

## Speech: UK closing statement by Lord Ahmad at the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council

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As I said during my [speech at the Council on 25 February](#), in an ideal world, states and non-state actors would not violate and abuse human rights. Sadly, we do not live in that ideal world, and that is why the Human Rights Council is such a vitally important part of the rules based international system. The UK continues to be one of the Council's strongest supporters and we are underlining that commitment by standing for election to the Council next year, for the 2021-2023 term.

I welcome the [UN's continuing advocacy on media freedom](#), including commitments made by the Secretary General. A free media is essential for democracy, economic prosperity and the protection of human rights. All states must come together to remove impediments to a free media and ensure justice for those who commit violence against journalists. We hope ministers from around the world will join us, and our Canadian co-hosts, in London on 10-11 July for our international conference to agree a meaningful way forward.

This has been an important Council in terms of country resolutions and issues of topical concern. On China, we supported a side event that focused on the situation in Xinjiang and we continue to call on China to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On Venezuela, we co-sponsored a US-led side event that highlighted the human rights situation there, and also supported a joint statement to the Council.

Turning to [Syria](#), I welcome the resolution adopted by the Council. The liberation of the last territory held by Daesh is a historic moment, but Syria is far from returning to normal. The international community must continue to highlight ongoing violations and abuses by all sides, and support UN-led efforts for a political resolution. The Commission of Inquiry's work

is vital, and I welcome the renewal of its mandate for another year.

I am pleased that the Council [renewed the mandate of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan](#), with South Sudan's agreement. This enables the Commission to continue its vital work in monitoring human rights and tackling impunity. The Commission plays an important role in supporting implementation of South Sudan's peace deal and I urge South Sudan's continued cooperation.

We welcome the adoption of the resolution on the human rights situation in [Nicaragua](#), which highlights restrictions on civil society and the independent press. I am alarmed by the police's arbitrary use of force against, and arrest of, peaceful protestors last weekend. If Nicaragua is to move forward, the Government must end the repression of its citizens, create the right climate for inclusive political dialogue and participate with genuine intent to reach a peaceful negotiated solution.

I welcome the [renewal of the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran](#). This provides an important signal that the international community remains concerned with unfair judicial processes that fall significantly below international standards, the arbitrary detention of dual nationals and others, and deterioration in the protection of freedoms of expression and of religion or belief. Iran should grant the Special Rapporteur immediate access so that he can properly fulfil his mandate.

Turning to [Libya](#), the resolution underlines the need for all parties, including the Government of National Accord and the UN, to continue to improve the human rights situation. Full support for the UN-led Action Plan will be crucial to address human rights violations and abuses as it provides the best route to a sustainable political settlement, with greater security and stability.

I am encouraged by [Sri Lanka's agreement to co-sponsor a further resolution](#) continuing the commitments made to the Human Rights Council in October 2015 and March 2017. The UK will continue to support Sri Lanka as it implements its commitments.

Elsewhere, I welcome the renewal of the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the [situation of human rights in Myanmar](#), the [Independent Expert for Mali](#) and the Special Rapporteur on the [situation of human rights in the DPRK](#). I also welcome the adoption of the resolution on [Human Rights monitoring in the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia](#)

For the reasons the [Foreign Secretary set out in his article](#), the UK voted against four resolutions on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, tabled under agenda item 7. While we welcome the decision to table a fifth resolution, on accountability, under agenda item 2 in response to the High Commissioner's report, the UK abstained [our explanation of vote](#) because it did not address the actions of non-state actors such as Hamas. I want to stress that these votes should not be misconstrued in any way as a vote against either Palestinian self-determination, or against appropriate and proportionate scrutiny of human rights abuses or illegal settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We remain committed to a two state

solution and support justified scrutiny of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories under appropriate agenda items.

Finally, I welcome the support for the [joint UK and Austrian led statement](#) made in response to the deteriorating human rights situation in Cameroon. This demonstrates widespread concern and strengthens our call for the Government to establish a credible dialogue and accept offers of technical assistance to address the worsening human rights situation.

The Human Rights Council has an essential role in bringing states together to address the world's most pressing human rights issues. The UK will continue to play an active role on the Council and to support its efforts to hold those who violate and abuse human rights to account.

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## **News story: NATO appoints UK Officer Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe**

Lt Gen Radford, who has previously served as the Deputy Commander of NATO's Op Resolute Support in Afghanistan and Commander of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps in Gloucester, takes over from fellow Brit, General Sir James Everard, in Spring 2020.

