

# Belarus: Statement following conclusion of Constitutional Referendum in Belarus

The Constitutional Referendum in Belarus failed to meet international standards or offer the Belarusian people a true set of options. The lack of international observers or proper public consultation demonstrates the regime's blatant attempts to prevent a democratic process. Furthermore, the arbitrary arrests and crackdown on protests seen during voting was unacceptable.

This result follows the flawed Presidential elections in 2020 where opposition candidates, journalists and peaceful protestors were imprisoned, and protests were brutally suppressed. It also takes place amidst Belarus' unacceptable support of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We support the Belarusian people's demand for the right to determine their own futures. We urge the authorities to engage in inclusive national dialogue with the democratic opposition and civil society.

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# UK and New Zealand sign comprehensive trade deal

- International Trade Secretary signs UK-New Zealand free trade deal in meeting with New Zealand minister Damien O'Connor in London
- UK-New Zealand trade expected to see a boost of almost 60% under the deal, helping the UK Build Back Better from the pandemic
- Agreement will see red tape slashed for the UK's world-leading tech, creative and services companies
- Deal drives towards accession to Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – which had a GDP of £8.4 trillion in 2020

The UK has signed a far-reaching trade deal with New Zealand that will remove trade barriers on a huge range of UK goods and services and provide new opportunities for British businesses.

The deal has been signed by International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan and New Zealand Minister for Trade and Export Growth Damien O'Connor. After reaching agreement in principle last October negotiators have worked intensely to finalise the agreement.

The UK-New Zealand trade relationship was worth £2.3 billion in 2020 and is now expected to increase by almost 60%, boosting our economy by £800 million and increasing wages across the UK.

Under the new deal, tariffs will be eliminated on all UK exports to New Zealand, including current tariffs of up to 10% on clothing and footwear, 5% on buses and up to 5% on ships, bulldozers and excavators.

Smaller businesses will also find it easier to break into the New Zealand market as a result of modernised customs procedures, such as digital documents and customs clearance as quick as six hours.

Other UK benefits include:

- UK professionals, such as lawyers and auditors, being able to work in New Zealand more easily, and bring their families with them.
- Red tape being slashed for the 5,900 UK SMEs who export goods to New Zealand and employ 233,000 people.
- Guarantees for small businesses who will benefit from practical advice and support to find opportunities and link to commercial partners in New Zealand.
- Flexible rules of origin that will give British exporters an advantage over international rivals in the New Zealand import market, which is expected to grow by 30% by 2030.

UK consumers will also have access to a standalone consumer chapter, while high-quality products that British shoppers love could become more affordable, including Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, Manuka Honey and kiwi fruit.

This deal is the most advanced agreement New Zealand have signed with any nation bar Australia and is part of our ambitious strategy to deepen trade ties with like-minded partners and create a more predictable, free and fair framework for UK businesses.

It is one of our greenest deals ever, confirming commitments to the Paris agreement and Net Zero. It will liberalise tariffs on the largest list of environmental goods in any FTA to date and encourage trade and investment in low carbon services and technology.

**International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:** "This deal will

slash red tape, remove all tariffs and make it easier for our services companies to set up and prosper in New Zealand.

“Our trade with New Zealand will soar, benefiting businesses and consumers throughout the UK and helping level up the whole country.

“Like all our new trade deals, it is part of a plan to build a network of trade alliances with the most dynamic parts of the world economy, so we set the UK on a path to future prosperity.”

The agreement is one of a series of advanced deals with leading nations that will update trade rules for the digital age, building on the groundbreaking Digital Trade Principles agreed by G7 countries under the UK’s Presidency.

It is also a vital part of our plan to build new trade routes for services, which the UK excels at, and to refocus Britain on the faster-growing parts of the world in the Asia-Pacific region, including accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a vast free trade area populated by half a billion people and with a joint GDP of £8.4 trillion in 2020.

**Vincent Keaveny, Lord Mayor of the City of London, said:** “This deal will strengthen trade between the UK and New Zealand, deepen market access and make it easier for people to operate in each other’s economies.

“From the lawyers advising on contracts, to the ships transporting goods, and the banks providing the financing – financial and professional services are the glue which binds the international trading system.

“As a newly independent trading nation I’m proud to see the UK blazing a trail in this area with New Zealand, a country with which we share close cultural, historical and familial ties.

