

Russia's actions in Ukraine fall far short of the standard set by the Human Rights Council: UK at UN General Assembly

Mr President,

When establishing the Human Rights Council, this General Assembly unanimously agreed that "members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and the protection of human rights." Russia's actions in Ukraine fall far short of that standard.

We have all now seen the horrific images from Bucha and Irpin of civilians deliberately killed in areas from which Russian forces have recently withdrawn. As President Zelenskyy said to the Security Council on Tuesday, it was difficult to find a war crime that Russia did not commit in Bucha.

Reports of executions, rape and mass graves leave no doubt that Russia has committed gross and systematic violations of human rights: the threshold for suspension from the Human Rights Council. I strongly welcome the General Assembly's decision to send a clear message: Russia has no place on the Human Rights Council.

This vote today delivers another message to Putin, that those who stand by him or speak in his name, must stop killing innocent civilians and end this war now.

Mr. President,

We take note of the fact that following their suspension, Russia has subsequently declared its withdrawal from the Human Rights Council. We understand this will trigger a by-election, and we welcome the opportunity this presents for a Member State from the region, who will genuinely promote and protect human rights, to take that seat.

Mr. President,

Today's vote is a victory for human rights, upholding the credibility of the Human Rights Council and the principles of the UN Charter.

Thank you.

Mali: The reports from Moura underline the extent of Russia's malign activity globally: UK at UN Security Council

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I want to start by thanking SRSW Wane for his remarks today – and through him, pay tribute to all members of MINUSMA, whether civilians or in uniform, serving the UN in Mali. I also want to thank Madame Samaké for her briefing. Her words are a clear reminder of the invaluable contribution women make, including in societies affected by conflict and poverty. We must ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the pursuit of lasting peace. I also welcome the Representative of Mali to our meeting.

Like other Council members, the United Kingdom is horrified by reports indicating that hundreds of people were killed in Moura last week, following a counterterrorism operation carried out by the Malian Armed Forces, with the alleged involvement of the Wagner Group. This needs an urgent, transparent and impartial investigation, to bring those responsible to justice. The government must grant MINUSMA full access to Moura, without further delay.

The latest reports from Moura follow a clear trend in a surge of human rights abuses since the deployment of the Wagner Group to Mali – as also highlighted in the deeply concerning Human Rights Watch report in March. We know that, as of early 2022, around 1,000 Russian mercenary personnel have been stationed across Mali. Just as the presence of Russian mercenaries drove an increase in human rights violations and abuses in the Central African Republic last year, we fear we are now seeing the same in Mali. This underlines the extent of Russia's malign activity globally, which serves to damage efforts to address peace and security in contexts beyond Ukraine.

With the threat to communities in Mali growing, it is vital that MINUSMA is able to carry out its human rights tasks. We thank MINUSMA for their continued efforts to investigate, document and report on all allegations. We encourage the publication of human rights findings in full, and at the earliest opportunity.

We note with concern the increasing restrictions imposed by the Malian authorities on MINUSMA operations. MINUSMA's freedom of movement and its Status of Forces Agreement must be respected. Only last month, UK Peacekeepers came under fire from a Malian Armed Forces helicopter. We look forward to receiving the outcome of the UN's investigation into this concerning incident as soon as possible. We were deeply saddened to learn that three Egyptian peacekeepers were killed last month in IED attacks. On behalf of the UK, I would like to extend my deepest sympathies.

On the political transition, the United Kingdom continues to support ECOWAS's

dialogue with the Malian authorities on a revised timeline for elections, so that sanctions can gradually be lifted, and attention turned towards electoral preparations. We recognise the sincere desire of many Malians for substantive reform. However, we believe it is only through elections and a return to constitutional, democratic rule, that long-term reform can be driven forward, with the support of partners.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting those most in need in Mali, and we provided more than \$16 million in humanitarian aid in 2021. However, the mobilisation of resource by the international community must also be accompanied by unimpeded, safe and sustained humanitarian access – including in those areas that are hardest to reach.

I resume my function as President of the Council.