Speaking about his appointment Lt Gen Tim Radford said:

It's a great honour to have been selected to serve as the next Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe at a time of significant transformation within NATO.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson added:

In NATO's 70th year, the alliance retains all its relevance as the cornerstone of European security and I commend the work General Everard has done in maintaining that. The appointment of Lt Gen Radford embodies the role the UK plays in NATO – one of leadership and commitment.

The UK currently has thousands of troops stationed across the globe standing shoulder-to-shoulder with NATO allies. In the Baltics, the UK has over 1,000 troops, Challenger II tanks, and Wildcat and Apache helicopters deployed as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, the largest commitment of any nation.

Later this year, four RAF Typhoons will return to Estonia, where they

conducted Air Policing in 2016, and, for the first time will patrol Icelandic skies. This will allow the UK to work closely with allies to deter aerial threats to Euro-Atlantic security.

In Afghanistan, there are over 900 UK troops mentoring the next generation of Afghan military leaders and leading the Kabul Security Force, providing vital protection to over 8,000 NATO mentors and advisors working within the city.

NATO is the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security and later this year the Prime Minister will welcome NATO Leaders to the UK to strengthen the bonds that have maintained peace for the last 70 years and will do so well in to the future.

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## [News story: UK response to WTO Appellate Body ruling on Boeing](#)

Today the Appellate Body, the final court of appeal at the WTO has definitively ruled that the US has continued to unlawfully subsidise aircraft manufacturer Boeing, causing significant harm to its European competitor Airbus.

The WTO's ruling in this 15 year-long dispute confirms that the United States has not complied with obligations to withdraw subsidies previously declared illegal by the WTO Appellate Body in 2012, adversely affecting the EU aerospace industry.

Following today's findings, the UK stands ready to work with the EU and the US to bring a sensible conclusion to this dispute.

**International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:**

We are committed to supporting jobs in the British aerospace industry and will now work to ensure that any negotiated settlement allows Airbus to compete on a level playing field with Boeing.

The UK is one of the strongest defenders of the global trading rules and has together with our European partners fully complied with WTO rulings regarding its support to Airbus. We will continue to work closely with the EU and European partners to contest the US's right to impose any tariffs on the UK and its partners.

We look forward to taking our independent seat at the WTO and will

continue positive and productive conversations with both the US and EU to help bring an end to this dispute.

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## **Press release: Investment in Catterick training area creates challenging urban training environment**

The investment into Whinny Hill, Catterick training area's urban operations training facility, has created a more challenging training environment for the armed forces and emergency services personnel who use it. The upgrade has created a more realistic environment for troops carrying out modern day military training in the area.

The new facility consists of 13 buildings constructed from purpose built reconfigurable containers. The single and two-storey buildings have a variety of access points and forced entry points. A further multi-storey building provides helicopter and rope access training.

Working with BeaverFit Ltd and industry partner Landmarc Support Services, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) delivered the project in two phases, the first finished in October 2018 and the second completing this month. The facility remained operational throughout the construction period so that the impact on vital military training was minimised.

Lt Col Mark Holden, Commander Defence Training Estate for the North Region, said:

"DIO supports our armed forces by providing what they need to live, work and train. We have worked closely with experts and our partners to ensure that we deliver exactly what the military needs to provide enhanced training for their sailors, soldiers and airmen.

"The new urban complex has been designed to meet the needs of military personnel now, and in the future, and we're pleased that it's now ready for use."

Claire Travis, Project Manager from Landmarc, commented:

"The buildings have been designed with facades to add realism and internal room layouts that are reconfigurable to enable different challenges for defenders and attackers.

"One of the key challenges was to ensure that the existing urban training facility remained operational whilst the project was delivered. This required

close collaboration with DIO and our contractors to de-conflict the training areas during vehicle movements and the final delivery of the containers, which were manufactured off-site to provide a more flexible and cost-effective solution.”

Major General Tim Hyams said:

“We’re delighted to take into use the new urban training facility here in Catterick. This state-of-the-art facility will enable the delivery of realistic and challenging training to our soldiers.

“Whinny Hill is the principal sub-unit urban training facility in the North of the UK and the enhancements made here will develop further our ability to prepare for operations in complex urban terrain.”

**ENDS**

#### **Notes to editors**

1. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) plays a vital role in supporting our armed forces by building, maintaining and servicing what the men and women who serve our country need to live, work, train and deploy on operations.
2. DIO is part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). It is responsible for managing and maintaining land and properties, as well as providing related support services, to meet the current and future needs of the MOD and personnel at home and abroad, and to support current operations.
3. Our work includes supporting operational units by providing and improving single living and service family accommodation; training areas and historic military sites. DIO actively manages these to ensure the needs of Defence are met, value for money is achieved, and its heritage is protected, and to achieve its environmental goals.