**Mike Cherry, FSB National Chair, said:** “New Zealand is a key market for UK small businesses – close to a third of smaller exporters already have ties to the nation. As such, this deal marks a great step forward, and we are pleased to see inclusion of a dedicated SME chapter that will help more small businesses from both countries to take part in international trade and, in doing so, spur our global economic recovery.

“We also welcome the important additional measures outlined as part of the agreement, not least around the streamlining of self-declaration of origin procedures and bringing more small businesses into government supply chains.”

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[\*\*National Highways urges drivers to use\*\*](#)

# the two-second rule in new campaign

Eight in 10 people questioned in a National Highways poll said they were aware of the 'two-second rule' when they took to the wheel. While three-quarters (75%) said they had never driven too close to the vehicle in front within the previous three months.

Yet a recent trial of new tailgating cameras on a stretch of the M1 captured 60,343 incidents of vehicles driving too close, in just one year.

National Highways has now launched a campaign to tackle the issue of tailgating which is a factor in around one in eight crashes on England's motorways and major A roads.

National Highways Head of Road Safety, Jeremy Phillips, said:

Unfortunately, as highlighted by the M1 trial, we know that too many people are driving too close on our roads.

Most tailgating is unintentional by drivers who don't realise that they are infringing on someone else's space. But not leaving enough space between you and the vehicle in front is not only very frightening for that driver, it could have devastating consequences.

The closer you get, the less time you have to react and to stop safely. So to avoid inadvertently getting too close to the vehicle in front, we would urge drivers to use the two-second rule and to always 'stay safe, stay back'.

The Highway Code tells drivers to allow at least a two-second gap between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying faster-moving traffic and in tunnels where visibility is reduced. The gap should be wider as speeds increase. It rises to 2.4 seconds – about 53 metres – when driving at 50mph and 3.1 seconds – or 96 metres – at 70mph.

Furthermore, the gap should be at least doubled on wet roads and increased still further on icy roads.

To use the rule, drivers should allow the vehicle in front to pass a fixed object such as a lamp post or road sign then count to two seconds. If they reach two seconds before reaching the reference marker they need to drop back.

The picture below shows how intimidating it can be when someone is driving too close.

Most drivers would realise this car is driving too close.

But this second image gives the viewpoint of the second driver – and the close following isn't quite as obvious. When asked, a large number of people seemed to think a gap of this size was acceptable.

Would you consider this too close?

Around one third of respondents in the research for National Highways stated that leaving a gap of 1-2 car lengths was sufficient.

In both pictures the distance is 7.5m so at 50mph this gap is approximately 0.34 seconds compared with a gap of 53m or 2.4 seconds which should be left at this speed.

Last year National Highways and Northamptonshire Police joined forces in a trial to raise awareness and deter tailgating. Cameras were used on lane one of a stretch of the M1 over 12 months to automatically detect vehicles driving too close.

National Highways has now released the figures from the trial when there were:

- 60,343 detections
- 10,994 repeat offenders
- 2,144 letters sent to drivers warning they had driven too close and highlighting the dangers of not leaving safe braking distances

Drivers caught in the trial were not prosecuted but advised they had been tailgating and given educational material demonstrating the dangers of driving too close.

National Highways will use the results of the trial to inform future work on tailgating.

Driving too close to another vehicle can lead to prosecution for 'driving without due care and attention'. This offence carries a minimum fine of £100 and three penalty points, and in some cases more severe penalties or a court appearance.

Jason Wakeford, head of campaigns at Brake, the road safety charity, said:

It's vital that drivers leave enough distance between the vehicle in front in order to react in time to any sudden dangers. We'd urge everyone to respect the two-second rule to keep them, and others on the road, safe.

Institute of Vehicle Recovery continually look to improve the safety of its roadside workers and to improve training safety standards for the recovery industry. President Nick Ovenden said:

We fully support National Highways '2 second rule' campaign, which highlights the importance of keeping your distance whilst driving. These precautions along with the updated rule 264 of the Highway Code – drivers should move over, if safe to do so, when approaching people and vehicles stopped on the hard shoulder or in an emergency area to create more space for the people and stopped vehicles – can only make the road network safer for our roadside workers.

National Highways has a [dedicated webpage](#) where drivers can find more information about tailgating and what they can do to stay safe.