[Future farming in Devon's Axe catchment](#)

The film 'Future farming in the Axe catchment' is available now on YouTube

[Future Farming in the Axe Catchment](#)

The River Axe is of national significance as a designated Special Area of Conservation. It is in poor condition due to degraded ecology, siltation and nutrient enrichment in the form of elevated phosphate.

Since 2016 we have been carrying out a regulatory project working with farmers in the catchment to achieve compliance with the aim to bring the river back to good condition.

Land management has changed dramatically in the Axe catchment over recent decades. The intensification of farming means that heavy agricultural machinery is on the land a lot more than it used to be, often at inappropriate times when the soil is wet. As many of the soils in the catchment have a high clay content, they are vulnerable to compaction, which generates run-off as little rainfall is able percolate through the soil.

Richard Smith, Soils Technical Specialist for the Environment Agency said:

Because of the state of the land we have run off, and soil, phosphates, nutrients and dung are all washed into the backwaters of the river and deposited on the gravels. They then behave like an enriched field – certain things thrive, but sensitive plants don't – so we end up with what is a muddy pond.

Where farms are found not to be compliant with regulations – the Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil (SSAFO) regulations and Farming Rules for Water (FRfW) – the Environment Agency works with the farmer to draw up a plan to move them into compliance and offers advice on how they may be eligible for grants from Catchment Sensitive Farming.

Stuart Hunter, Senior Advisor for the Environment Agency, said:

We work with farmers to find the most efficient way of making them compliant and protect the environment. It's made clear to the farmer that they need to be compliant, and that we expect progress to be made, if not we would look to regulation and enforcing the necessary improvements.

The film illustrates how many farmers have taken on-board the Environment Agency's advice and guidance. There are simple improvements, such as covering silage clamps to avoid rainwater draining into a slurry store. And other more long-term changes, such as changing to a completely grass-based system of feed or reducing the density of their dairy herd.

Stuart added:

With climate change, impacts are going to be more extreme – intense rainfall, drier periods – farming needs to adapt and change on the Axe, to become more sustainable as a business and to protect the environment.

We hope the film shows how we work with the people we regulate in order to improve the environment. People are often aware when they are not doing something right, which means they are not complying with the regulations. It's not a surprise when we discuss what is required in order to comply. Most farmers react well to advice and take the right actions to become compliant, however with the minority who don't engage and remain non-compliant we will not hesitate to use our enforcement powers – we want to work with farmers, supporting them to make changes and in doing so protect and enhance this precious river.

[Energy efficiency: what you need to know](#)

Improving energy efficiency, by reducing the amount of energy that households and businesses need, forms a crucial part of our British Energy Security

Strategy.

We want to continue making UK homes more comfortable and cheaper to run. Every therm of gas saved grows our energy security and brings jobs to the UK.

We have already saved households on the lowest incomes around £300 a year on bills through energy efficiency measures – and we are investing over £6 billion on decarbonising the nation's homes and buildings.

What support does the British Energy Security Strategy offer to help consumers with the cost of energy or lowering bills?

The British Energy Security Strategy is part of an overall movement to greater energy security, building on the commitments set out in the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan, the Energy White Paper, the Heat and Buildings Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy.

We have announced various measures worth billions of pounds to support consumers to cut their energy consumption, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, make their homes warmer and more energy efficient and help them to reduce their bills.

This includes making available £9 billion to protect against the impact of rising global energy prices through a £200 discount on energy bills this autumn and a £150 non-repayable reduction in Council Tax bills, while giving up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments to recipients of the State Pension and contributing £140 to the energy bills of 2.2 million low-income households through the Warm Home Discount.

Why is energy efficiency important?

Improving the energy efficiency of UK buildings is the quickest way we can support families and businesses, to respond to rising energy prices.

Over 90% of our homes are heated by fossil fuels, accounting for a third of UK total gas use. The price spikes in the gas market mean households are particularly exposed to these changes and facing energy bills upwards of £2,000.

Improving the efficiency of our homes could reduce our heating bills by around 20% and reduce our dependency on foreign gas.

Energy efficiency measures include double glazing, cavity wall, insulation to efficient light bulbs.

What is the government doing to improve energy

efficiency?

