plans were to advance this would be of grave concern given the sensitivities of the location.

Demolitions of Palestinian-owned homes and structures have also increased. The UK is concerned in particular by the targeting of donor-funded structures in Area C – which are provided on humanitarian grounds to support vulnerable communities.

As we have made clear before, any suggestion that parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories should be annexed is contrary to international law, damaging to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged.

Madam President, as the UK made clear last month, following the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, the indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians by Palestinian Islamic Jihad were completely unacceptable.

All countries, including Israel, have a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and are calibrated to avoid civilian casualties.

It is critical that the Palestinian leadership continue their efforts to tackle terror and incitement. Israeli security forces must also avoid the use of excessive force and we encourage Israel to properly investigate all potential breaches of law, holding those responsible to account.

The UK is concerned to hear of a further increase in the number of attacks by settlers on Palestinians. As the Occupying Power, Israel has a responsibility to protect the Palestinian population. We urge Israel to thoroughly

investigate every instance and bring those responsible to justice.

Turning to positive steps, the United Kingdom welcomes the progress made on implementation of the AHLC-endorsed package of interventions for Gaza, but we remain concerned by the dire humanitarian situation. We call again on Israel to ease restrictions on water, electricity, and movement and access, which impact the livelihoods and life prospects of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza and breed resentment.

We welcome the renewal of UNRWA's mandate, and encourage partners to step up with more funding and more predictable disbursements as the UK has done.

And we welcome continued work towards genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians, which is crucial to the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State.

Finally, Madam President, at this highly sensitive time in the region, we call on the parties to show real leadership, including the willingness to make tough compromises, in order to achieve a secure Israel, standing alongside a sovereign Palestinian state.

Thank you.

[Holding onto peace in South Sudan](#)

Thank you very much, Madam President. And let me, like others, thank Special Representative Shearer for his briefing and not only that, but for his work and that of all his team out on the ground of South Sudan. We really enjoyed coming to see you, David. We were impressed by what you and your team were doing and we really want to thank you. And I'd also like to very much thank Ambassador Wronecka for her tireless efforts as the chair of the 2206 Sanctions Committee.

Madam President, this is our first Council meeting since the 100-day extension, but it's not the first time that the parties have failed to deliver progress. We are over one third of the way through the 100-day extension. And I believe that this council must repeat and reinforce the clear and united message that we delivered collectively in Juba: that all parties must seize this opportunity and agree the steps that are necessary to form an inclusive government. And those steps include, of course, efforts to make progress on containment. And we heard from you today, SRSO Shearer, about the importance of resources being delivered into those containment sites, of food being delivered, of training being conducted and a genuine reintegration taking place to ensure security for all in South Sudan. I also very much want to pay tribute to those efforts of the Vice President of South Africa, David Mabuza, on the thorny question of states in South Sudan. It's a crucial issue, one that we perhaps have to recognize that there may not be

fully resolvable before the hundred days are over. But we do need commitment by the parties to continue to engage in that process and I very much welcome that, those efforts by the South African Vice President.

Of course, Madam President, we welcome the recent meetings and positive statements that have taken place between President Kiir and Dr Machar. But I have to say that so far we haven't seen those shift the dial and I want to stress today the importance of actions and results, as well as statements and promises. And I echo the need expressed by others to resolve the status of Dr Riek Machar. I just do not understand how he does not hold a South Sudanese passport while he's busy negotiating to be part of the South Sudanese government. And I hope that this can be sorted out quickly as a gesture of good faith and that his status can be resolved by the region.

