

UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children

World news story

The UK delivered this statement and outlined its concerns about the continued complex and evolving threat posed by online child sexual exploitation and abuse.



UK Government

Thank you, Mr President.

The United Kingdom thanks the Special Rapporteur for her ongoing work in this very important area. We agree with the Special Rapporteur that we can continue to learn from each other through sharing insights and practical approaches to tackle the horrific crime of child sexual exploitation.

The UK is committed to tackling all forms of child sexual exploitation, and shares the Special Rapporteur's view that action is needed right across

local, national, and global levels to strengthen our individual and collective responses to keep children safe online and in communities across the world.

The UK remains particularly concerned about the continued complex and evolving threat posed by online child sexual exploitation and abuse. We will shortly be introducing Online Safety legislation into the UK Parliament which will place safety duties on platforms to protect their users, overseen by an independent regulator. We are also continuing to work with international partners to encourage action and transparent implementation of the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation.

We would like to ask the Special Rapporteur, what further collective measures should we prioritise to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse online?

Thank you.

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[Defence Procurement Minister statement on National Shipbuilding](#)

With permission Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on behalf of my colleague, the Defence Secretary, the Shipbuilding Tsar concerning the Government's refresh of the [National Shipbuilding Strategy](#).

The United Kingdom is a great maritime nation and shipbuilding runs in our blood. At the turn of the last century Britain built 60 per cent of the world's ships and, while we are no longer the world's workshop, our shipbuilding industry remains a global leader in design and technology. It brings in billions to our economy and spreads wealth right the way across our country.

Today our maritime manufacturers are responsible for the state-of-the-art research vessel RSS Attenborough and for constructing the most powerful surface ship ever built in Britain – the Queen Elizabeth class carriers. More than 42,600 people from Appledore to Rosyth owe their livelihoods to this industry.

But, still we need to strengthen the resilience of our shipbuilding industry. It's worth reminding ourselves that even in the digital age, some 95 per cent of UK trade by volume and 90 per cent by value is carried by sea. Given this dependence, it's vital we continue safeguarding our access to global maritime trade even as we open up our sails and seek out new markets and new sustainable technologies.

That's why, in 2019, the Prime Minister appointed the Defence Secretary as the Shipbuilding Tsar. Since then he has been working tirelessly across Government to make our shipbuilding sector more productive, more competitive, more innovative, more ambitious.

There has been real progress.

Not only do we have much greater cross-Whitehall and industry co-operation but we are doubling MOD shipbuilding investment over the life of this Parliament to more than £1.7 billion a year.

We have committed to procuring a formidable future fleet including up to five Type 32 frigates, alongside the Type 31 and Type 26 programmes. We will be growing our fleet of frigates and destroyers over the current number of 19 by the end of the decade.

We have launched a competition to build a National Flagship – the first ship of its kind built and commissioned in Britain.

And last September we opened up a National Shipbuilding Office. A pan-Governmental organisation, reporting directly to the Shipbuilding Inter-Ministerial Group and chaired by the Shipbuilding Tsar that is driving transformative change across our organisation.

Today, I'm delighted to announce we are going one step further by publishing our refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Drawing on the multi-talented skills of Government, industry and academia and backed up by more than £4 billion of Government investment over the next three years, this plan creates the framework of our future UK maritime success.

It contains five essential elements:

First, it radically extends the scope of our existing Shipbuilding strategy. I may be standing here as a Defence Minister but, rest assured, this plan is as much about commercial shipbuilding as it is the Royal Navy. Nor are we simply focused on hulls alone but internal systems and sub-systems as well.

Secondly, we are establishing a 30-year shipbuilding pipeline of more than 150 vessels – offering a clear demand signal about our future requirements.

We know a regular drumbeat of design and manufacturing work is vital, not just to maintain our critical national security capabilities, but to drive the efficiencies that reduce longer-term cost.

But we're not just giving suppliers confidence in industry order books, we are going to give them greater clarity about our requirements too. Today we set out our policy and technology priorities – from net-zero commitments to social value requirements.

And we are also determined to ensure these vast shipbuilding programmes leave a lasting legacy that goes beyond procuring a new vessel for the Border Force

or the latest battle-winning warship. So we have made it a key requirement for shipbuilders to take account of social value – ensuring we not only deliver the capabilities that each Department needs, but that taxpayers' money is being used to maximum effect. We support jobs, skills and investment, and we will establish a new social value minimum for competitions for Royal Navy vessels of 20 per cent.

