

[UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the interactive dialogue with the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict](#)

The United Kingdom reaffirms its strong support for the work of the Special Representative, as we celebrate 25 years of the Children and Armed Conflict mandate.

The UK remains deeply concerned about the sustained and alarming number of grave violations committed against children.

In Ukraine, Russia's unprovoked and brutal assault has already resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties and deaths, including children. Continued attacks on schools, as well as other civilian infrastructure, demonstrate why we advocate for universal endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration.

We fully endorse the statement by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, demanding Russia immediately cease its aggression and military actions. This is the only way to ensure the protection of children in Ukraine.

Moreover, persistently high levels of sexual violence against children globally remains concerning, which is why in November 2021, we launched the Call to Action to ensure the rights of children born of sexual violence in conflict.

It is critical the voices of young people are heard and that they shape policy decisions. Our Minister for Africa is hosting a roundtable with young people this month to do just that.

Madam Special Representative,

Could you provide an update on the situation in Ukraine and the work your office is doing to support children and monitor alleged violations?

[RAF's first synthetic fuel drone flight](#)

Under Project Vermeer, the Royal Air Force has enhanced their ground-breaking work in using sustainable aviation fuel by successfully flying a four-meter

drone with synthetic fuel.

Synthetic kerosene is entirely fossil fuel-free, made by mixing raw materials with high sugar levels, such as food waste, with bacteria to create an oil substance that is then converted into aviation fuel using chemicals and heat.

As the process does not require large-scale infrastructure, synthetic kerosene can be made anywhere, making it an attractive option for military deployments around the world.

The breakthrough signifies the RAF's commitment to creating a more sustainable future as it can be used across all platforms from remotely piloted air systems to fighter jets, with a significantly reduced carbon footprint compared to traditional fossil-based fuels.

Defence Procurement Minister Jeremy Quin said:

"This is an exciting moment for the RAF and British industry as they continue to develop pioneering solutions to help address climate change. These new approaches will maintain our world-class fighting forces whilst reducing our carbon footprint."

Air Vice Marshal Lincoln Taylor said:

"The RAF needs to ensure that we are at the forefront of technology to safeguard our own resilience and operational capability, whilst minimising our damage to the environment. Fuel scarcity and cost will only ever increase in its impact on our operations and synthetic fuels for our aircraft are one potential solution to this situation as we look to secure the objectives of the next generation RAF of tomorrow."

Working with British company C3 Biotechnologies Ltd and the US Navy, the initial trial created 15 litres of fuel in laboratory conditions. Following successful engine testing, the fixed-wing drone completed a 20-minute test flight in Wiltshire, providing valuable data that indicates the fuel performs consistently to a high standard.

Chief of US Naval Research Rear Adm Lorin C. Selby said:

"It is exciting and game-changing to work with our allies in the UK to develop a more efficient synthetic aviation fuel.

"The U.S. Navy is committed to finding innovative solutions to operational challenges, and the ability to manufacture this fuel without large infrastructure requirements would be ground-breaking for deployed forces."

The RAF and partners are continuing with the next phase of the project, with work underway to refine the process and develop deployable manufacturing facilities.

This is the second big win for the RAF as they secured a Guinness World Record four months ago with a [successful flight on synthetic fuel](#).

Project Vermeer began in summer 2021 and demonstrates the RAF's commitment to investing in emerging technology, as highlighted in the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper.

Retirement calculator

News story

GAD has developed a retirement calculator designed to help public sector pension scheme members understand benefits options information in their pensions more clearly.



GAD's member-based innovation

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has developed an online tool that provides benefits options information to public sector pension scheme members. The retirement calculator is designed to help people understand their pensions more clearly.

We developed the retirement calculator to help people understand their pension implications following the McCloud legal ruling. The judgment means some pension scheme members have a choice between 2 different types of benefits. The choice is between legacy schemes (typically final salary schemes) and reformed schemes (typically career average revalued earnings schemes.)

Working it out

The retirement calculator uses projections to illustrate what people will get at their chosen retirement age for both options.

Once people add in basic details, this new calculator takes pay rises and working patterns into account. The resulting information then helps scheme members to understand the different benefits they may be eligible for during

the remedy period.

