

# Speech: Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster statement: 11 March 2019

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington made a statement in the House of Commons.

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With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the government's negotiations to leave the European Union.

Can I start Mr Speaker with an apology to you and to the Hon Gentleman for Holborn and St Pancras and to the SNP spokesman that we've not tonight been able to follow the usual courtesies that I would have wanted to do and give them advance notice. The reason for this as Honourable members who've been following the TV coverage will know, is that negotiations are still taking place in Strasbourg, and I think anybody who has taken part in EU business on behalf of this or any previous government will know that it is far from unusual for deadlines to be stretched or for talks to be going on late.

I would emphasise to the House Mr Speaker that the intention of my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister is to secure a deal that works for the national interest of our country and she will persist in those negotiations until she is satisfied that that is what has been achieved.

I can Mr Speaker, provide the House with an update tonight on what has been agreed so far and clearly the government will update the House at the earliest opportunity tomorrow should there be an outcome to the continuing talks in Strasbourg, that will have an impact on tomorrow's debate.

## **Legally-binding changes**

This evening in Strasbourg the Prime Minister and my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU has secured legally-binding changes that strengthen and improve the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration.

This House spoke clearly on 29 January when it voted in favour of honouring the decision of the British people and leaving the EU with a deal that works for the UK.

The primary issue of concern then was the Northern Ireland backstop. This

House needed legally-binding changes. And today, that is what the PM and the Secretary of State have achieved.

Tonight, we will be laying two new documents in the House. A joint, legally-binding instrument on the Withdrawal Agreement and Protocol on Northern Ireland, and a joint statement to supplement the Political Declaration.

The first provides confirmation that the EU cannot try to trap the UK in the backstop indefinitely and that doing so would be an explicit breach of the legally binding commitments both sides have agreed.

And if, contrary to all expectations, the EU were to act with that intention, the UK could use this acceptance of what could constitute an explicit breach as the basis for a formal dispute through independent arbitration that such a breach had occurred – ultimately suspending the Protocol if the EU continued to breach its obligations.

On top of this, the joint instrument also reflects the UK's and the EU's commitment to work to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements by December 2020 – setting out explicitly that these arrangements do not need to replicate the provisions of the backstop in any respect. By including this commitment in the joint instrument this provision on alternative arrangements will be legally binding.

And I hope too that the legally binding commitment that the alternative arrangements do not need to replicate the backstop in any respect will go some way to reassure hon members that the backstop does not predetermine our future relationship with the EU should be.

The joint instrument also puts the commitments set out by Presidents Juncker and Tusk in January onto a legally binding footing: underlining the meaning of best endeavours; stressing the need for negotiations on the future relationship to be taken forward urgently; and confirming the assurances we made to the people of Northern Ireland – for example providing a UK lock on any new EU laws being added to the backstop.

The second is a joint statement supplementing the Political Declaration which outlines a number of commitments by the UK and EU to enhance and expedite the process of negotiating and bringing into force the future relationship, for example it makes reference to the possibility of provisional application of such future agreement, and it sets out in detail how the specific negotiating track on alternative arrangements will operate.

As I said, Mr Speaker, negotiations are continuing and the government will provide an update to the House at the earliest opportunity should there be further changes.

I would also completely understand that Honourable and Rt Hon members on all sides of the House will want to have the opportunity to study the documents in detail and to analyse their import. And clearly, there will be the opportunity at the debate scheduled tomorrow for members to question the Prime Minister and other Ministers and to seek answers to those questions.

It is also the case that as he said during Law Officers' oral questions last week, my Rt Hon and Learned friend the Attorney General has given a commitment from this dispatch box to publish his legal assessment and that will, of course, be available to all members in good time before the debate.

I mean Hon members, Mr Speaker, say 'when?'. Since my Rt Hon and Learned friend has just seen the outcome of the negotiations as they have concluded so far in Strasbourg, I think the House would expect that they would want the Attorney General to consider very carefully the implications of those documents, rather than rush an opinion out to meet the deadline for this statement this evening.

