

# World Trade Organization General Council, February 2022: UK statements

## **WTO Response to the Pandemic**

Now that we have that date [for the Ministerial Conference], it is important that we focus on how we take this work [responding to the pandemic] forward. We thought that the “Walker Text” – if I may use that term, with all due respect to my new New Zealand colleague – was a decent basis from which to work. It was far less ambitious that we would have liked in many respects. But it was a good basis. And we thank you, Chairman, for your efforts to take that work forward. And we really appreciate the work that the Director General has done throughout the last year to work on this issue. Not least, the cooperation between WHO, WIPO, the private sector and others to focus on solutions that actually help us deliver vaccines into arms.

It is also really important to recognise the work we have done over the last year, including what we have heard and learnt from each other, from the private sector, from other international organisations – whether about supply chains, export restrictions, transparency or indeed about IP – and that we work to find solutions.

We do not think that IP has been a barrier to all of these efforts over the last few years. We think that IP has been an enabler of our efforts to confront this pandemic. We recognise that we need to find solutions and make a way forward – and we need to do so urgently. We need to see progress made on these issues over the next few weeks and months, so that we can come to MC12 with a package of measures that actually responds to the real world issues that we are facing – in this pandemic, in future pandemics and in response to the real risk of anti-microbial resistance. This requires us to work together, collaboratively, as organisations, to find solutions that will actually make a difference in the world.

## **TRIPS Council Matters**

Let me just start by echoing my colleague. This is an organisation that is founded on respect for the rule of law and this morning we are confronted with a situation in which international law is being flouted in the most egregious manner possible.

Let me turn to the agenda item before us. You will be glad to hear that I am not going to repeat, yet again, the substance of the United Kingdom’s position on this issue but let me endorse the comments made yesterday by others on the process.

Our debate has to be informed by the facts on the ground, not wider politics. But the British Government is deeply disappointed with the process that is underway here.

We were asked to wait and see what a very small and – if I may say – unrepresentative group could deliver. After some months of a fairly closed-door process, where our views and positions have not been represented, our patience has – I'm afraid – run out. I would only note that our taxpayers – along with many others – helped subsidise the development of the vaccines that are being used against this pandemic, their voluntary licensing to the Serum Institute of India and their purchase and delivery by COVAX.

I would also like to express our frustration, as others set out yesterday evening, with the lack of transparency around this process. Sadly, TRIPs Council updates have been rather irregular, infrequent and not particularly uninformative. The updates don't enable members to engage at all with the process, and – to be honest – we have often learnt more from the media than we have from the official updates.

So, let me be very clear that, while we recognise the urgency of taking forward our wider discussions on the pandemic response, we will not simply support the outcome of a process in which we are not included.

### **Immediate action to support the multilateral trading system in preparation for a successful MC12**

This statement shows a real commitment to the WTO and a successful outcome at MC12. Yesterday we agreed a date for MC12, which will bring much needed focus and momentum back to our discussions.

We, as supporters of this statement, believe that the Membership must come to agreement on all four of the key pillars at MC12: Health, Fisheries, Reform and Agriculture. And we should not forget about renewing the moratorium on customs duties.

The date is the starting point; we now need a clear work programme to give us focus and direction. We have to get the process right. We would welcome the DG and GC Chair setting direction with the Chairs of each negotiating file and including engaging Ministers in advance of the conference. There are also areas where we can start to make progress now, ahead of MC12.

On reform, it's especially important that we capitalise on the momentum that we saw before the postponement. Let's think creatively about how we can advance this. It's particularly true for commencing work on WTO disputes settlement, where we've seen ambition from members to take meaningful action.

We are in greater need now, more than ever, as we have seen so starkly this week, of ways to ensure we stick to the rules and abide by international law. We should also consider how we make progress now on the wider reform agenda.

So, as our Ambassador said, when we thought we were a week away from MC12 and with the due apologies to the intellectual property rights of our US friends, Geneva needs to become the city that never sleeps.

We have just over three months and some major divisions that we need to bridge to secure a successful outcome.

It's our firm belief that we can get there, and we can do it. But it will require hard work and flexibility from us all. So, we as the UK, are ready to roll up our sleeves and we look forward to getting stuck in with you all.

