

COP26 President keynote address at Society of Editors conference

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for having me here today.

They say that only two things in life are certain, death and taxes.

But to that list, I would add the tenacity and the rigour of the British press.

Whether it is war, or corruption, or injustice, or hypocrisy, or indeed a desire for greater transparency, you are unrelenting, uncompromising, and fearless in your pursuit of the truth, and in your determination to hold those in power to account.

I can tell you, from personal experience, being under the magnifying glass of the British press can be mildly uncomfortable.

Anyone remember "Air Miles Alok"?

Anyone from the Daily Mail here? Ok let's move on.

But however much it makes those under scrutiny squirm, I hope that you will never change.

Over the past year, I have been in 35 countries to persuade governments to up their climate commitments.

Because as you all know, better I think than anyone, you rarely land a story, or in my case a commitment, on the phone.

It needs to be face-to-face.

And on those visits I have been in very many newsrooms, I have been interviewed by your peers from Berlin to Brasilia, from Nairobi to New Delhi.

But rarely does anything evoke greater trepidation in politicians than walking into Milbank or indeed taking a call from a Fleet Street journalist.

And I have to say I think that is a credit to your industry, and the press freedom this country holds so dearly.

The question I really want to address today is what a future shaped by a changing climate means for reporting, and holding to account, by the British press.

Because that unfortunately is the future that we face.

Now you will be aware of this, but I think it's worth saying that scientific report after scientific report demonstrates that unless we get to grips with climate change, the effects will be catastrophic for people and nature.

Last year, we had a seminal report by the UN climate science body, the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, noted that average global temperatures have risen by 1.1 degrees above preindustrial levels.

The report also concluded that human activity is unequivocally responsible for global warming.

This report was agreed by 195 countries, and its findings were based on the distillation of 14,000 scientific papers.

I can tell you from my own personal experience, getting almost 200 countries to agree on something this substantive is far from easy.

Now, there will be those who will say that 1.1 degrees does not sound like very much, but we see the impacts around the world.

Last year saw devastating floods across Europe and Asia.

Wildfires raged in North America and Australia.

And already this year India and Pakistan have been experiencing extreme heat waves, with some of the hottest months since records began.

Floods have killed hundreds in South Africa.

And the IPCC's latest reports published this year, tell us that due to climate change, ecosystems are being irreversibly destroyed, people are being forced from their homes, human health is being damaged, and water and food insecurity have increased.

I have seen this first hand.

I've met mountain communities in Nepal that have been forced to flee from their homes because of a combination of floods and droughts caused by the changing climate.

I've witnessed the effects of Hurricane Irma four years on in Barbuda.

Buildings lying derelict, roofs still blown off, walls crumbling, and people forced from their island homes due to climate change.

And talking to those affected is heartbreaking.

Because you get to not just see but you get to hear the human cost of a changing climate.

The reality is that climate change does not respect borders.

It impacts us all.

Here in the UK each of our top ten warmest years since 1884, have occurred since 2002.

Climate change is not a stand alone issue to be mitigated.

Unfortunately it exacerbates other existing risks.

These are what respected think tanks, like Chatham House, call the “systemic cascading risks” of global warming; the knock-on-effects resulting from climate change, such as food and water insecurity, pests, diseases, the loss of lives, livelihoods and infrastructure.

Indeed in one of its recent reports, Chatham House makes the case that such factors could, ultimately, displace people, disrupt markets, undermine political stability, and exacerbate conflict.

And, frankly, where people’s ability to feed their families becomes precarious and extreme weather and disease wipe out livelihoods, people may be forced from their homes, and civil unrest may foment,

events that can undermine fragile governments, and then ultimately reverberate around the globe.

It is because climate is central to geopolitics, that the UK’s Integrated Review established tackling climate change and biodiversity loss as the UK’s top international priority.

These impacts are happening today, and we know that in the future, they will become more severe.

Because unfortunately further temperature rises are now inevitable.

Even if we limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees celsius, the effects will be significant.

Yet there is still everything to play for, because the higher temperatures rise, the more extreme the effects become.

And every fraction of a degree makes a difference.

At 1.5 degrees warming, 700million people will be exposed to extreme heat around the world.

At 2 degrees it’s 2 billion people.

At 1.5 degrees, 70 percent of all coral reefs around the world would be destroyed.

At 2 degrees they are just about all gone.

But to keep that 1.5 degree limit alive we are going to have to halve global emissions by 2030.

And I think it’s worth saying that the cost of inaction is far, far greater than the cost of taking action now.

The Office for Budget Responsibility projects that unchecked climate change could lead to UK public debt reaching a staggering 289 percent of GDP by the end of the century.