Thirdly, our strategy will accelerate innovation. Enabling shipwrights and supply chains to unlock new manufacturing, production and clean maritime technologies.

In recent times, the automotive industry has blazed a trail in the field of sustainability investing in everything from electric to hydrogen to ammonia fuel technologies. But, domestic shipping accounts for more emissions than the bus and rail sector combined. When it comes to decarbonisation, it's high time we made sure shipping doesn't end up in the slow lane.

In 2019 Department for Transport published its Maritime 2050 strategy – amplifying the power of UK maritime business clusters to foster a climate of innovation.

And last year's Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition underlined the sheer depth of the sector's potential with 55 projects winning a share of £23 million to develop carbon-free solutions such as hydrogen fuelled vessels, and shipping charge-points powered by offshore wind turbines.

Building on this success, we will now make this competition a regular event. Creating more opportunities for industry to bring their cutting-edge technologies to market.

Alongside this, I can also announce today that the Department for Transport has committed £206 million to develop a UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions. It will fund research and development into zero emission vessels and help roll out the infrastructure that enables the UK to achieve its goal of becoming a world leader in sustainable maritime technologies.

Shipbuilding is a long-term investment. The more we can do to shelter it from market storms the better. So, the fourth aspect of our plan is about providing greater financial support for shipbuilders to win orders.

Access to finance for underwriting contracts is an essential element of any shipbuilding enterprise. Alongside banks and working capital loans, Government too has a role to play in helping finance vessel contracts.

UK Export Finance already offers credit facilities to support British companies winning work overseas. But to make UK shipbuilders more competitive when bidding for orders for new ships from domestic customers, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is now working on plans to underwrite contracts for UK shipbuilders building ships for UK operation. BEIS aims to launch this new Home Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme in May.

Switching to exports, opportunity is opening up for suppliers to increase

their market share. In 2020 we exported £2.2 billion of ships, boats and floating structures. But we believe we should be able to grow our exports by 45 per cent by 2030. To make that happen we're opening a new Maritime Capability Campaign Office. Covering all aspects of the shipbuilding enterprise, from platforms, to sub-systems, to the supply chain, it will use robust industry analysis of global markets to help suppliers reach untapped markets.

Of course, our success in the long-term will hinge on the strength of our skills base. This brings me to the final aspect of our plan. We are determined to develop the next generation of shipbuilding talent. So today we're establishing a UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce. Led by the Department for Education and working in tandem with the NSO and Devolved Administrations, it will bridge skills gaps and learn from best practice – particularly in relation to new and emerging technologies. Above all, it will act as megaphone for the varied and exciting careers that shipbuilding can offer up and down the country from designing cutting-edge environmentally friendly ferries to developing propulsion systems for complex warships.

The building blocks of our refreshed Strategy are settling into place. Our NSO and Maritime Capability Campaign Office are up and running. Our UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce is accepting applications from today. And, in the coming months, we will be establishing a new Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth. Co-chaired by the CEO of the National Shipbuilding Office and a senior industry executive, it will unite the finest minds in shipping to overcome some of the sector's toughest challenges.

In other words, today we offer a powerful vision of what shipbuilding will look like in 2030.

A vision of a supercharged sector with thousands of highly skilled workers.

A vision to make this country the country of choice for specialist commercial and naval vessels and systems, components and technologies.

A vision that generates the increased investment to level up our nation. And a vision that will spark a British shipbuilding renaissance and inspire ever more countries to seek out that 'Made-in-Britain' stamp.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the framework is ready. Now we will be working with our superb shipbuilders, our supply chains and across Government to help transform this great ambition into a prosperous reality.

And I commend this Refreshed Strategy and Statement to the House.

[UK Shipbuilding Taskforce launched to boost skills and jobs](#)

The Department for Education (DfE) is today (10 March) calling on experts from the shipbuilding industry to [apply](#) to become a member of the first UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce.

Following the publication of the refreshed cross-government [National Shipbuilding Strategy](#), which sets out a package of government measures aimed at fostering a shipbuilding renaissance across the UK, the DfE will lead work to establish a UK wide Taskforce to develop a world-leading skills strategy to support the industry.

The Taskforce will last for 18 months and aims to build a picture of the industry's skills needs and provide solutions to skills shortages – particularly those related to new and emerging technologies and zero-emissions shipping. Partnering industry experts with training providers, the Taskforce will collect best practice from across the shipbuilding sector to plug skills gaps and promote shipbuilding career opportunities.