## **Work programme on electronic commerce and moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions**

I would like to thank those who have added their names to the moratorium, and I would particularly like to welcome Barbados on behalf of the CARICOM group [Member States of the Caribbean Community].

As others have said, the moratorium is a key tool for supporting the development of global e-commerce – the digital economy – and is a clear demonstration of the WTO's relevance and credibility in the 21st century. In November last year, over 70 global business associations – from developed and developing countries alike – called on us all to ensure the continuation of the moratorium.

This is all the more crucial as businesses across the world seek to build back better from the pandemic. We need to answer their call and demonstrate that the WTO continues to back business. Indeed, I can't imagine how I would possibly explain to British business anything other than the continuing of this moratorium.

We do, however, recognise the importance of the work programme for developing members. We heard those calls this afternoon. The UK of course remains open to continuing discussions under the Work Programme on E-Commerce and looks forward to Members' bringing new proposals in that respect.

## **Paper titled "The Legal Status of 'Joint Statement Initiatives' and Their Negotiated Outcomes"**

Let me just echo what others have said: that we have just reached an agreement [on Domestic Services Regulation] that will cut \$150 billion off the costs of global services trade. This is about delivering trade rules that deliver new trade rules fit for the 21st century.

An agreement that, while negotiated plurilaterally, will benefit all Members of this organisation and their businesses. A clear demonstration that this organisation is back in business and backing business.

And we continue to make really important progress across a number of other joint initiatives including: MSMEs – 99% of British businesses; gender – 50% of the global workforce; and the environment – each and every one of us. These are the issues of the third decade of the 21st century that this organisation should be dealing with. These JSIs provide us with the means of doing so. So, rather than having a conversation about how we shut the door on these JSIs, we should be having a conversation about how we can welcome, support, harness and be inspired by the energy, dynamism and relevance that these JSIs bring to this organisation, to our businesses, and to the people we are meant to serve.

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## PM announces further humanitarian aid to Ukraine

- £40m more aid released to provide vital medical supplies and other help to Ukraine
- Assistance in addition to wider economic and military support bolstering the Ukrainian resistance to the Russian invasion
- Announcement follows PM discussions with President Zelenskyy and meeting with Ukrainian community leaders in London this weekend
- The UK has stepped up its support to the people of Ukraine again today (Sunday) with the announcement of £40 million of further humanitarian aid to the country.

The funding will help aid agencies respond to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, creating a lifeline for Ukrainians with access to basic necessities and medical supplies such as medicines, syringes, dressings and wound care packs. UK Government humanitarian experts have also deployed to the region to support those fleeing the violence in Ukraine.

On Saturday evening the Prime Minister spoke again to Ukrainian President Zelenskyy who updated him on the critical need for humanitarian assistance as people are forced to flee their homes and seek safety.

This evening he met Ukrainian community leaders at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London to hear their stories about the impact of Russian violence on the people of Ukraine.

In response to the growing concern of Ukrainians living in the UK about their welfare of their families back home, today the Prime Minister also confirmed that any person settled in the UK will be able to bring their Ukrainian immediate family members to join them here. This will benefit many thousands of people who at this moment are making desperate choices about their future.

The UK also continues to support those Ukrainians who wish to remain close to home through logistical and humanitarian support to Ukraine's neighbours.

The Prime Minister said:

“In the last days the world has witnessed awe-inspiring displays of bravery and heroism from the Ukrainian people in response to those who seek to obliterate their freedom by force.

“The UK will not turn our backs in Ukraine's hour of need. We are providing all the economic and military support we can to help those Ukrainians risking everything to protect their country.”

This latest assistance package brings the total amount of UK Government aid

pledged to Ukraine this year to £140 million. Last week the Prime Minister also announced the UK would guarantee up to \$500 million of loans to Ukraine through Multilateral Development Banks.

The UK also continues to supply defensive military equipment to the Ukrainian military to bolster their resistance against invading Russian forces.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

“Putin’s regime has undertaken an illegal and violent assault against the people of Ukraine.

“The UK will provide £40 million in aid to help our Ukrainian friends, more funding to tackle what is becoming a humanitarian crisis.

“We stand with Ukraine, shoulder to shoulder, in its hour of need”.