Understanding benefits

The idea was developed by GAD actuary John Bayliss. He said: “This is really about helping members understand their benefits and putting this into context. We expect this will sit along with other member information on pension portals. Once people answer some quick questions, the system will determine if they will be affected. It then refers pension scheme members to the retirement calculator.

“This is new for GAD and over the course of the last year we’ve had to learn some elements of how to do this from scratch. We intend to apply this learning in different areas such as live interactive reporting which we’ve not been able to do before.”

Member-focused

GAD used web programming and software to make the retirement calculator more responsive and interactive. This is so that it leads to a better experience for clients and pension scheme members.

The first retirement calculator is set to go live in March and will be rolled out to several clients across the public sector throughout the UK in the coming financial year.

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[Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine: UK OSCE statement, 16 March 2022](#)

Thank you Mr Chair. This statement is delivered under the topic raised by Ukraine and I request that this be accurately reflected in the Journal of the Day.

Mr Chair, it is now nearly three weeks since President Putin launched his premeditated and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and, as we have heard today, our Russian colleagues persist in playing the role of the Kremlin’s storytellers, peddling their lies in an attempt to justify Russia’s military action against Ukraine.

In February, during the run up to the invasion, more than 100 different

stories promoting unfounded claims around pre-texts for invasion were identified as being disseminated by Kremlin-controlled media. Accompanied by baseless rhetoric and disinformation, our Russian colleagues blindly attempted to falsely cast Ukraine as a threat – but they fooled no-one.

And here and now, our Russian colleagues continue to lie in transparent attempts at disinformation to provide continued pretexts for military action. Last week, along with my Ukrainian and US colleagues, we exposed Russia's absurd accusations and lies surrounding the false notion that Ukraine sought to pursue offensive biological and nuclear weapons capabilities. That my Russian colleague's public reaction to delegations speaking the truth was "amazement" says it all.

Mr Chair, I would urge our Russian colleagues, who have a unique position in Vienna to see uncensored news from around the world reporting the truth, to take a moment. To consider their position, responsibilities and legacy as diplomats and citizens of Russia and stop their complicit propagation of President Putin's lies to their own people.

Whilst these lies continue, the Kremlin's war machine lumbers on. Frustrated by staunch Ukrainian resistance, the Russian military has increasingly resorted to attacking indiscriminately from distance using: Multi-launch Rocket Systems, Iskander Ballistic Missiles, Artillery, Air-to-Ground Attack and cruise missiles to attack all major Ukrainian cities, critical national civilian infrastructure, including sea ports, residential areas, and even hospitals. Russia is using cluster munitions and thermobaric rockets, weapons designed to inflict maximum damage wherever they are deployed.

Mr Chair, we heard my Russian colleague's ridiculous claims that Ukraine was responsible for the impact on commercial shipping in the region. I would note that it is Russian naval forces that have established a distant blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, effectively isolating Ukraine from international maritime trade. And, it is Russia that has targeted several foreign flagged commercial vessels over the past weeks. Russian naval forces are also continuing to conduct missile strikes against targets throughout Ukraine.

Russia has unleashed a horrendous amount of violence on the Ukrainian people. In particular, the atrocious and indiscriminate destruction of Mariupol and the resulting civilian casualties is unforgivable. It should sit heavily on all of us in this room (including our Russian colleagues) as humans, diplomats, and military advisers. The UK has offered technical support to the International Criminal Court in bringing those responsible for war crimes in Ukraine to justice – including support in the immediate priority of gathering and preserving evidence. Russian commanders carrying out war crimes should know they cannot act with impunity. The world is watching, and their actions risk landing them in a jail cell. Nobody is forgotten, and nothing is forgotten.

Mr Chair, my Russian colleague again insisted that the so-called "Special Military Operation" is going to plan. But it is not. For the first time this week, Russia has finally admitted so. The Chief of Russia's National Guard, Viktor Zolotov, announced it should my Russian colleague need the reference.

Russia is paying a high price for each advance as the Ukrainian Armed Forces continues to offer staunch resistance across the country.

The Ukrainian people's response in the defence of their homeland against a foreign invasion has been stoic, united and defiant. From President Zelenskyy's leadership from Kyiv to the thousands upon thousands of Ukrainians who have volunteered to join the territorial defence, their displays of courage, determination, and resolve will go down in history.