### **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

### **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## **[New National Security College founded to boost UK and Australian National Security](#)**

- New UK College for National Security (CfNS) created to put the UK's national security community on the front foot to tackle emerging security threats.
- The new college will work with Australia to boost mutual security and expertise and share best practice.
- It will be part of the UK Government Campus with national security training opportunities beginning in the Autumn.

The UK College for National Security has been set up to equip the UK's national security community with the skills and expertise they need to tackle a growing range of threats facing the UK.

The college was first proposed as part of the Integrated Review's recognition of the need to upskill the sector's workforce, build resilient networks

amongst professionals, and provide a platform for international collaboration. Focus, duration and location of courses will be determined by the national security teams across government, where its priority purpose is to provide strategic training for policy experts in the height of their careers and to ensure they have the latest science and technology skills. Cohorts of students will then form networks across government, ready for the next challenge.

International collaboration will also be a key pillar of the college, offering opportunities to join forces with our international partners to share best practice and maximise learning and development.

Its first international collaboration will be with the National Security College at the Australian National University, marking the importance of the two countries' strategic relationship and drawing on their proven expertise. This partnership will span the curriculum of the college, encourage staff exchanges and priority research, boosting both countries' mutual security and harness collective expertise.

Michael Ellis QC MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, said:

The new College for National Security is a great example of how we can join forces with our partners to catalyse learning and development and help meet the UK's ambitions in national security.

Our partnership with the Australian National Security College will harness our collective expertise from opposite sides of the globe and keep us on the front foot for tackling the growing range of domestic and global threats we face.

International collaboration is a key pillar of the College and we are proud to be working with our Australian colleagues to leverage resources and opportunities from across Government, industry, academia and the private sector to drive forward this exciting initiative.

Professor Rory Medcalf, Head of the Australian National Security College, commented:

This partnership will expand the security expertise and capability of Australia and the UK in facing shared risks.

Our mission is to develop the people, ideas and networks for a secure Australian future, and I'm delighted we can take that further with such a close international partner.

We've begun discussions with the leadership of the new UK College and we'll work closely to map a partnership spanning shared curricula, staff exchange and priority research.

The College for National Security will open in April as part of the UK Government Campus for Skills, with its first training programme beginning in the Autumn.

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## [Joint Statement from UK, Egypt and UNFCCC in response to IPCC Working Group 2 Report](#)

News story

COP President Alok Sharma, COP 27 President Designate Sameh Shoukry and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa's joint statement on the IPCC Working Group 2 Report, which assesses the impacts, adaptation and vulnerabilities related to climate change



We thank the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its authors for the latest volume of their 6th Assessment Report published today – [Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability](#).

Today's report shows that the impacts of climate change are already with us and will affect us more severely than previously thought, with the most vulnerable being hardest hit. Human health and livelihoods are being devastated, unique ecosystems are being irreparably damaged, and many species have become extinct. Although the report indicates that adaptation action is taking place in all regions of the world, our attempts at adapting to climate change impacts have fallen short. Adaptation limits have already been reached in places across the globe and more will emerge as temperatures rise especially if 1.5°C of global warming is exceeded. Yet, despite a narrowing window for action, the report gives cause for hope. With a decisive and immediate response, bringing transformational adaptation together with rapid mitigation led by countries' plans, we can create a climate resilient society, with benefits for all.



As the COP 26 and COP27 Presidencies and UNFCCC secretariat, we are committed to furthering climate action which responds to the science. We must collectively deliver on the Paris Agreement including through the Glasgow Climate Pact, and countries must further strengthen their pledges and urgently implement them at scale in Sharm el-Sheikh and beyond. Developed countries must follow through on their commitment to at least double their climate finance for adaptation to developing countries by 2025 aiming at achieving balance between funding for adaptation and mitigation. The world must make concrete and substantive progress on the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme to implement the Global Goal on Adaptation. We must also act with urgency to put in place the technical and financial support to deal with loss and damage, including through the Santiago Network and Glasgow Dialogue. We must urgently accelerate our efforts to keep 1.5 in reach through revisiting and strengthening 2030 targets, delivering support, investment and employment opportunities.

We all must respond to this report by collectively honouring the commitments made under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, delivering on the Glasgow Climate Pact now and through COP27 and beyond to ensure we can build a sustainable, climate resilient world.

Signed:

Alok Sharma, COP President

Sameh Shoukry, COP 27 President Designate

Patricia Espinosa, UNFCCC Executive Secretary

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