

Russia is trying to maximise civilian hardship over winter: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair. On 31 October, Russia launched a wave of missile attacks targeting hydroelectric dams and other critical infrastructure across Ukraine. Strikes were reported close to Kyiv, and in at least 10 other cities and regions. Around twenty energy facilities were hit, including hydroelectric plants in Zaporizhzhia, Kremenchuk, and the Dniester dam close to the border with Moldova. Millions across Ukraine faced power outages and in some cities, including Kyiv, Dnipro and Zhytomyr, they lost water supply.

These have direct human costs. According to the head of the Kyiv regional hospital, all surgeries were cancelled, as surgeons could not sterilise their theatres or tools. Cities closer to the front-line, such as Nikopol, went for days without power. In Mykolaiv, where Russia cut off the city's water supplies over six months ago, residents have had to queue at distribution points near the frontline, braving frequent shelling. I want to focus my statement this week on energy, the environment and food supply.

Mr Chair, as we have flagged in previous weeks, Russia is trying to maximise civilian hardship over winter. According to President Zelenskyy, Russia has already damaged or destroyed about 40% of Ukraine's civil energy infrastructure. And we know that vulnerable groups suffer disproportionately – be it the elderly, those with medical conditions or disabilities. As President Putin will be aware, attacks which disproportionately kill civilians, and destroy objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, are prohibited under international humanitarian law. It is morally bankrupt.

Ukraine's tireless efforts to repair infrastructure and restore services have once again demonstrated the resilience of the Ukrainian people. As Ukraine prepares for what will be a tough winter, the UK has donated 850 generators, guaranteed a £50m loan for Ukraine's electricity grid operator, and will shortly disburse £10m to the Energy Community's fund for energy equipment. We will not let Ukraine face this winter alone.

In addition to the lives lost, the environment is another victim of Russia's ongoing invasion. Four months ago, the World Bank estimated that reconstruction and recovery would cost about USD 349 billion. Of this, the decontamination of land would cost over USD 70 billion, agriculture 19 billion and energy 10 billion. The numbers today would certainly be significantly higher. Russian attacks have degraded and polluted Ukrainian land and water, which will take decades to remedy. We deplore Russia's persistent violent actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine, including at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. This significantly raises the risk of a nuclear incident, endangering the population of Ukraine, neighbouring States and the international community. In addition, as we have mentioned previously, the IAEA have been invited by Ukraine in the name of

transparency, and there is no evidence to back up Russia's false allegations that Ukraine is preparing to use a "dirty bomb" – we once again call on Russia to desist from its nuclear rhetoric.

Mr Chair, the Black Sea Grain Initiative is vital to global food security, and a matter of life or death for 100 million people at risk of extreme poverty. An average of 100,000 tons of grain is exported each day under the Black Sea Grain initiative – enough to feed 5 million people for a month. We welcome an extension of this initiative. But Mr Chair – President Putin must stop weaponising food and hunger. He realised he shot himself in the foot by earlier stopping ships from entering Ukrainian ports to load up grain to feed the world. The Grain Initiative must now be extended beyond November without further Russian impediments.

Mr Chair, we will support Ukraine for as long as it takes to restore its territorial integrity, recover and rebuild. In the face of these challenges to its energy infrastructure, its environment and food supply stemming from Russia's illegal invasion – Ukraine will win. Ukraine will rebuild. And Ukraine will flourish.

[Bedlington recycling site fire to be extinguished](#)

Press release

An operation to extinguish an ongoing fire at a green waste composting site in Bedlington, will commence today under close supervision by the Environment Agency.



Environment Agency officers on site monitoring the activity to extinguish the fire

A fire at Green Leaf Recycling Ltd first broke out on 31 August 2022 and

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) attended the site to bring the fire under control.

Following advice from Northumberland FRS there has been a controlled burn of the remaining waste wood on site which has continued to generate low level smoke and odour in the area. Now that the burn is under control, Green Leaf Recycling Ltd, the site operator, will start to extinguish the fire on Thursday 3 November following advice from the fire service.

Environment Agency officers will be closely supervising the work done by Green Leaf Recycling Ltd to ensure there is minimal impact on the environment to bring this incident to a conclusion.

This operation is expected to take a few days to complete and may cause a temporary increase in smoke and odour coming from the site until the fire is completely extinguished.

The material on the site is clean waste wood which poses a low risk to health and the environment, however, people are advised to keep windows and doors closed if they are affected by this.

The green waste composting activities at the site are authorised by an Environmental Permit issued by the Environment Agency.

If you have any queries relating to this then please contact the local Regulated Industry team at ne-waste@environment-agency.gov.uk.