The United Kingdom, along with many others, repeatedly warned that any Russian military incursion into Ukraine would be a massive strategic mistake and would come at a severe cost. In this regard, we continue to support Ukraine, our friends, in their fight for their homeland.

We have so far provided Ukraine with nearly 4000 light, anti-armour defensive weapons systems or NLAWs, and we will shortly begin delivery of a small consignment of anti-tank Javelin missiles as well. These help Ukraine defend against the armoured forces threat it faces.

The UK Government has also taken the decision to explore the donation of Starstreak, high velocity, man-portable anti air missiles. This defensive weapon system would allow the Armed Forces of Ukraine to better defend their skies.

Mr Chair, I would reiterate, all of our support to the democratic sovereign nation of Ukraine is defensive in nature and will help them defend themselves against this Russian war of aggression.

We will make the Russian government pay the price of its actions. The UK stands with the Ukrainian people in their fight for their homeland. We will work with our partners – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is restored.

Thank you. And I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

CMA clears Sony's acquisition of AWAL

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) referred the merger to an in-depth Phase 2 inquiry in September 2021, after identifying competition concerns during its initial Phase 1 investigation.

In February 2022 the CMA provisionally concluded that the deal does not substantially reduce competition in the UK and may not be expected to do so in the future. Following a consultation that ended on 4 March 2022, the CMA has upheld its provisional findings and cleared the deal.

Sony is one of the three major record labels active in the UK today, along with Warner and Universal Music Group. In addition to its main label offering, Sony Music Entertainment, Sony also owns The Orchard, an A&L services provider. A&L services typically cover promotion, marketing and distribution. They also allow artists to retain full ownership of their copyrights and a greater percentage of royalties. A&L contracts tend to provide a narrower set of services with less financial support and shorter-term contracts than traditional record contracts.

AWAL is an emerging music distributor offering an alternative to traditional music deals by providing both A&L services and a 'DIY platform' that allows artists to upload their own music for distribution.

The CMA's inquiry focused on the 2 main areas in which the firms' businesses overlap. It assessed the extent to which The Orchard and AWAL may be expected to compete to provide A&L services. It also looked at how closely Sony and AWAL may be expected to compete to sign successful artists, and those with the potential to become successful, where higher levels of support and investment are provided.

The CMA found that, while not currently competing closely due to their different areas of focus, The Orchard may have become a stronger rival to AWAL in the supply of artist services in future. However, there are many other providers who will continue to compete effectively with both firms – including independent A&L companies, the A&L branches of the other major labels (like Warner's ADA and Universal Music Group's Virgin) and independent labels.

In terms of its rivalry with Sony, AWAL is still a relatively small player when it comes to signing artists who require higher levels of support and investment. Despite trying to expand its offering, AWAL was expected to continue to compete with Sony only on a limited basis. In the course of its investigation, the CMA also found that many other firms have begun providing similar services which can be expected to make up for the limited loss of competition from AWAL.

As part of its assessment, the CMA considered a wide range of evidence, including thousands of internal documents from both firms, evidence submitted by their competitors and customers, and its own analysis of market conditions.

Margot Daly, Chair of the independent CMA Inquiry Group, said:

We launched this inquiry as we wanted to be sure that this deal wouldn't lead to worse outcomes for artists and fans. The music industry is vital to the UK economy and effective competition ensures that it works for everybody.

Having carefully assessed the merger we found that it is not likely to affect competition in a way that will reduce the choice or quality of recorded music available or increase prices.

For more information, visit the [Sony / AWAL merger inquiry page](#).

The CMA is committed to making sure markets are working well for music fans and [recently launched a separate probe into music streaming](#), paying particular attention to the roles played by record labels and music streaming services.

1. All the CMA's functions in Phase 2 merger inquiries are performed by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's panel members. The members of this inquiry group are Margot Daly (Chair), Paul Hughes, John Thanassoulis and Ashleye Gunn. The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience.
2. The CMA ran a 3-week consultation on the provisional findings up to 4 March 2022, during which time anyone could make submissions to the CMA. The responses are published on the merger [inquiry page](#).
3. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
4. The CMA launched a separate [market study into music and streaming services](#) on 27 January 2022.
5. For media queries, please contact the press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.