We have gone further than any government in setting out an ambitious strategy by:

- publishing the landmark Heat and Buildings Strategy with an accompanying £3.9 billion of support.
- this includes nearly £1.8 billion targeted at low-income households through the Home Upgrade Grant and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. This builds on more than £1.2 billion we have already invested this Parliament to support low-income households to install energy efficiency measures. We are also investing more than £1.4 billion to upgrade public sector buildings. This brings capital spending on buildings decarbonisation over the lifetime of Parliament to £6.6 billion
- expanding the Energy Company Obligation to £1 billion per year from 2022-2026, helping 133,000 low-income households annually to improve their energy efficiency
- combined, all this funding will improve up to 500,000 homes, saving households hundreds of pounds per year on their energy bills and reduce our reliance on gas
- setting a 2035 date by which we intend to phase out the sale of new and replacement gas boilers
- introducing a package of measures to increase deployment of heat pumps to 600,000 installations per year by 2028, and expanding heat networks through the Green Heat Networks Fund and designating heat network zones.

What has the government achieved so far?

We have already saved households on the lowest incomes around £300 a year on bills through energy efficiency measures – and we are investing over £6 billion on decarbonising the nation's homes and buildings.

The number of homes with an Energy Efficiency Rating of C or above is 46%, up from 13% in 2010, and rapidly rising thanks to government commitments.

The UK has a strong track record in making homes more energy efficient, with 40% in England now at EPC B and C or better and 84% of new builds in the top energy efficiency bands A or B.

By 2025, around 700k homes will be upgraded, and by 2050 all our buildings will be energy efficient with low carbon heating.

How is the government helping to cut the cost for consumers?

We will cut the cost for consumers who want to make improvements by:

- zero-rating VAT for the next five years on the installation of energy saving materials, including insulation and low carbon heating, saving between £1000-£2000 on the cost of an air source heat pump

- launching the £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme this month. Thanks to government support, heat pumps are now priced much more competitively compared to gas boilers. We want as many people as possible who want one this year to be able to have one installed, so will continue to keep uptake of the scheme under review
- ‘rebalancing’ the costs placed on energy bills away from electricity to incentivise electrification across the economy and accelerate consumers and industry’s shift away from volatile global commodity markets over the decade. This will also ensure heat pumps are comparatively cheap to run over time. We will publish our proposals on how to do so in 2022, considering overall system impacts and limiting the impact on bills, particularly for low-income consumers

What is the government doing to support people already in, or about to get pushed into, fuel poverty?

The Heat and Buildings Strategy sets out how we are prioritising the most vulnerable in society, ensuring that those on low income and/or at greater risk of fuel poverty are able to access energy efficiency measures and not be left behind.

- we’re giving up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments to recipients of the State Pension and contributing £150 to the energy bills of 2.2 million low-income households through the Warm Home Discount
- last summer, BEIS consulted on proposals which would expand the scheme from around £350 million to £475 million per year (in 2020 prices), reaching 3 million households from winter 2022/2023 onwards. The additional funding and proposed reforms would mean around 780,000 more households would receive rebates of £150 from winter 2022/2023 until 2025/2026
- through the Cold Weather Payment scheme we also provide an extra £25 a week for poorer households when the temperature is consistently below zero
- the most vulnerable can get additional help with essential costs through our £500 million Household Support Fund
- the Energy Company Obligation is now worth £1 billion per annum. ECO has been in place since January 2013 and has delivered around 3.4 million measures in around 2.4 million homes. We have committed to a 4-year, £4 billion extension and expansion of the scheme to accelerate our efforts to improve homes to meet fuel poverty targets

How are you supporting property owners improve their properties?