If local residents have environmental concerns they should contact the Environment Agency's 24/7 hotline on 0800 807060.

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[Social media users set to benefit from new hidden advertising protections](#)

- New principles for platforms to follow to protect users
- Influencers told gifts must be disclosed as well as payment
- Brands warned that compliance is their responsibility too

Everyone involved in creating content and posting this on social media must take responsibility to ensure all ads are labelled correctly.

Working alongside the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Ofcom, social media companies and content creators, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has produced a suite of resources designed to help those publishing and

sharing paid promotions to comply with consumer protection law. This work builds on [commitments made by Instagram in 2020](#) to tackle hidden advertising on its site.

Three separate guides set out the expectations for social media platforms, brands and influencers about being open and upfront when it comes to paid promotions, as well as explaining the roles and responsibilities of the different regulators of online advertising.

George Lusty, CMA Senior Director of Consumer Protection, said:

Hidden adverts are illegal and harmful. They could persuade people to spend money on things they might not buy if they knew the endorsement was paid for, which is even more concerning now people's finances are squeezed.

Transparency is everyone's responsibility – from social media platforms to brands and influencers. Those not already doing their part should get up to speed with the law now, to make sure people can quickly and easily identify paid-for content. Following our guides will help them with this.

The 'Compliance Principles' set out how social media platforms should prevent and tackle hidden advertising appearing on their sites. These principles apply to all social media platforms and the CMA expects them to be followed. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest and Twitch have engaged constructively with the CMA in drawing up the guidelines.

The principles require platforms to be proactive in tackling hidden advertising, including by:

- Providing their users with tools to label commercial content and to report suspected hidden advertising
- Improving information to content creators and influencers about what to label as a paid-for endorsement
- Improving policies and taking action where hidden advertising is found
- Using technology to identify suspected hidden advertising for action

Guidance for businesses/brands

The guide helps make brands aware of their responsibility to tackle hidden advertising. This includes:

- being clear with influencers who they pay or send gifts to that they must label these posts in an obvious way
- taking action where this does not happen – for example, contacting influencers who are promoting products or services on their behalf and asking them to remove or amend posts to accurately reflect the commercial relationship

The guidance is clear that when posts are shared as part of a wider campaign, businesses themselves can be held accountable for misleading customers, as well as influencers.

Guidance for influencers

The CMA's guide reminds content creators that misleading customers through hidden adverts could be in breach of consumer protection law and that people should be able to recognise an advert as soon as they view it. This includes when influencers are paid to post, when they receive gifts and when they post on behalf of a brand they own or are employed by. Posts should clearly display that they are paid-for endorsements using #Ad or #Advert and not use unclear terms, such as: #gift, #gifted, or #spon, among other ambiguous hashtags.

Separately, the CMA and ASA's existing 'Guide for influencers' sets out clearly what influencers need to do when sharing paid-for and promoted content online.

The ASA can [take action to ban undisclosed ads by influencers](#) and, where an influencer appears unwilling or unable to abide by the rules, impose further sanctions.

Guy Parker, Chief Executive of the ASA, said:

We welcome this guidance, which adds to the existing resources the ASA and CMA have produced to help platforms, brands and influencers stick to the rules. Platforms have an important role to play in making sure advertising content is clearly recognisable. We will continue to work closely with the CMA in this key area.

For more information on the CMA's work to improve transparency of paid-for endorsements on social media platforms, visit the [social media endorsements case page](#) including the CMA's guides.

Notes to editors:

1. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk or by phone on 020 3738 6460.
2. Currently, only a court can decide if consumer protection law has been broken. On 22 April 2022, Government announced that it intends to legislate to give the CMA the power to enforce consumer protection law directly – meaning, to make a legal finding that a company has breached consumer law. Amongst other things, this would enable the CMA to fine companies for breaches. To note – this has not yet been passed into law.
3. If in doubt about their legal obligations, content creators and businesses should seek legal advice.

Russia “plunging world’s poorest further into despair” – Foreign Secretary to tell G7 partners

- The Foreign Secretary will meet G7 partners in Münster, Germany this week
- He will use the talks to call out the impact of Russia’s war on civilians in Ukraine and around the world, and the need to sustain Ukraine’s self-defence
- This follows Russia’s weaponisation of food, water and energy, and its missile and drone strikes against Ukraine’s energy infrastructure

As Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine causes widespread devastation, its global impact continues to generate lasting damage to the world’s most vulnerable – driving up food and energy prices and putting supplies at risk. To discuss the international response, the Foreign Secretary James Cleverly is in Germany today (3 November) for the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Münster.