## **Forward process**

Mr Speaker, this evening we shall table a motion that the House will debate tomorrow.

We have already published the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration, and the other papers required of us under the European Union Withdrawal Act. And those will be supplemented by the documents I have drawn to the House's acquaintance this evening.

Tomorrow the House will vote on this improved deal.

## **A good deal**

Mr Speaker, I believe that the deal we have already secured represents a good deal for the whole country and delivers on the result of the referendum.

When I was knocking on doors during the referendum campaign, the message I very clearly got from the people who voted to leave the EU was that they wanted to take back control – particularly of our borders but also of our laws.

The deal ends free movement and allows us to deliver a skills-based immigration system; and it ends the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the UK.

Under the deal, we will also take back control of our money, no longer sending vast sums to the EU.

We will leave the Common Fisheries Policy and Common Agricultural Policy and take back control of our trade policy.

But I also found in 2016, Mr Speaker, that whether people voted to leave or to remain, they wanted us to have the deep and special partnership with the EU that our manifesto committed us to delivering.

The Political Declaration – the framework for the future relationship – allows for this.

## The choice tomorrow

So in the Meaningful Vote tomorrow this House will face a fundamental choice. We said we would negotiate a good deal with the EU and I believe we have. And the EU has been clear that with the improvements that have been announced, which continue to be negotiated, this will be the only deal on the table.

And tomorrow there will be a fundamental choice: to vote for the improved deal or to plunge this country into a political crisis.

And if we vote for this improved deal we will both end the current uncertainty and have delivered Brexit.

This House was clear on the need for legally binding changes to the backstop. Today we have secured those changes.

Now is the time to come together, to back this improved Brexit deal, and to deliver on the instruction of the British people.

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## Speech: Prime Minister's press statement in Strasbourg: 11 March 2019

Last November, after two years of hard-fought negotiations, I agreed a Brexit deal with the EU that I passionately believe delivers on the decision taken by the British people to leave the European Union.

Over the last four months, I have made the case for that deal in Westminster and across the UK.

I stand by what that deal achieves for my country.

It means we regain control of our laws, by ending the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the UK.

Regain control of our borders, by ending free movement.

Regain control of our money, by ending vast annual payments to the EU.

The end of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy for British farmers and fishermen.

An independent trade policy.

And the deal sets us on course for a good future relationship with our friends and allies in the EU.

A close economic partnership that is good for business.

Ongoing security co-operation to keep our peoples safe.

The deal honours the referendum result and is good for both the UK and the EU.

But there was a clear concern in Parliament over one issue in particular: the Northern Ireland backstop.

Having an insurance policy to guarantee that there will never be a hard border in Northern Ireland is absolutely right – it honours the UK's solemn commitments in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

But if we ever have to use that insurance policy, it cannot become a permanent arrangement and it is not the template for our future relationship.

The deal that MPs voted on in January was not strong enough in making that clear – and legally binding changes were needed to set that right.

Today we have agreed them.

First, a joint instrument with comparable legal weight to the Withdrawal Agreement will guarantee that the EU cannot act with the intent of applying the backstop indefinitely.

If they do, it can be challenged through arbitration and if they are found to be in breach the UK can suspend the backstop.

The joint instrument also gives a legal commitment that whatever replaces the backstop does not need to replicate it.

And it entrenches in legally-binding form the commitments made in the exchange of letters with Presidents Tusk and Juncker in January.

Second, the UK and the EU have made a joint statement in relation to the Political Declaration.

It sets out a number of commitments to enhance and expedite the process of negotiating and bringing into force the future relationship.

And it makes a legal commitment that the UK and the EU will begin work immediately to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements by the end of December 2020.

There will be a specific negotiating track on alternative arrangements from the very start of the next phase of negotiations.

It will consider facilitations and technologies – both those currently ready and emerging.

