

UNAMA will support the rights of all Afghans: explanation of vote

Thank you Madam President, and can I start by thanking Norway for their hard work as penholder on this text.

Today, the Council spoke with one voice in support of a robust UN Mission in Afghanistan:

- to lead and coordinate urgent humanitarian efforts
- to support the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls
- and to hold the Taliban account on its commitments

It's disappointing that one Council member decided to abstain, just when UNAMA's work is more important than ever.

Over 20 million Afghan people need urgent assistance. For our part, the UK has doubled aid for Afghanistan this financial year to \$370 million. And on 31 March, the UK, Qatar, Germany and OCHA will co-host a pledging conference to raise funds for the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan. We encourage Member States to respond generously.

Today's adoption ensures UNAMA will continue to play a key role in coordinating the UN's response as it scales up across the board.

Beyond the humanitarian crisis, we are particularly concerned by reports of reprisals against former government officials, as well as attacks and intimidation against minority groups and civil society.

We are also concerned about detentions and enforced disappearances in breach of international norms. And although there has been a reduction in civilian casualties, the Taliban need to demonstrate that extremist groups are no longer able to flourish in the country.

Let me be clear – the Taliban have a choice.

The international community has made its expectations clear. We will base our approach on the actions the Taliban now take.

UNAMA will play a key role in supporting the rights of all Afghans, promoting an inclusive society in which women and girls participate fully. We are watching closely to see if the Taliban meets its commitments that girls return to secondary school at the end of March.

And in closing, I'd like to pay tribute to Special Representative Lyons and her team, and reaffirm the UK's solidarity with the Afghan people.

Thank you.

Ukrainians fleeing war granted free access to NHS healthcare

- Changes coming into force today (Thursday 17 March) will also cover any treatment that has taken place since the start of the Russian invasion.
- The UK remains the second-largest humanitarian donor to Ukraine and has provided over 1.8 million items of medical supplies to the country.

From today Ukrainians fleeing their home country will be guaranteed free access to NHS healthcare, including hospital services, GP and nurse consultations, urgent care centres and injury units.

As part of the UK's offer to those Ukrainians coming to the UK, we have committed to providing full access to a range of public services, including doctors, schools and full local authority support. They will also be offered Covid vaccines and medical screenings. The new legislative measures introduced today will ensure Ukrainians who are in the UK lawfully can access the NHS on a similar basis as other UK residents.

Those benefitting will include any Ukrainian who:

- uses an alternative temporary visa route outside of the family or sponsorship routes;
- is on a family or sponsored route to England
- chooses to extend their visit or seasonal worker visa temporarily, without going through the Immigration Health Surcharge system; or
- is in the process of switching visas

The changes, made in regulations laid today, cover any NHS treatment that started on or after 24 February 2022, the date the full-scale Russian invasion began, providing support to as many people as possible.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

It's our moral duty to ensure any Ukrainian arriving in England, after being forced out of their home country by the Russian invasion is able to access the healthcare they might need, without worrying about the cost.

We have acted swiftly to provide substantial humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and we stand shoulder to shoulder with our international partners. Those in need of care will be treated by our incredible NHS staff as we welcome them to this country.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The people of Ukraine are facing unimaginable suffering and trauma at the hands of Putin's barbaric regime.

We are providing a safe haven for some of those people and as soon as they arrive in England they will be able to access the support they need, including healthcare, education, benefits and the right to work – helping to provide some stability at a difficult time.

These changes form part of the government's wider humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis. The UK government has now delivered more than 1.8 million medical items, including wound care packs, equipment for intensive care and vital medicines.

On Monday, 21 Ukrainian children with cancer were evacuated to England and have since been triaged at seven NHS hospitals where they are receiving lifesaving treatment.

More than 6,100 visas have been granted through the Ukraine Family Scheme and, for those with valid Ukrainian passports, the government has removed the need to attend an in-person appointment to conduct biometric checks before travelling to the UK.

Since Monday, people in the UK have been able to register their interest to sponsor a named Ukrainian under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with more than 150,000 people registering.

The government has provided £400 million in humanitarian and economic aid to Ukraine and neighbouring countries, along with defensive anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry.

- The exemption regulations are due to be reviewed in six months.
- Details on the NHS migrant charging policy can be found here: [NHS entitlements: migrant health guide](#).
- Ukrainian residents in the UK unlawfully are not covered by these measures. The government is clear however that urgent treatment will not be withheld – even when the visitor has indicated that they cannot pay.
- Free healthcare for those accompanying people medically evacuated to the UK for treatment will be limited to needs which arise during their stay – pre-existing conditions that worsen and those which develop in the UK.

[British High Commission Accra announces winners of Ambassador for a](#)

Day competition

Today, 17 March 2022, the British High Commission in Accra, in partnership with the Australian and Canadian High Commissions and the French Embassy, will announce the 4 winners of the illustrious Ambassador for a Day competition.

Launched at the start of March, in partnership with CAMFED, Girls Education Challenge (GEC) and Plan Ghana, the competition asked applicants to submit an essay and a video explaining what being an ambassador for a day would mean for them.

Selected from hundreds of women aged between 16 to 19 years, the 4 winners will spend a day with high commissioners and ambassadors from the UK, Australia, Canada and France to understand what it's like to work in and lead a diplomatic mission.

An independent judging panel made up of representatives from the UK, Australia and Canada High Commissions and French Embassy, assessed the entries and selected the winners.

Later today the winners will be formally announced at a ceremony at the British High Commissioner's residence in Accra.