The Foreign Secretary will say that the G7 must work with partners across the world in the face of Russian aggression and the resulting economic insecurity, building resilience against Putin’s weaponisation of energy, food and water.

James Cleverly will say that Putin’s exploitation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative shows his willingness to hold the world’s vulnerable hostage.

On Saturday, Russia said it was suspending its participation in the initiative, which allows food vital to developing countries to be exported safely from Ukraine. On Wednesday, it resumed participation. From the first ship leaving Odesa on 1 August, nearly 10 million tonnes of grain have been exported under the initiative.

This deliberate uncertainty caused by Russia raises fears around the security of food supply. The UK and its allies continue to urge Russia to agree an extension to the UN-brokered deal beyond its 19 November deadline.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

While we are steadfast in our support for Ukraine, we must not

forget that the impacts of Russia's aggression, interference and hostility extend across the world.

Putin's actions are plunging the world's poorest further into despair, putting global food security on the brink and pushing up energy prices.

These actions only serve to demonstrate Putin's true intentions and further unite the international community against his callous plans.

Germany has also invited Ghana, Kenya and the African Union to join the meeting for discussions on collaboration with the G7 on climate change, infrastructure, defending democracy and addressing conflict and humanitarian crises.

Also on the agenda for the G7 will be the growing protests in Iran, stability in the Indo-Pacific, and the role of China in the wider world.

The Foreign Ministers will discuss the situation in Taiwan, particularly following the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party last month, and how the G7 can strengthen partnerships with countries in the region to build prosperity and protect shared values.

Before arriving in Münster, the Foreign Secretary will represent the UK at the Berlin Process Summit on the Western Balkans, where he will call for a joint response to Russia's destabilising actions in the region, including taking steps to reduce the region's reliance on Russian energy.

[Skills for Prosperity Helps Opening STEM Centre in Oaxaca](#)

As part of the Skills for Prosperity programme (SFPMX Mexico), His Majesty's Ambassador to Mexico, Jon Benjamin, officially inaugurated the STEM Centre at the Technological University of the Central Valley of Oaxaca (TUCVO). This university is located in the heart of one of Mexico's states with the highest levels of poverty.

Skills for Prosperity is a development programme of the UK government that focuses on improving the access of marginalised youth to quality and market-aligned vocational training and higher education. Through this initiative and thanks to co-funding from the University and the Iberoamerican STEM Academy, a non-governmental organisation, the Ambassador Jon Benjamin unveiled a plaque to officially inaugurate the STEM Centre at the Technological

University of the Central Valley of Oaxaca.

The Centre will provide assistance and technological support to at least 1,700 students interested in deepening their knowledge in science, technology, engineering and maths. This is of special relevance considering the high levels of poverty in Zimatlan, the rural community where the university is located which has a strong indigenous presence and difficult physical access.

For this initiative, the TUCVO invested £15,000 in building the Centres' facilities and the SFPMX invested close to £80,000 in capacity building for the University through trainings and technical certifications to professors. This included soft skills training highlighting the importance of breaching the gap for women in science. The Iberoamerican STEM Academy invested nearly £80,000 to equip the robotics, automation and programming classrooms of the Centre and the Oaxaca State Government will also participate in this initiative by providing additional equipment worth £100,000.

During the unveiling ceremony of the Centre, the Ambassador Jon Benjamin awarded the teachers certifications for having completed these courses, and had the opportunity to meet some of the students that have already benefited from the STEM Centre through its courses on robotics and programming.

The STEM Centre is equipped with computers for programming in languages such as Python (used to build websites and software), robotic arms and other technical components. The Centre had already benefited students even before its inauguration, by providing the necessary equipment and training that allowed a group of students to participate in the 2022 National Robotics and STEM Skills Championship. Even though this was the first time that students from the TUCVO had the opportunity to participate in this competition, the team won the first place in the category of collaborative robotic arms.

Ramsés García, a student of mechatronics at TUCVO said:

The equipment and computer systems in the Centre allow us to have practical experience of the acquired knowledge, and are focused to the labour market demands. I feel grateful to the TUCVO and the UK Government for offering this opportunity to further my skills.

Similarly, Emilia Ramírez shared:

Here I am learning how to programme in Python language, build small robots and how to operate advance robotic arms used to automatize manufacturing processes.

Through the creation of the STEM Centre at the Technological University of the Central Valley of Oaxaca, the Skills for Prosperity programme seeks to

bring women and vulnerable populations in remote regions of Oaxaca closer to fields of study such as robotics, industrial design and software programming, therefore contributing to the reduction of local employment gaps for marginalised youth in Mexico.