

# Coordinated efforts to address instability in the Sahel

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, SRSB Chambas for your briefing.

I can also be quick because, as the German ambassador said, I think there is a good degree of consensus on this topic in the Council. I think I agree with the points made by almost everybody here today. So let me just highlight three issues.

First, on the elections, we very much endorse your assessment of the recent elections in West Africa and welcome all the good work that you have been doing to support those elections. The UK believes that these inclusive, democratic processes are critical not just for international peace and security, but also for creating an enabling environment for investments and for sustainable development more broadly. And I think it is absolutely vital that all authorities and international partners work together to ensure that future elections in the region are timely, peaceful and credible.

Second, the Secretary-General's Report highlights the devastating effect that the deteriorating security situation in northeast Nigeria is having on the people of the Lake Chad Basin region. I think this is a region that is often overlooked by this Council, particularly in recent years. The UK is discussing with the Nigerian government what more the international community could do to help it tackle the crisis. Clearly, extending state authority into so-called ungoverned spaces will be essential in order to stem the advances of Boko Haram. We welcome UNOWAS' efforts to date, and we encourage further support to the governments in the region to tackle the crisis and to implement UNSCR 2349 on the Lake Chad Basin region.

And then third and finally turning to the Sahel, which of course, remains a major concern for all of us on this Council, I'm pleased to announce that the UK Government has recently announced this week that we will make a future commitment of 250 troops to MINUSMA. But we must all do more to help address the root causes in the Sahel. And as we heard during our recent visit to the Sahel, these include reducing abuses by the Security Forces, helping governments provide basic services, and mitigating the conflicts over resources by helping people to adapt to climate change. And it's a good thing, Mr President, that this Council has become more focussed on the link between climate change and conflict in recent months.

And then I also agree with my Chinese colleague when he says that we need to make better use of international coordination mechanisms on the Sahel. We should be using this Council, the Sahel Alliance, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to make sure that the international community and our partners in the Sahel are working effectively together to address the long-term drivers of instability and poverty together.

Thank you.

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# Troika Statement on the South Sudan Peace Process

The text of the following statement was issued jointly by the governments of the United States, Norway, and the United Kingdom:

The Troika (the United States, United Kingdom, and Norway) reaffirm their commitment to the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process and to the lasting peace the people of South Sudan deserve. The significant drop in political violence and the presence of many opposition politicians in Juba are welcome developments. However, with less than four months until the new deadline for the end of the pre-transitional period in November, time is running out. While there is progress, lack of momentum to fully implement the peace agreement may threaten the successful formation of the transitional government and prospects for the peace process.

We call on the parties to redouble their efforts to resolve the most pressing remaining issues, which include ensuring agreed security reforms are delivered, through the mobilization of necessary support. We join the region and South Sudan's civil society in calling for regular engagement between President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar. Focused discussions on outstanding tasks are critical for progress towards the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, which will set the foundation for effective joint governance. Credible elections in South Sudan in 2022 are another important milestone.

We are encouraged by the appointment of H.E. Stephen Kalonzo as the Kenyan Special Envoy on South Sudan; this is an important demonstration of commitment from an Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member state. The Troika also welcomes the commitment made by the AU High-Level Ad hoc Committee (the C5) at the AU summit on 6 July to re-engage in South Sudan's peace process. The role of IGAD countries and the wider international community remains critical, and the Troika stands ready to support the region's engagement.

For the peace process to remain credible, it is important that the parties demonstrate their commitment to peace and meet the assurances they made in May. The Troika stands by the people of

South Sudan and looks forward to working with the peace agreement's mandated reconstituted transitional government to support a successful transitional period.

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## Cumbrian students get construction insight from M6 team

Highways England – the government-owned company which operates, maintains, repairs and improves the country's 4,300 miles of motorways and major A-roads – is working to ensure there are enough engineers to help build the roads of the future.

And as part of its support for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in schools and colleges, Highways England staff based in Penrith have been running 'construction schools' to coincide with its package of work which includes resurfacing, a new noise barrier and roundabout improvements along the M6 north east of Carlisle.

Almost 60 students from Lakes College in Workington and William Howard School at Brampton near Carlisle, attended the events with a key focus on construction site health and safety and an insight into highways engineering.