Congratulating the winners, British High Commissioner to Ghana Harriet Thompson said:

Africa Gender Month is a chance to spotlight the gender challenges across the continent, but to spotlight also the champions and changemakers who are overcoming those challenges. Ambassador for a Day gives a unique opportunity to some of Ghana's future leaders and I am really looking forward to spending a day with one of the impressive winners.

The UK is committed to upholding the rights of women and girls around the world, working to transform lives through prosperity and stability. We'll have much greater impact working together, so it's been fantastic to run the Ambassador for a Day competition together with Ghana, Australia, Canada and France.

Speaking ahead of the award ceremony, winner of the competition Ibrahim Barikisu from Kumasi said:

I will call this a dream come true. I was overwhelmed with joy when my entry was selected. I am looking forward to spending a day with

the Ambassador in order to learn and share this life-changing experience with other young people.

The Ambassador for a Day is a competition that provides a platform for marginalised young women to become leaders and advocates for change.

They will have the opportunities to voice their opinions and share their ideas on how a gender-equal future can be shaped.

List of winners

- Dorcas Arthur from Cape Coast who will spend the day with Australian Charge D'affaires, H.E. Leann Johnson
- Maish Ibrahim Mansoorah from Budumburam who will spend the day with the British High Commissioner, H.E. Harriet Thompson
- Barikisu Ibrahim from Kumasi who will spend the day with the Canadian High Commissioner, H.E. Kati Csaba
- Feruza Abudulai from Tamale who will spend the day with the French Ambassador, H.E. Anne Sophie Ave

About CAMFED

[CAMFED](#) is a pan-African organisation revolutionising how girls' education is delivered.

About Plan Ghana

[Plan International](#) has been working in Ghana to support children, particularly the most marginalised, to exercise their rights for more than 25 years.

About Girls Education Challenge (GEC)

From 2018 the [Girls Education Challenge](#) 'Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education' (STAGE) project has supported 20,000 marginalised out-of-school girls to gain quality complementary basic education and vocational skills, and go on to formal school or work, including 2,000 girls with disabilities.

[UK provides additional emergency support to Madagascar](#)

On 17 March 2022, UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford has announced a further £500,000 of UK aid for Madagascar following a series of extreme weather events.

The new UK support will allow UNICEF to provide safe water, emergency sanitation and hygiene services for 13,500 people and to help monitor for outbreaks of water borne diseases.

This is in addition to the [£500,000 the UK contributed](#) to the Red Cross emergency appeal earlier this month.

UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford said:

Cyclone Emnati is the fourth extreme weather event to hit Madagascar in the last month. They have impacted hundreds of thousands of people, causing widespread flooding, displacement and destroying livelihoods.

This additional £500,000 will bring the level of UK support to a total of £1 million, providing immediate assistance to vulnerable communities through partners on the ground and helping Madagascar to recover.

UNICEF Representative in Madagascar, Jean-François Basse said:

This support from the United Kingdom comes at a crucial time as UNICEF and partners are on the ground working to assist those impacted by these cyclones and tropical storms. By urgently addressing the water and sanitation needs of these communities we can keep a bad situation from getting worse.

Tropical Cyclone Emnati hit Madagascar on 22 February, following Cyclone Batsirai and Storm Dumako in early February and Storm Ana in January.

These extreme weather events have affected up to half a million people with widespread flooding and destruction of property, schools and health centres.

When these natural disasters strike, the UNICEF team is at the forefront of deploying key responses and providing assistance to victims. The main activities are related to the installation of water storage and treatment tanks, the construction of emergency latrines and vector control, and the distribution of hygiene kits that include household water treatment tablets/solutions, sanitary napkins, soap bars, a bucket with a lid, a plastic cup, hydroalcoholic gel, and hand washing devices.

The UK continues to work with local authorities and partners to monitor the situation closely.

UK aid

- more details on the Red Cross appeal is on the [Red Cross website](#)
- in addition, the UK is a donor to African Risk Capacity (ARC), Africa's

regional insurance pool and the first risk pool in the world that links pay-outs following a disaster to pre-approved contingency plans. Tropical Cyclone BATSIRAI has triggered a US\$10.7 million payment from the African Risk Capacity Group (ARC) to help the government of Madagascar and its people build back better

- the UK is a significant contributor to the Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), which has allocated funding of CHF 750,000 (approx. £600,000)
- the UK is also a contributor to the Start Network, a multilateral humanitarian fund, which has already set aside nearly £635,000 of assistance for those most in need

UNICEF

- UNICEF has worked closely with the government's National Risk and Disaster management office throughout the responses to facilitate coordination
- UNICEF's pre-positioned response team and supplies in key cities and town throughout the affected areas
- UNICEF supported the preparation and coordination of the response, working with government and NGO partners, particularly in the areas of water and sanitation, health, and education

[Commonwealth Day celebrated in Ashgabat](#)

World news story

Ambassadors of the UK, Pakistan and Malaysia in Ashgabat planted a jubilee plane tree in the garden of the British Ambassador's residence to mark the day.



Ambassadors of the UK, Pakistan and Malaysia in Ashgabat plant a jubilee plane tree

On 14 March 2022, Commonwealth Day, the Ambassadors of the UK, Pakistan and Malaysia in Ashgabat joined together to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, and the 70th anniversary of her role as Head of the Commonwealth. The representatives planted a jubilee plane tree and unveiled a commemorative plaque in the garden of the UK Ambassador's residence.

People across the United Kingdom and British diplomatic missions overseas have been planting trees to support the Queen's Green Canopy, which is a unique tree planting initiative created to mark the 70 years of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2022.

With a focus on planting sustainably, this green initiative seeks to create a legacy in honour of The Queen's leadership of the Nation, which will benefit future generations.

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