Minister for Skills Alex Burghart said:

We are looking for a chair and members for our new Taskforce that will supercharge the shipbuilding industry, bringing together experts who will work together to develop a plan to plug skills gaps and get more people into rewarding jobs.

These roles are an exciting opportunity for people who have the skills, knowledge, and experience to be at the forefront of this vital work, helping to level up opportunities for people across the UK and ensure our fantastic shipbuilding industry will go from strength to strength.

Working closely with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Transport (DfT), the Taskforce will also work to ensure training providers are empowered to meet the industry's requirements, drawing on best practice from other sectors and national skills approaches to optimise the available skills funding and opportunities for shipbuilding.

Chair of the Maritime Skills Commission, Graham Baldwin, said:

The Maritime Skills Commission welcomes the establishment of the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST) which comes at a crucial time for the sector. The Commission is committed to ensuring the maritime sector has the skills it requires for building back better and the transition to net-zero, but it is imperative that this

supported by Government and industry. Attracting and retaining a diverse pipeline of skilled workers is a priority and the Commission will work closely with the UKSST to ensure this happens. We are delighted to welcome the Chair of the UKSST onto the Commission and together we will work closely to tackle the skills challenges and opportunities now and into the future.

[Applications are now open online](#) for a chair and members for the Taskforce with experience in and a passion for shipbuilding.

Recruitment process for Victims' Commissioner launched

Press release

The government has launched the recruitment process for the Victims' Commissioner in line with the standard public appointments process.



The competition will run from today until 4 April with the successful candidate taking on the role in the following months.

It comes as the government embarks on landmark reforms for victims, including new legislation to ensure they are better heard, served and supported by the criminal justice system. The role of the commissioner will be crucial in delivering this which is why as part of the Victims' Bill consultation ministers are considering evidence on the role's responsibilities.

Meanwhile, the government is investing nearly half a billion to provide the swift justice that victims deserve, and progress continues on the Rape Action Plan in order to increase the volume of prosecutions flowing through the system.

The commissioner will be integral in working alongside government to restore

confidence in the justice system, and ministers are determined to seek the very best candidate.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab said:

The Victims' Commissioner role is vital in holding the Government and criminal justice agencies to account and being the voice for those affected by crime.

I'm keen that all these roles are open to competition so we always have the best candidate in post, and have invited Dame Vera to re-apply as part of the process.

The commissioner position is being opened to competition as the fixed-term appointment comes to end, as is common with public appointments. Dame Vera has been invited to reapply.

Notes to Editors

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[Home Secretary update on support for Ukrainians](#)

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to update the House on the government's humanitarian response to Putin's depraved war on Ukraine.

As the House knows, the UK's humanitarian support for Ukraine has been developed following close consultation with their government and governments in the region.

On 4 March, I launched the Ukraine Family Scheme. It applies to immediate and extended Ukrainian family members and everyone eligible is granted 3 years' leave to enter or remain.

Today, I want to set out further changes I am making to the process to make it quicker and simpler. I have 2 overarching obligations: first to keep the British people safe. Second to do all we can to help Ukrainians.

No Home Secretary can take these decisions lightly and I am in daily contact with the intelligence and security agencies who are providing me with regular threat assessments.

What happened in Salisbury showed what Putin is willing to do on our soil. It also demonstrated that a small number of people with evil intentions can wreak havoc on our streets.

This morning I received assurances which enable me to announce changes to the Ukraine Family Scheme. Based on the new advice I have received, I am now in a position to announce that vital security checks will continue on all cases.

From Tuesday, I can announce that Ukrainians with passports will no longer need to go to a Visa Application Centre to give their biometrics before they come to the UK.

Instead, once their application has been considered and the appropriate checks completed, they will receive direct notification that they are eligible for the scheme and can come to the UK.

In short, Ukrainians with passports will be able to get permission to come here, fully online, from wherever they are; and will be able to give their biometrics once in Britain.

This will mean, Mr Speaker, that Visa Application Centres across Europe can focus their efforts on helping Ukrainians without passports. We have increased the capacity at those centres to over 13,000 appointments per week.

This streamlined approach will be operational as of Tuesday 15 March, in order to make the relevant technology and IT changes.

I will, Mr Speaker, of course update the House if the security picture changes and if it becomes necessary to make further changes to protect our domestic homeland security.

Threat assessments are always changing, and we will always keep our approach under review.

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, I once again salute the heroism of the Ukrainian people.