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## [PM message to the people of Ukraine and Russia: 25 February 2022](#)

[Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s message to the people of Ukraine and Russia.](#)

The scenes unfolding in the streets and fields of Ukraine are nothing short of a tragedy.

Brave young soldiers and innocent civilians are being cut down, tanks are rumbling through towns and cities, missiles raining indiscriminately from the skies.

It is a generation or more since we witnessed such bloodshed in Europe.

We hoped we would never have to see such sights again.

The people of the United Kingdom stand with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters in the face of this unjustifiable assault on your homeland.

We salute the fierce bravery and patriotism of your government, your military and your people. I am in close contact with President Zelenskyy

And as Prime Minister I speak for us all in the United Kingdom when I once again say Slava Ukraini.

This is a tragedy for Ukraine.

And so too is it a tragedy for Russia.

Like Ukraine, Russia is a great country with a rich history and a proud

people.

Like Ukraine, Russia's poets and artists and authors have shaped our culture, and Russia's soldiers fought so bravely with us in the struggle against fascism.

But Putin's actions are leading to complete isolation for Russia.

Shunned by the rest of the international community

Hit by immense economic sanctions.

And facing a needless and bloody war that is already costing countless lives, from innocent Ukrainians to your Russians soldiers who will never see their families again.

And to my Russian friends:

[In Russian] I do not believe this war is in your name.

It does not have to be this way.

This crisis, this tragedy can and must come to an end.

[In Ukrainian]

Because the world needs a free and sovereign Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini

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## **Special OSCE meeting on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine: UK statement, 27 February 2022**

Thank you, Mr Chair, for convening this Special Permanent Council meeting today.

It is deeply saddening that we are meeting for the fourth time in less than a week in the most appalling of circumstances. The news from Kyiv and elsewhere in Ukraine is grim. Russia's leaders have – without need or provocation – launched the largest European war since 1945. They have brought the madness of conventional war – a madness we had thought consigned to history – back to Europe. And they have done this against a peaceful, sovereign, and democratic neighbour.

Russia's actions show flagrant disregard for the UN Charter, the Budapest

Memorandum, the Minsk Agreements and the Helsinki Final Act. Alongside this, Russia has disregarded all of the subsequent OSCE Declarations and de-escalation mechanisms that it not only freely signed up to, but helped to build. The Russian Government has walked away from its commitments designed to protect all our security and is looking to conquer an independent state by force of arms. This is an attack not only on Ukraine, but on the security and freedom of Europe as a whole.

We have by now all become used to the rhythm of the lies of the Russian government. Russia said that their military build-up was merely an exercise – a lie. Russia said that Ukraine was a threat – a lie. And Russia is saying that they are conducting a peacekeeping operation – a lie.

But the truth of the Russian Government's actions in Ukraine is now beginning to emerge. [As the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights \(ODIHR\) said on Friday:](#) "While the attack on Ukraine is little more than a day old, it is already taking its toll on civilians". The British Government has verified multiple instances of military strikes destroying large apartment buildings across Kyiv. UNICEF are reporting terrified families sheltering underground across the city. We have seen reporting of civilians shot by Russian soldiers, and – unbelievably – of tanks crushing people alive in their cars. We have verified footage of Uragan Multiple Launch Rocket Systems – weapons with wide area effects – indiscriminately targeting the city of Akhterka, causing many casualties. And, Mr Chairman, I am sorry to say, we have verified that a kindergarten called 'Solnyshko' has been completely destroyed.

Overnight, we have seen reports that Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been targeted, including the oil depot in Rovenky, Luhansk, and Vasylykiv Oil depot near Kyiv. We are also concerned by reports of heightened levels of radiation detected in the Chernobyl Exclusion – just a couple of examples of the environmental cost this unprovoked Russian invasion is starting to have.

This crisis is also leading to displacement. UN agencies suggests around 100,000 people have lost their homes. Innocent civilians fleeing Russia's onslaught are now arriving in Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. We have reports that on Saturday morning there was a 58km queue on the border with Moldova, with 30,000 people having crossed. These have grown since. You mentioned Mr Chair the thousands of civilians arriving into Poland. I am grateful for the humanitarian spirit in which these countries are receiving innocent civilians. We must also support the safe passage out of Ukraine for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission teams.