Madam President, to achieve these ends, we strongly welcome the region's engagement and leadership. History has shown that without external pressure, the parties fail to act and we therefore urge our partners in the region, particularly IGAD, to redouble efforts to ensure progress. We believe that the IGAD 50-day report will be an important moment. The Security Council must work hand-in-hand with IGAD, that is key, and I think we should consider in our consultations how we could deepen that cooperation. Madam President, we also need to look beyond the 100-day extension and issues around South Sudan's future. It is deeply concerning that subnational communal violence remains at worrying levels across the country. And the persistence of conflict related sexual violence, as evidenced in the Secretary General's report, is extremely worrying. All parties to the conflict must take immediate action to stop conflict related sexual violence. We welcome UNMISS' focus on this important issue and its support for efforts to end impunity for such crimes. And I want to strongly support my Belgian colleagues intervention on this point and echo concerns over the re-appointment of the Gany County Commissioner. Humanitarian partners continue to face high levels of bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian access and serious insecurity and the urgency, as others have said, has only been further deteriorated by the recent flooding; the worst in 30 years with almost 1 million people affected. The UK's contribution has been of 210 million dollars in 2018 and we continue to do all that we can to improve the situation.

Madam President, in closing, let me stress that the ongoing ceasefire must continue to hold and the two leaders must commit – must unequivocally commit to that ceasefire and to peace. This council must stand ready to support the parties in coordination with IGAD and the African Union to support the parties forward on the pathway to peace, to make necessary compromises. That cannot happen unless the best interests of the people of South Sudan are prioritised over the self-interest of the elite.

Madam President, there must be consequences for those who do not live up to their responsibilities to bring about a lasting peace in South Sudan. Thank you.

[PM call with Prime Minister Modi: 18 December 2019](#)



The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Modi of India, who congratulated him on the result of the General Election.

The two leaders resolved to continue working closely together on issues such as trade, security and defence, and to step up our cooperation on climate change ahead of next year's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

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[DVLA's school hosting days make learning fun](#)

We know that Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) will be as important to future generations as IT literacy is to today's workforce. To help with this, we've recently launched our new Discover, Reach, Interesting Interaction, Visualise and Engage (DRIIVE) programme.

Through DRIIVE, we use our IT expertise to teach children how to use coding in a practical way through problem-solving, teamwork and creative sessions.



Sharing skills, opening doors

Our school hosting days are one part of DRIIVE.

During the sessions, children have a chance to learn how to code automated vehicles, create [chatbots](#) and program digital ID badges. They also find out how teams at DVLA work together on exciting projects such as creating digital services that millions of people use.

By taking part, children develop practical skills, and it also helps schools to take these lessons back to the classroom.



Our aim is to introduce IT skills by making them fun and easily accessible for all. Ideally, we hope this will pique their curiosity in the STEM subjects and not only influence their educational choices for the future, but teach them the importance of mastering STEM.

Our hosting days are aimed at encouraging and hopefully inspiring our next generation of STEM experts. The development of these skills is critical and who knows, in the future some of these children may choose a career at DVLA!

An amazing day

Our first school hosting day was with our local year 6 pupils from nearby [Clase Primary School](#).

Through different activities and interactive sessions, the children learned about emerging technologies, such as virtual reality and facial recognition. We also taught them about [scratch coding \(coding for beginners\)](#) and how to use [Micro:bit](#) and OhBot (computer programming tools). For the finale, they all had a go at navigating a Sphero (a small round robot) around a pre-built track.

[embedded content]

Great feedback

The pupils were amazing and all keen to learn and brimming with questions, which was fantastic. Every child left with a certificate and more information to take home with them to show how they can continue their learning about

STEM.

It was a brilliant opportunity for us to share our knowledge and we were able to donate decommissioned laptops to the school. This will help to continue STEM in the classroom.

Ffion Morgan and Suzanne Ward, both teachers at Clase Primary School, had this to say:

An amazing day from start to finish – 10 out of 10!

This has given us loads of inspiration to take back into the classroom.

Just the beginning

This is just the start. Our aim is to invite or visit 6 schools each year for a day of fun and learning about STEM and to keep working closely developing key skills in the local community.

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Hampshire landowner fined for running a scrap metal operation on a protected Site of Special Scientific Interest

A Hampshire landowner who ran an illegal scrap metal dealership on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), protected for its value to wildlife, was fined £3,600 today (18 December) at Basingstoke Magistrates' Court after pleading guilty to conducting unauthorised operations likely to damage the site.

