

Addressing the lingering humanitarian situation in Syria: UK at the UN Security Council

Thank you, Madam President.

I thank Special Envoy Pederson, USG Griffiths and ASG Zaki for their briefings.

Madam President, last week marked the 11th anniversary of the Syrian conflict. We commend the Syrian people, who courageously and peacefully took to the streets to demand freedom, political reform, and a government that respects and upholds human rights. The Asad regime met those demands with a brutal assault against them that continues today.

This year's anniversary coincides with the appalling Russian aggression against Ukraine. Russia's inhumane and destructive behavior in both conflicts is deplorable.

As we have said many times, there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. We continue to support the UN-facilitated, Syrian-led, political process outlined in resolution 2254. We urge Council members to continue to call for a nationwide ceasefire, unhindered aid access and conditions for safe refugee return.

We commend Geir Pedersen for his continued efforts to facilitate a sustainable resolution to the conflict. He has our full support.

After more than a decade of conflict, the Syrian humanitarian situation remains bleak. 14.6 million Syrians require humanitarian assistance, more than 80% of the population. 6.6 million Syrians are registered as refugees, and 6.7 million are displaced within their own country.

Our hope is that Syrian refugees will eventually be able to return to their homes, but we agree with the UN judgement – conditions do not currently allow this. It is essential that international law is respected, and that any refugee returns are voluntary, safe and dignified.

It is a sad fact that as long as the conflict continues, humanitarian aid will continue to be vital for millions of vulnerable Syrians. And this is why the UK is clear in its position and commitment to the cross-border mandate under resolution 2585.

Madam President, the Council must be prepared to act and support the renewal of this resolution in July. In the meantime, we call on all parties to fulfil their international obligations and ensure access to humanitarian aid.

The United Kingdom continues to oppose engagement with the Asad regime in the absence of behavioural change. Ceding legitimacy to Asad's unreformed,

unrepentant and unreliable regime, for nothing in return, will undermine efforts to end the conflict and prolong the suffering in Syria.

Finally, on the Constitutional Committee talks taking place in Geneva this week, we encourage all parties, especially the Syrian regime, to meaningfully participate. Urgent progress is needed, and we urge the regime's backers to redouble their efforts to find a way forward.

I thank you, Madam President.

[UK exposes Russian spy agency behind cyber incidents](#)

- KGB's successor agency, the Federal Security Service (FSB) is behind a historic global campaign targeting critical national infrastructure.
- Long list of cyber operations includes UK energy sector, US aviation and a Russian dissident in the UK targeted using sophisticated hacking and spear-phishing.
- Foreign Secretary Liz Truss sanctions a Russian MOD subsidiary for carrying out malicious cyber activity on a Saudi petro-chemical plant.

The UK, together with the US and other allies, has today (Thursday 24 March) exposed historic malign cyber activity of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) – the successor agency to the KGB.

One month on since Putin's unprovoked and illegal war in Ukraine started, the global scope of the FSB's Centre 16 cyber campaign has been revealed.

The National Cyber security Centre (NCSC) assess it is almost certain that the FSB's Centre 16 are also known by their hacker group pseudonyms of 'Energetic Bear', 'Berserk Bear' and 'Crouching Yeti', and conducted a malign programme of cyber activity, targeting critical IT systems and national infrastructure in Europe, the Americas and Asia. They have today been indicted by the FBI for targeting the systems controlling the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant in Kansas, US in 2017 but failed to have any negative impact.

Separately, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has used the UK's cyber sanctions regime to designate a Russian defence ministry subsidiary, the Central Scientific Research Institute of Chemistry and Mechanics (TsNIIKHM), for an incident involving safety override controls in a Saudi petro-chemicals plant

in 2017.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Russia's targeting of critical national infrastructure is calculated and dangerous. It shows Putin is prepared to risk lives to sow division and confusion among allies.

We are sending a clear message to the Kremlin by sanctioning those who target people, businesses and infrastructure. We will not tolerate it.

We will continue to work together with our allies to turn the ratchet and starve Putin's war machine of its funding and resources.

The malware used against the petro-chemical plant was designed specifically to target the plant's safety override for the Industrial Control System and resulted in two emergency shutdowns of the plant.

The malware was designed to give the actors complete control of infected systems and had the capability to cause significant impact, possibly including the release of toxic gas or an explosion – either of which could have resulted in loss of life and physical damage to the facility.

The FSB's long raft of malign cyber activity includes:

- Targeting UK energy companies
- Sustained and substantial scanning and probing of networks in the American aviation sector, and exfiltration of data in aviation and other key US targets
- Posing as the Russian Federal Tax Service to conduct spear-phishing attacks against Russian nationals
- Attempting to spear-phish the press secretary of Mikhail Khodorkovskiy, a UK-based longstanding critic of the Kremlin, and monitoring a website he set up to expose corruption in the Russian government

These sanctions follow a further 65 oligarchs and banks targeted earlier today by the Foreign Secretary, bringing the UK's sanctions on those who enable Putin's war to more than £500 billion worth of bank assets and £150 billion in personal net worth.

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Notes to editors:

- Spear-phishing is the practice of sending targeted electronic communication, such as emails and SMS messages, to specific individuals,

groups or organisations for malicious purposes, including data theft, espionage and fraud.

[PM meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan: 24 March 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan ahead of the G7 summit at NATO.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson met Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan this afternoon, ahead of the G7 summit at NATO.

They discussed the need for urgent de-escalation and unfettered humanitarian access in Ukraine, and the Prime Minister thanked the Japanese leader for his strong support to Ukraine and Europe.

Both leaders agreed that on the importance of reducing reliance on Russian hydrocarbons and improving global energy security, and the Prime Minister welcomed Japan's support in that regard.

The Prime Minister condemned recent North Korean missile launches and they agreed to further strengthen UK-Japan bilateral cooperation, particularly in defence. They also welcomed progress in talks on the UK joining the CPTPP trade bloc.

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[PM meeting with President Erdoğan of Turkey: 24 March 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey at the NATO summit in Brussels today.



The Prime Minister met President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey at the NATO summit in Brussels today.

They shared their deep concerns at the increasingly brutal conflict unfolding in Ukraine, and the Prime Minister welcomed Turkey's strong diplomatic leadership and humanitarian response.

They discussed ways to increase military and economic support to Ukraine's government as it seeks to defend itself. The leaders also discussed bolstering regional security in the face of new threats, including in the Black Sea.

The Prime Minister noted the opportunities for greater trade and investment between the UK and Turkey, including in renewable and nuclear energy, and looked forward boosting cooperation between our countries.

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[PM meeting with EU President Ursula von der Leyen: 24 March 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, on the sidelines of the G7 meeting in Brussels today.



The Prime Minister met the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, on the sidelines of the G7 meeting in Brussels today.

He welcomed President von der Leyen's leadership on the response to crisis in Ukraine and the EU's close cooperation with the UK, including on sanctions, energy security and the humanitarian response.

They shared their horror at the devastation being inflicted on Ukraine by Russia, and agreed on the need to step up military, financial and economic support to the Ukrainian government.

The leaders committed to strengthen the economic sanctions on Putin's regime and continue working together to diversify energy sources and move away from reliance on Russian hydrocarbons.

The Prime Minister and President Von der Leyen also discussed wider bilateral cooperation, including the ongoing issues with the Northern Ireland Protocol. The Prime Minister reiterated the importance of working together to find durable solutions that address the challenges with the Protocol.

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