The UK's position will be informed by the three domestic groups announced last week – for technical experts, MPs, and business and trade unions.

Third, alongside the joint instrument on the Withdrawal Agreement, the United Kingdom Government will make a Unilateral Declaration that if the backstop

comes into use and discussions on our future relationship break down so that there is no prospect of subsequent agreement, it is the position of the United Kingdom that there would be nothing to prevent the UK instigating measures that would ultimately dis-apply the backstop.

Unilateral Declarations are commonly used by states alongside the ratification of treaties.

The Attorney General will set out in legal analysis the meaning of the joint instrument and unilateral declaration to Parliament.

Tomorrow the House of Commons will debate the improved deal that these legal changes have created.

I will speak in more detail about them when I open that debate.

MPs were clear that legal changes were needed to the backstop.

Today we have secured legal changes.

Now is the time to come together, to back this improved Brexit deal, and to deliver on the instruction of the British people.

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## Speech: Unprecedented opportunity for peace in Afghanistan

Madam President, let me begin by expressing our condolences to all of those killed and affected by the tragic air crash in Ethiopia. Let me also thank our briefers today. First, SRSY Yamamoto; UNAMA continue to do vital work in very difficult circumstances. Also to National Security Adviser Mohib; we were very encouraged to hear your personal commitment to reform, to women's empowerment and also to credible elections taking place later this year. And of course to Ms. Tapes; for your very powerful words on the importance of involving women in all aspects of the political process and in safeguarding women's rights in Afghanistan. Thank you.

Madam President, I'd also like to take this opportunity to condemn the recent attack on those Afghans attending the commemoration of Abdul Ali Mazari his death and express our deepest sympathy for those affected. This recent attack was a very tangible demonstration of the challenges we face collectively in ensuring the protection of civilians and politicians of all ethnicities and space for peaceful dialogue in Afghanistan.

Madam President, we join the Dominican Republic and other speakers today in being deeply concerned by the 10,993 record civilian recorded civilian casualties of the armed conflict in 2018 and the 11% increase in civilian

deaths recorded by UNAMA in the last year. As the Security Council, we must remind all parties that any targeting and killing of civilians are serious violations of international humanitarian law and we support enormous efforts to ensure that protection remains at the core of the humanitarian response in Afghanistan.

Madam President, we often sit in this chamber and talk about what a crucial time we are entering in defining Afghanistan's future. This is especially true today as we approach important elections that underpin political stability in the country.

As my Indonesian and Belgian colleagues have already recognised today, it's very important that lessons are learned and are rapidly addressed from October's parliamentary elections to ensure that this year's presidential vote is transparent credible and inclusive. We recognize the efforts by Afghanistan's electoral management bodies to address many of these issues but the new Election Commissioners face a formidable task. There is a great deal still to be done to deliver a credible vote on the 20th of July. We urge you UNAMA to work closely and urgently with the new commissioners to identify priorities, highlight where key milestones are not being met and to lead the international community's response. We would also welcome a clear and pragmatic plan for voter registration and verification systems that will be used for July's vote.

Once again Madam President, we would ask the Mission to consider what more UNAMA can do and what additional resources it needs to strengthen support ahead of the forthcoming elections. And we would welcome detailed updates from the UN on this priority issue in the coming months. Forthcoming elections are crucial for Afghanistan. Both the international community and the Afghan government can and should focus on this even while we continue to support and drive progress towards a long-term political settlement to the conflict. We are therefore strongly supportive of all efforts to start a credible and sustainable Afghan-led and owned peace process to resolve the conflict. As Germany has already noted today, the current opportunity for peace is unprecedented and Afghanistan its neighbours and the wider international community should do everything possible to seize it.

The forthcoming Kabul Process meeting will provide a good opportunity for the international community and the region to take stock and work out how best to support Afghan peace efforts and we are particularly supportive of the efforts being led by U.S. special representative Zalmay Khalilzad including to kickstart the intra-Afghan dialogue that must lie at the heart of any efforts towards an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political settlement.