But just as the science has become starker, the environmental and economic opportunities presented by tackling climate change have become clearer.

When the UK took on the role of hosting COP26, less than 30 percent of the global economy was covered by a net zero target.

By the time we got to COP26, with like minded partners around the world, we had persuaded 90 percent of the global economy to sign up to net zero.

So I would say that where the UK has led, others have followed.

Net zero is one of the clearest economic trends.

It encompasses just about every country and every sector.

As journalists, you are used to following the money.

So there is a reason why more than 7000 international companies have signed up to rigorous net zero targets.

There is a reason why, at COP26, financial institutions with over \$130 trillion dollars of assets on their balance sheets were signed up to net zero.

There is a reason why earlier this year Larry Fink, who as you know runs Black Rock, one of the biggest fund managers in the world, wrote to the CEOs of Black Rock's investee companies, and he noted:

that climate risk is investment risk, that there is a tectonic shift of capital underway, that sustainable investments have now reached \$4trillion, and that every company and every industry will be transformed by the transition to a net zero world.

Mr Fink went on to ask these investee companies whether they would lead this transition or whether they would be led.

And the reason for all of this is because businesses around the world can see the economic dividend from the pursuit of net zero.

It is clear to governments and businesses that the future of the global economy is clean.

And we must embrace the opportunities that presents.

But whether we do so fast enough or not, one thing is clear.

Climate change will define the future.

So it is rightly commanding increasing media attention.

Years ago, climate was a side issue for journalists specialising in international development or the environment.

Now it runs through many areas, from business, to culture, to sport, to

economics, to fashion, and of course politics.

Analysis by Carbon Brief, which focuses on climate, shows that the number of editorials in UK newspapers calling for more action to tackle climate change has quadrupled in three years.

And yes, scepticism has diminished.

That same analysis found that in 2011, right-leaning newspapers ran one editorial in favour of climate action for every five against.

By 2021, those same newspapers were publishing nine positive editorials for every one against.

Now, from my perspective, this focus is extremely welcome, but of course this year, climate is no longer in the spotlight.

COP26 is over, although of course our presidency year continues until November.

The headlines are understandably dominated by the other immense and immediate challenges facing the world.

Vladimir Putin's illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine will define 2022.

And that is rightly the focus of the media and the international community.

And I understand that you've just had a discussion panel on Ukraine and reflected on the journalists who have very sadly lost their lives, and of course I pay tribute to all of them.

And of course, governments must also address the global crisis in energy markets and increasing inflation and its attendant impacts.

And again, the media is naturally focusing on this.

And actually it is quite interesting that, the current crisis has also made clear to governments that homegrown renewables and clean energy,

the price of which cannot be manipulated from afar, are the best option for domestic energy security.

Climate security has become synonymous with energy security.

And the chronic threat of climate change is unfortunately not going away.

And so journalists are vital to ensure it continues to receive the column inches and the air time that it deserves, and that leaders are held to account.

Because world leaders have committed to tackle climate change.

Almost seven years ago, countries forged the Paris Agreement.

And in this they committed to limit the average rise in global temperature to well below two degrees, pursuing efforts towards 1.5.

Last year at COP26, nations agreed the historic Glasgow Climate Pact that showed how we will deliver this.

And countries agreed to revisit and strengthen their 2030 emissions reduction targets this year, to align them with the Paris temperature goals.

They agreed to phasedown coal power and phase out fossil fuel subsidies.

And they agreed that the developed countries would provide more finance to support developing nations to deal with climate change.

Alongside the Glasgow Climate Pact, companies and countries made commitments at COP26 to clean up critical sectors, to halt deforestation, and to work together to accelerate green technologies.

In short, the world has agreed what it needs to do. Our task now is to deliver.

And to achieve that, we need you to do what you do best, and hold governments and businesses to account.

The British media has significant international clout.

Editorials written here are read with keen interest in capitals around the globe.

You help focus the eyes of the world on those in positions of responsibility, to scrutinise whether or not they deliver on their commitments.

And if they do not, you have the tools to hold them to account.

We also need you to help people understand the reality of climate impacts.

And help them make informed choices.

And of course, we need you to interrogate objectively the benefits of the move to clean economies.

Ladies and gentleman, I believe that the chronic threat of climate change, and its expansive impact, will increasingly be the biggest story of the twenty-first century.

I will go further.

I would argue it will ultimately be the biggest story in many of our lifetimes.

And we need you to tell it.

And we need you to shape it.

By continuing to do what you do best.

Speak truth to power.

Report on the reality of the world around us.

These are the finest qualities of the British press.

So whatever the future of news, they must endure.

Thank you.

[PM meeting with President Niinistö of Finland: 11 May 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met with President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, in Helsinki.



