

## UN Human Rights Council 41: Item 10

Thank you, Mr President,

The United Kingdom emphasises the significant role of technical cooperation and we welcome States' engagement with the Council and with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as they work to protect the human rights of those States' citizens. It is important that the Council provides opportunities to not only highlight the most egregious human rights offenders, but also to encourage engagement. We invite all states to consider how best to use this agenda item to support countries that seek such cooperation and engagement with the OHCHR.

The UK is encouraged by the Government of Afghanistan's commitment to better promote and protect human rights. However, largely due to the challenging security situation, the progress made since 2001 is fragile and we urge Afghanistan to take steps to better implement its commitments.

In particular, we remain concerned by the sustained high level of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. All credible claims of civilian casualties must be fully investigated and all parties must take immediate measures to avoid the killing of civilians. We urge particular attention to be paid to those groups most vulnerable to violence, such as minorities, women, aid workers and journalists.

We welcome the continued co-operation between the Government of Georgia and OHCHR. We commend the government's openness in discussing its human rights challenges and in accepting international assistance. However, we remain concerned that those in effective control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia continue to refuse access to OHCHR and other international human rights mechanisms. We are also concerned that the 'de facto authorities' have further restricted freedom of movement and increased civic inequality based on ethnicity.

We regret that Tbilisi's first Pride march was cancelled because the security of its participants could not be guaranteed. We underline the UK's strong support for the commitment made by the Government to support and protect the rights of all citizens, including the right to freedom of assembly and expression.

Thank you, Mr President.