As well as receiving the fine, Christopher Ball, trading as C Ball and Sons, was also ordered to pay £30,000 in costs.

Mr Ball, who bought a meadow on the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI in 2014, was prosecuted by Natural England after failing to notify them of his plans to undertake activity that is restricted on the sensitive wildlife-rich site. Site inspections revealed that vehicles, vehicle parts and tyres, construction waste, pallets, felled branches and a bonfire site were all on the site and vehicle fluids were leaking into the soil. Natural England has since taken action to clear the site.

The SSSI, which is located between Basingstoke and Aldershot, comprises nearly 130 hectares of wood pasture, rare grassland habitats, meadows and common land at the junction of the London Clay, Plateau Gravel and Lower Bagshot Beds on the edge of the Thames Basin. The Common was formerly used by Edward the Confessor as a hunting ground before being developed into the land which is seen today, predominantly oak trees, but with isolated patches of meadow.

The site is home to 39 ancient woodland species such as woodruff, early-purple orchid, wood spurge and Solomon's-seal, as well as nationally rare deadwood invertebrates, reptiles, and birds such as woodcock and wood warbler.

Andrew Smith, Manager for Natural England's Thames Solent Area said:

It is alarming to see a landowner showing such complete disregard for a protected site in their care. I am pleased that this responsibility has been recognised by the courts.

When we find cases of damage, such as this, in some of England's most important and precious countryside, we will take enforcement action and, if necessary, prosecute those responsible. We take our role as a regulator seriously. Our aim now is to work with the owner to re-establish the site and avoid damage to the SSSI in future.

As the owner and occupier of part of the SSSI, Mr Ball is required by law to obtain Natural England's consent for "operations likely to damage the special interest" of the site. This includes storing or dumping materials or using vehicles on the SSSI that could cause harm.

Shortly after Mr Ball came into ownership of the land in 2014, Natural England was notified that spoil had been dumped on the site and trees had been cut down. This spoil was cleared from the site in response to an Enforcement Notice issued by Hart District Council in September 2014.

In May 2017 Natural England were informed that the site was now being used to store truck cabs and car chassis, alongside the dumping of other miscellaneous items such as tyres and vehicle exhausts. This led to a sustained intervention by various organisations, including Hart District Council, Hampshire Constabulary and Natural England to bring harmful actions on the site to an end. Mr Ball failed to respond to numerous warnings or to cooperate. Mr Ball refused the attempts of Natural England and Hart District

Council to arrange for the site to be cleared and would not engage in resolving the situation, which led to an application for a closure order, which was granted in April 2019.

About Natural England

Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. Established in 2006, our work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public.

The full details of the charge:

- On and before 28 February 2018 on land known as the Donkey Paddock that forms part of the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI, Christopher Ball, being an owner and occupier of that SSSI, without reasonable excuse carried out, or caused or permitted to be carried out, on that land operations specified in the notification for the SSSI as likely to damage the special interest, namely: i. dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials ii. storage of materials iii. use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb features of interest,

This was undertaken without giving Natural England notice of a proposal to carry out those operations, without Natural England's written consent and not in accordance with any relevant agreement or management scheme, contrary to sections 28E(1) and 28P(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

About Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSIs') are the best examples of natural environment in the United Kingdom, selected because of specific environmental features, which can include flora, fauna and geological features. There are over 4,100 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England, covering around 8% of the country's land area. Parliament has required Natural England and its predecessors to identify these sites and "notify" them. Notification is a process under which land owners and occupiers of the site are informed of the intention to protect the site as an SSSI and they have the opportunity to make representations.

Once a site is notified, that is binding on all landowners, occupiers and – most importantly in this case – their successors. Such is the value placed on these sites that the law takes the unusual step of restricting rights that owners and occupiers would otherwise hold in relation to their land. In particular, each SSSI notification includes a list of operations that are likely to damage the site's notified features. It is an offence to carry out any of those operations without first gaining the consent of Natural England, which in turn has a duty to restrict that consent to activities that will not cause damage.