The Prime Minister met the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö in Helsinki this evening ahead of signing a security agreement with the nation on behalf of the UK.

Both leaders discussed the barbaric invasion of Ukraine, which they agreed had changed the equation of European security.

The Prime Minister set out the United Kingdom's staunch support of Finland's sovereign right to make decisions about its future without fear or influence. He made clear that Finland could depend on the United Kingdom's unequivocal and steadfast support.

As two democratic, northern European nations, the UK and Finland shared common challenges, and would stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the face of traditional and hybrid threats, the Prime Minister added.

The leaders also discussed the importance of energy security and how both nations could boost trade ties.

The Prime Minister and President Niinistö said they looked forward to even closer military collaboration and agreed to stay in close touch.

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[Addressing the political gridlock and instability in Bosnia and Herzegovina: UK Statement at the UN Security Council](#)

Thank you, Madam President.

And I start by welcoming the participation, in this meeting, of the High Representative. It remains vital for the Security Council to have a full, open and informed dialogue with Mr Schmidt on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I also welcome the Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency Mr Sefik Dzaferovic, and thank him for travelling to New York to take part in this meeting.

Unfortunately, Mr Schmidt's briefing and report, yet again, paint a worrying picture of the situation in the country.

Political gridlock and instability continue at many levels. We are concerned by the actions of some members of the Republika Srpska leadership, particularly Mr Milorad Dodik, whose threat to re-establish a Republika Srpska army and to pull out of other state-level institutions – attempts to engineer de facto secession – are dangerous and risk conflict. This could lead to the undoing of 26 years of hard-won peace and progress.

So, it is more important than ever that the Security Council maintains its support for the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, including the role of the High Representative and EUFOR. The Council should refrain from undermining or destabilising the situation. We should promote collaborative and constructive politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The UK welcomes the increased presence of the EUFOR mission to reassure the population during this challenging time.

The UK takes its role under the Dayton Agreement extremely seriously. We commit to remaining an active member of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, and fully support the territorial integrity and fundamental

structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, sovereign state, comprising two entities. We have recently used our own sanctions regime to send a clear message to those threatening the country's future.

We firmly support the work and the role of the High Representative, including the judicious use of his executive powers – as he did recently to suspend unconstitutional and divisive legislation. We condemn attempts to undermine the High Representative and to close his office prematurely. These are not motivated by the interests of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but by a desire to undermine regional security for geopolitical objectives.

Politics of division and hatred are dangerous distractions from the issues of importance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge all parties to focus on working together, to improve the quality of life for all citizens, and to make progress on the agreed aim of Euro-Atlantic integration. October's elections, which can and must go ahead as scheduled, offer an opportunity to rebuild citizens' confidence in a brighter future for all.

I thank you, Madam President.

[New Bill to level up the nation](#)

- Levelling Up Missions, such as eradicating child illiteracy and closing gaps in life expectancy and living standards, to be enshrined in law
- Local communities get extra powers to tackle scourge of boarded up shops and empty homes
- Legislation to underpin biggest shift of power from Whitehall in modern times

The government has today (11 May 2022) introduced plans to transform struggling towns and cities, supporting local leaders to take back control of regeneration, ending the blight of empty shops on their high streets and delivering the quality homes that communities need.

The [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#) will enshrine in law the government's commitment to long-term missions to spread opportunity, drive productivity and boost local pride in every corner of the country.

Levelling Up Secretary Rt Hon Michael Gove MP said:

As a country, we need to be firing on all cylinders. That is why we must level up the UK; spread prosperity and opportunity, and make sure everyone can share in our nation's success.

This Bill puts in place the reforms we need to level up. It enshrines our levelling up missions in law, which will shift

resources and focus throughout this decade to the parts and people of the country who need it most. It enables every part of England which wants a London-style mayor to have one. It empowers local people, not the big developers, to take back control of regeneration in their community.

It shifts power out of Whitehall by giving local leaders the powers they need to tackle the blight of empty shops on high streets and to regenerate their communities. This is underpinned by a firm belief that by far the best placed people to level up communities are the people who live there.

We want everyone to be given the opportunity to stay local but go far.

Levelling Up

The government's defining mission is to level up the UK; to increase and spread prosperity and opportunity across the UK, and break the link between geography and destiny. The Bill puts the legal foundations needed to deliver this mission in place, so that all parts of the country will be able to share equally in our nation's success.