The Russian military – under the government's orders – bomb civilians and have caused thousands to flee their homes. They call this demilitarisation. They destroy kindergartens, and call it denazification. Mr Chairman, they will make a desert, and call it peace. Have they no shame? Have they no shame?

Mr Chairman, the Geneva Conventions have, for over 150 years, codified the Laws of Armed Conflict. The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross has said that all sides must adhere to international humanitarian

law. He has said, 'Attacks must not be directed against civilian objects'. And he has said that, 'the use of weapons with wide area effects should be avoided in populated areas'. And Amnesty International has said that the Russian military's use of area weapons in densely populated areas may constitute war crimes.

One day – when this horrific attack and unfolding tragedy is all over – Russian soldiers will have to look their Ukrainian brothers in the eye and answer to them for what they have done.

Until that day comes, we will make President Putin pay. Three days ago in this forum, our Foreign Secretary announced the toughest package of sanctions that Russia has ever faced. We said at the time, these sanctions will only get tougher. More sanctions were announced yesterday. Last night decisive action was taken with international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will continue to provide defensive assistance to Ukraine. And where there is evidence of war crimes, we will ensure that – however long it takes – justice is served.

Mr Chair, the UK, with our international partners, stands united in condemning the Russian government's premeditated, unprovoked and unjustified aggression against the Ukrainian people. We stand with Ukraine. We have nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for the brave men and women of Ukraine's armed forces, whose tenacity and fortitude – our military intelligence assesses – have stopped President Putin achieving any of his day-one objectives. We defend and will always defend the Ukrainian people's right to choose their own destiny, and make their own security choices. Free from external aggression and free from coercion. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Ukraine – for however long it takes – to ensure that their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence is rightfully restored.

Mr Chair, the world is watching. Russia is now an international pariah. Russia needs to stop its attack and withdraw its forces. President Putin's squalid venture will ultimately fail and will be seen to fail. However long it takes, that will be the steadfast and unflinching goal of the United Kingdom. Thank you.

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## **Joint Statement on Further Restrictive Economic Measures: 26 February 2022**

We, the leaders of the United Kingdom, the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and the United States condemn Putin's war of choice and attacks on the sovereign nation and people of Ukraine. We stand with the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people in their heroic efforts to



resist Russia's invasion. Russia's war represents an assault on fundamental international rules and norms that have prevailed since the Second World War, which we are committed to defending. We will hold Russia to account and collectively ensure that this war is a strategic failure for Putin.

This past week, alongside our diplomatic efforts and collective work to defend our own borders and to assist the Ukrainian government and people in their fight, we, as well as our other allies and partners around the world, imposed severe measures on key Russian institutions and banks, and on the architects of this war, including Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As Russian forces unleash their assault on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, we are resolved to continue imposing costs on Russia that will further isolate Russia from the international financial system and our economies. We will implement these measures within the coming days.

Specifically, we commit to undertake the following measures:

First, we commit to ensuring that selected Russian banks are removed from the SWIFT messaging system. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally.

Second, we commit to imposing restrictive measures that will prevent the Russian Central Bank from deploying its international reserves in ways that undermine the impact of our sanctions.

Third, we commit to acting against the people and entities who facilitate the war in Ukraine and the harmful activities of the Russian government. Specifically, we commit to taking measures to limit the sale of citizenship—so called golden passports—that let wealthy Russians connected to the Russian government become citizens of our countries and gain access to our financial systems.

Fourth, we commit to launching this coming week a transatlantic task force that will ensure the effective implementation of our financial sanctions by identifying and freezing the assets of sanctioned individuals and companies that exist within our jurisdictions. As a part of this effort we are committed to employing sanctions and other financial and enforcement measures on additional Russian officials and elites close to the Russian government, as well as their families, and their enablers to identify and freeze the assets they hold in our jurisdictions. We will also engage other governments and work to detect and disrupt the movement of ill-gotten gains, and to deny these individuals the ability to hide their assets in jurisdictions across the world.

Finally, we will step up our coordination against disinformation and other forms of hybrid warfare.

We stand with the Ukrainian people in this dark hour. Even beyond the measures we are announcing today, we are prepared to take further measures to hold Russia to account for its attack on Ukraine.