We are catalysing a world-leading competitive low-cost green finance market to help property owners improve their properties stock. For example:

- we are working with mortgage lenders to support homeowners to improve

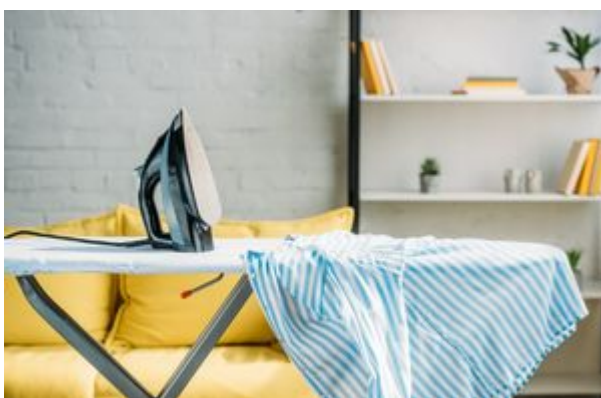
the energy performance of their properties and will publish our response to the consultation on Improving Home Energy Performance through Lenders in due course

- the policy proposals in the consultation could help improve the comfort of 2.8 million households and lead to bill savings of £196 per property by 2030
- our £1.8 million Green Home Finance Innovation Fund, which completed in March 2022, was a key early step in supporting the lending community to design, develop and pilot green finance products for homeowners
- as announced in the Net Zero Strategy, the Innovation Fund will be followed by a £10 million Green Home Finance Accelerator programme, focused on supporting the development of innovative green finance products and services, enabling homeowners to decarbonise their homes and improve thermal comfort
- finally, we are also working with the new UK Infrastructure Bank to explore whether they can play a wider role in scaling up green home finance in the future

[TRA opens new investigation into subsidised ironing boards](#)

Press release

The Trade Remedies Authority has opened a new anti-subsidy investigation into imports of ironing boards from Turkey.



[The Trade Remedies Authority \(TRA\)](#) has today (Thursday 7 April) opened a [new anti-subsidy investigation](#) into imports of ironing boards from Turkey.

This investigation is in response to an application from a UK manufacturer to investigate whether ironing boards imported from Turkish Free Zones are subsidised and causing injury to UK industry. The TRA will conduct an Economic Interest Test (EIT) as part of its investigation to assess whether introducing new trade remedy measures to address the injury, would be in the

UK's economic interest.

Information from interested parties will be used for the TRA to establish whether imports of ironing boards from Turkish Free Zones benefit from subsidies, whether these imports are causing injury to UK industry and whether it would be in the UK's interests for countervailing measures to be put in place to mitigate any injury.

The TRA exists to defend UK economic interests against unfairly traded imports into the UK. This new investigation will examine whether Turkish subsidies are unfairly impacting British manufacturing of ironing boards and the broader economy.

The period of investigation is 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, while the injury period is 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021.

View further information on how to contribute to the investigation and on the TRA's current case load, including its investigation into aluminium extrusions and transition reviews into steel safeguard measures, iron and steel Wire Rods and heavy steel plate.

Background information:

- UK industries concerned about imports have been able to submit applications for a new trade remedy measure since January 2021. These applications are considered by the TRA to see if there are grounds for an investigation.
- Countervailing remedies are one of three trade policy tools to counter imports which are causing or threatening injury to domestic industry, the other two being anti-dumping and safeguard remedies. Countervailing remedies address imported goods which are being subsidised by foreign governments.
- Ironing boards made in the UK are mostly sold to the domestic market. The UK imports more ironing boards than it exports. Steel prices and anti-dumping remedies can impact fluctuations in imports and exports of ironing boards.
- Turkish Free Zones are designated areas of enterprise that are subject to special regulatory treatment like tax breaks and other government support. They are deemed to be outside of the country's customs territory.
- Some alleged benefits for companies based in Free Zones are: opportunity to benefit from tax advantages, opportunity to transfer profits, facilitation of foreign trade, trade facility free from customs duty procedure.
- This is the second new case (not a transition review) that the TRA has opened and follows our first new investigation case into potential dumping of Aluminium Extrusions that opened in June 2021 and is still under investigation.
- The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK body that investigates whether new trade remedy measures are needed to counter unfair import practices

and unforeseen surges of imports.

- The TRA is an arm's length body of the Department of International Trade (DIT) launched on 1 June 2021. Before its launch, it operated as the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) of DIT.
- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU. Forty-four EU trade remedy measures of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA is currently reviewing each one to assess whether it is suitable for UK needs.

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