Madam President, I want to turn now to the points made by at Ms. Tapeshe earlier today. As progress is being made in the path towards women's meaningful participation in all levels of decision making from the local community to the negotiation table, it's essential that we maintain momentum. This is not just because it's the right thing to do. It's also because analysis suggests that the sustains and empowered involvement of women makes any peace process much more likely to succeed. It's positive that there are an increasing number of women on the High Peace Council but more can be done

to ensure that women's voices are represented. Any political settlement should protect the progress achieved on human rights and gender equality in Afghanistan over the past 18 years. This will require patience given the distrust between the parties and the history of the conflict. It will also require the international community to be united in its demand for the Taliban to sit down with other Afghans and in particular representatives of the internationally recognised Government. The Taliban claim that they are serious about peace. They need to realize that peace requires compromise and dialogue. All other parties are ready to engage in this with an open mind. We should all call upon the Taliban to do the same. Thank you Madam President.

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## **Press release: Penny Mordaunt doubles support for plastic recycling**

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt today (11 March) doubled UK aid support for plastic recycling in developing countries and called for solutions to clearing plastic waste from the world's oceans and rivers, at an event in Parliament with Sir David Attenborough.

Ms Mordaunt was joined by Sir David Attenborough and MPs in Parliament on Commonwealth Day, where she spoke about the duty we have to our planet, to future generations and to the world's poorest to "sort out" plastic waste. Ms Mordaunt made "crystal clear" that the UK's aid budget will continue to be used to confront plastic pollution and that she wants to hear from scientists, tech entrepreneurs and business leaders for ideas and solutions to clean up plastic waste already in our oceans.

At an event, hosted by the Coalition for Global Prosperity, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Prevention for Plastic Waste and Plastic Oceans UK, Ms Mordaunt announced that the Department for International Development (DFID) will increase its UK aid support for pilot schemes to improve plastic recycling in some of the world's poorest countries, from £3 million to £6 million.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Plastic pollution is one of the biggest threats to our oceans. The UN estimates that there will be more plastic in the sea than fish by 2050, unless we act to reduce our use and improve how waste is managed, particularly in poorer countries.

That's why I am doubling UK aid's support to projects in developing countries to increase plastic recycling. This will create jobs and reduce the harmful impact of plastic waste in our oceans. Cleaning up our environment is a win for us all.



During a speech in parliament Sir David Attenborough spoke of “the hideous consequences” of plastics “to both humanity and to life in the seas, upon which we depend” and mentioned the “shame” in the amount of plastics the UK produces. Sir David also questioned where all of the country’s plastic waste would end up.

The mismanagement of plastic waste on land accounts for most of the plastic pollution in our waters. Around two billion people lack access to basic waste collection which has ruinous impact on their health as well as killing wildlife in our oceans. The new funding will find ways of collecting and recycling more plastic waste to avoid it ending up in the oceans.

The UK aid-supported pilot projects, some of which have already begun in the Commonwealth nations of Ghana and Bangladesh, will work alongside global businesses like Coca-Cola and Unilever, governments, and waste collectors to increase the amount of plastic waste collected and reused. The aim is to connect responsible businesses with people who make a living collecting waste – often women living in poverty – to improve incomes and protect the environment.

The UK is a global leader in tackling the issue of plastic pollution. It has already banned microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and taken 15 billion plastic bags out of circulation with its 5p carrier bag charge in the last two years alone. It is now consulting on plans to extend the charge to all retailers and double the minimum charge to 10p.

Last year, the Prime Minister pledged £66.4 million to boost global research and help countries across the Commonwealth stop plastic waste from entering the oceans in the first place. The UK is co-chairing the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance with Vanuatu.