Highways England project manager Jobert Fermilan said:

The current shortage of around 200,000 workers with STEM skills is set to double during the next decade and it's vital we play our part in encouraging children and young adults to look at engineering as an interesting and rewarding career. Without projects like this we risk not having enough surveyors, designers, drainage experts, bridge builders and other skilled construction workers to maintain and improve the strategic road network of the future.

As a regional STEM ambassador and project manager for the M6 scheme I was keen to offer local students the chance to come and talk about a career in our industry and take a look at a real-life scheme in progress. It was great to meet the construction specialists of the future and to pass on what a rewarding sector it can be to work in. There are lots of routes into the industry and the sector is expected to need about 1.3 million new recruits by 2024.

During the two events – hosted by civil engineering and tunnelling firm AE

Yates – the students also got to meet construction partners in Highways England's supply chain. Companies like traffic management supplier HW Martin, road marking specialists WJ North and resurfacing contractors Aggregate Industries – who demonstrated an impact protection vehicle, robotic road marker and resurfacing paver and roller – will have their own demands for STEM-skilled staff in future years. Students were also taken on a drive-through of the M6 roadworks between junction 44 and junction 45.

Demonstration of a robotic road marker.

Lakes College Placement leader Rachel Melton said:

Our students really got a lot out of the visit, especially seeing the real-life application of skills they are developing at college. We look forward to working with Highways England and its contractors in the future.

Year 10 students from William Howard attended a second event with a 'women in engineering' focus underlining the message that engineering jobs are not just for men. The students also got a chance to see how technology is helping improve the safety of road workers – by getting their hands on GPS controlled road painting machine.

Teacher Simon Ling who led the school's visit said:

Our students are still talking about the trip. They all came back enthused about the day, what they had learned. For some it has helped cement in their minds the career path that they might follow after leaving school.

AE Yates project manager Ruairi Flynn added:

It was really good to see how keen and enthusiastic the students were to learn about civil engineering. We emphasised a lot on health and safety and explained how people need to be appropriately trained to work in our industry. We also explained the benefits of choosing a career in construction and how rewarding the construction industry can be.

The work along the M6 started in April with resurfacing and major roundabout improvements at junction 44 already delivered and only the installation of a new noise barrier around Todhills left to complete.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact

centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

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

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## **Detailed guide: Stop ragwort and other harmful weeds from spreading**

How to stop harmful weeds spreading onto land used for grazing livestock or growing crops, how to dispose of them and how to report them if they've spread.

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## **Huge stride forward in upgrade of M6 junction**

Contractor John Sisk & Son has been appointed to design and build the new junction at Walsall which will replace the bridges over the motorway, increasing capacity at the traffic bottleneck and improving safety.

Preparation work is expected to get under way in the autumn with construction work beginning in January. Work is due to be completed by summer 2022.

This is a joint venture between Highways England and Walsall Council, supported by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

The current junction is over 50 years old and replacing the bridges which carry it over the motorway will avoid the need for extensive maintenance. The new bridges will also make the junction larger, significantly reducing delays for road users.

The new junction will help facilitate growth at the Black Country Enterprise Zone in Darlaston and improve accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians.

Following a public inquiry in April, the Secretary of State has now confirmed the orders to acquire the land needed to alter the junction and layout of the local roads and motorway slip roads.

Only a small area of land is needed on a permanent basis as the scheme uses

existing highway land where possible.

M6 junction 10 and the surrounding area currently experiences significant congestion and delays. The problems there were identified as one of the main transport issues facing the region in the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan.

Highways England Project Manager David Reed said:

We are delighted to announce that John Sisk & Son have been appointed to lead this important scheme which will tackle congestion at a very busy junction at the heart of the country.

This is a significant milestone for the project which will ultimately bring smoother and safer journeys for the many thousands of drivers using junction 10 every day.

Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader of Walsall Council, said:

With junction 10 on our doorstep, Walsall has excellent connectivity and is an attractive place for investment. Reducing delays and increasing capacity at this vital interchange will play an important role in strengthening our economy and improving the accessibility of our town centre.

Paul Brown, Managing Director UK Civils, John Sisk & Son, said:

Sisk is delighted to be awarded this major highways scheme. The project provides us with an opportunity to further enhance our reputation and continue our excellent relationship with Highways England, following the recent successful completion of the A19 works in the North East. We are committed to delivering the project in line with Highways England's key imperatives and to maximising social value to benefit Walsall Council.

For more details about the scheme visit the [Walsall Council website](#) or the Highways England [scheme web page](#).

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