Measures include:

- Creating a legal duty for the government to set and report on a number of missions for levelling up the country.
- These missions will include: closing the gap in pay and productivity between the richest and poorest areas, effectively eradicating child illiteracy and innumeracy, closing gaps in healthy life expectancy, getting the rest of the country's transport connectivity much closer to the standards of London's, and making sure everyone has a local community they can be proud of.
- The deadline for each mission is 2030, but the Levelling Up Bill will create a duty for the government to report on progress annually.
- The legislation needed so that every part of England that wants a strong devolution deal can have one.
- Enabling more areas to have the kinds of devolved powers which currently only the largest cities enjoy, helping drive improvements on local priorities such as transport and skills.
- New provisions on council borrowing to protect taxpayers' money while enabling local areas to make much needed investment.

Regeneration

The Bill will also directly give local leaders the powers they need to regenerate their communities, and transform their high streets and town centres. A new infrastructure levy will see the big developers contribute more towards better local roads, schools, hospitals, and genuinely affordable housing. Communities will also receive a share of the Levy revenue raised –

as long as they have a parish or town council – and we are exploring how this could be expanded.

Measures include:

- New powers for local leaders to run High Street Rental Auctions, where they can auction off tenancies in shops that have been vacant for over a year. This will help to end the plague of empty shops that blight so many high streets.
- Councils will also be able to double council tax on empty and second homes, ensuring everyone pays their fair share towards local services and boost levelling up.
- The ‘al-fresco dining revolution’ will be made permanent, injecting new life into the high street through creating a sustainable process for communities, business and local authorities, making it permanently cheaper and quicker to get a licence for outdoor dining.
- A new, locally set infrastructure levy, charged on the final value of property when its sold, will replace much of the broken S106 payments system. This will see the big developers contribute far more of the money they make from development towards building better local roads, rail, schools, hospitals, and more affordable housing.
- Legislation to make it easier for councils to regenerate their town centres through Compulsory Purchase Orders, making the process quicker and easier to use.

Right homes in the right places

The Bill will also deliver new reforms to the planning system, ensuring new development is more beautiful, produces more local Infrastructure, is shaped by local people’s democratic wishes, improves environmental outcomes, and occurs with neighbourhoods very much in mind.

Measures include:

- Local plans – the way in which councils set the vision for future development in their area and decide whether to give planning permission – will gain stronger legal weight and be made simpler to produce. Communities will have a major say in these plans giving them more opportunity to shape what happens in their areas. Currently 61% of councils do not have an up to date local plan, which leaves communities exposed to development on which they haven’t had a meaningful say.
- A digitised planning system making plans and planning applications fully available on your smartphone.
- Stronger protections for the environment in local plans, empowering councils to make better use of brownfield land and protect precious greenbelt land.
- Local design codes will be made mandatory so that developers have to respect styles drawn up and favoured locally – from the layout or materials used, to how it provides green space.

The government has today also outlined a new deal for millions of renters in private and social housing.

By ending Section 21 evictions and extending the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector, all renters can expect a decent, safe, and secure home. At the same time, these measures deliver a fairer system for good landlords who can struggle to recover their properties when faced with anti-social behaviour or wilful non-payment of rent.

Details on further support for tenants in social housing will be unveiled later this year which will include a review of the Decent Homes Standard, new consumer regulation and regular inspections of the largest landlords.

Further information

The planning measures have been informed by over 40,000 responses made to the government's 2020 'Planning for the Future' White Paper, and inquiry by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

In order to continue to support the hospitality sector, we will also extend the temporary pavement licence process for one further year while we seek to make permanent these provisions through the Bill, subject to Parliamentary approval.

[PM opening remarks at press conference in Finland: 11 May 2022](#)

Thank you very much President Sauli Niinistö and thank you for hosting me today. It's wonderful to be in Helsinki this evening, at this pivotal a moment in our shared history.

It's pivotal because, as I also discussed with colleagues with Prime Minister Andersson in Sweden, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed the equation of European security and it has rewritten our reality and reshaped our future.

We've seen the end of the post-Cold War period, and the invasion of Ukraine sadly has opened a new chapter.

That invasion has already failed for two reasons.

Firstly because of the unbreakable spirit of the Ukrainian people who have fought back and rallied the world behind them.

And secondly because that Ukraine struggle for freedom, that heroic fight, has brought the world together in condemnation of this assault on our values.

And it would be fair to say it has also brought Finland and the UK even closer together today.

The security declaration, the solemn declaration, we have signed today ensures our two nations can intensify our partnership and take it to unparalleled heights – both latitudinal and metaphorical.

From the High North to the Baltics and beyond, our armed forces will train, operate, and exercise together – marrying our defence and security capabilities and formalising a pledge that we will always come to one another's aid.

Because this is not a short term stop gap as you consider NATO membership, but an enduring assurance between our two nations.

An assurance that brings us even closer together as we face the challenges of today, the threats of tomorrow, side-by-side.