Through the UK aid budget DFID has also:

- agreed to raise the target of Tearfund’s plastics appeal from £2 million to £3 million, which means every pound raised will be doubled by the British Government through UK Aid Match. The money will set up recycling hubs across Pakistan and stop about 2,000 tonnes of plastic – equivalent to more than 150 million plastic bottles – entering the ocean each year;
- committed up to £10 million to assist the 19 developing countries that have signed up the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance. These countries and the UK have all made substantive commitments, such as restricting plastic bag use and banning plastic microbeads in personal care products;
- and allocated £20 million to reduce pollution from manufacturing in Africa and South Asia through the Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution programme.

Theo Clarke, Chief Executive of the Coalition for Global Prosperity said:

We should be proud of the leading role that Britain has played in tackling plastic pollution both at home and abroad. I've seen first-hand the scale of the challenge when I visited Kissi Dump in Sierra Leone and heard from local campaigners about the challenges of how to build waste management and recycling systems in developing countries.

I saw rubbish being burnt in the street, thrown into the river or sea and heard stories about the related flooding and health problems. I was shocked to hear that globally two billion people don't have their rubbish collected which leads to disease for people in poverty. Waste and plastic pollution is having a detrimental impact on people's lives.

We can all do our bit to help the environment as after all, we only have one planet and we need to look after it for future generations. Tackling plastic pollution also helps to protect wildlife and to conserve our beautiful coastlines here in the UK and around the world.

During today's event Ms Mordaunt also announced she is co-hosting a meeting with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the World Economic Forum's Global Plastics Action Partnership, major brands, waste management companies and investors to start a conversation about how the global plastic supply chain can be made more sustainable.

Today's event was chaired by Theo Clarke CEO, Coalition for Global Prosperity with speeches from Sir David Attenborough CBE, Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, Secretary of State for International Development. Also, in attendance will be Mary Creagh MP, Chair, Environmental Audit Committee, Anne Main MP, Chair, APPG on Prevention for Plastic Waste, Jo Ruxton, Blue Planet producer, Roger Wright (M&S) and Professor Richard Thompson OBE, University of Plymouth.

The first trial waste recycling projects were launched in Ghana and Bangladesh last December. A Uganda project is due to be launched shortly. The new funding announced will extend the number of countries that we will carry out projects in.

- The Bangladesh project is working with the country's industry to increase the quality and volume of plastic recycling, particularly in garment manufacturing. The estimated total demand for plastic resin in Bangladesh is around 540,000 tonnes per year, yet only 10 per cent is made up of recycled resins.
- The Ghana project is focused on improving waste management and increasing recycling by leveraging in private sector investment. It is led by the Association of Ghana Industries, which is made up of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana, Dow Chemical West Africa Limited, Fan Milk Ghana Limited, Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited, Nestlé Ghana,

PZ Cussons Ghana Limited, Unilever Ghana and Voltic (GH) Limited.

- The Uganda pilot is due to be launched shortly. The trial will set up a partnership between key businesses including Coca-Cola Beverages Africa, government, and the charity sector to increase the proportion of plastic bottles recovered and recycled. We will seek to improve the incomes of those involved in collecting waste plastic. Some 80 percent of Kampala's 6,000 waste collectors are women.

The Coalition for Global Prosperity is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation that brings together political, military, business and faith leaders who believe that an effective development budget, alongside an active diplomatic and defence strategy, keeps Britain at the forefront of saving lives, alleviating poverty and bringing freedom, security and prosperity to those who need it most. CGP organises public and private events to explore the UK's role as a global leader. For more information, visit [www.coalitionforglobalprosperity.com](http://www.coalitionforglobalprosperity.com)

Plastic Oceans UK was the first charity focused on plastics and have been experts on the issue for nearly a decade. This began with their award-winning documentary A Plastic Ocean, available for streaming on Netflix. They are solving the plastic crisis through science, sustainability and education programmes.

The APPG on the Prevention of Plastic Waste is a parliamentary group which monitors the progress of the 25-year Environment Plan in relation to plastic waste, raises issues relating to the impact of plastic waste on our environment and provides a cross-party forum to work towards the minimization of plastic waste.