

Press release: PM call with President Buhari: 1 March 2019

The Prime Minister spoke with President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria this afternoon to congratulate him on his recent re-election.

Reflecting on commitments made during her trip to Abuja last summer, the PM said the UK would continue to work together with Nigeria to tackle corruption, improve security and create jobs and prosperity for the UK and Nigeria.

She looked forward to continuing and strengthening their close partnership.

Speech: Addressing political instability in Syria

Thank you very much Mr President and I'll add our voice to all those welcoming the Special Envoy and thanking him for his briefing.

Mr President, I think there's been a lot of identity of view here today and it's all centred around our support for the Special Envoy. And I just wanted to note that to date we've had resolutions, we've got principles, we've got baskets, we've got pillars and we haven't had any progress that's been meaningful, particularly on the notion of a political settlement. So I think the most useful thing I can do today is to add the United Kingdom's voice to all those pledging to support you, Special Envoy, but also to highlight one theme that I think nearly every speaker has made and that Mr President, is about the critical importance, as a Special Envoy said, of an eventual settlement that is inclusive of all legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. And this links also with what the German Ambassador just said about reconstruction. For Syria to be rehabilitated into the international community in the way that we all want to see there needs to be a political settlement firmly based on 2254 and there needs to be a representative set of politics in Syria that address all the underlying issues that led to the crisis in the first place. And we're not going to get there quickly.

I'm not going to talk about the Constitutional Committee which has bedevilled this Council for far too long. I am going to say that we trust the Special Envoy to use his very best efforts to make progress on this absolutely critical part. And for the avoidance of doubt Mr President, there's nothing ideological in the United Kingdom's position on this. We want a political settlement that is inclusive and credible and will last. And we will support the Special Envoy to the hilt in getting that settlement. So I just wanted to

put that on the table because I think it's a really critical point.

I want to join all those speakers who've called on those members of the Council who have strong influence with the Syrian authorities to use that influence to support the Special Envoy in making serious progress because this has gone on too long. I really hope that by the time you come back next month there will be something more to say than these messages which we have repeated for so many months, for so many years.

The other thing I wanted to say Mr President, was about Idlib. I agree with other speakers who have made the very important point about our concern for Idlib and for the safety of civilians there. The fight against terrorism isn't a licence to harm civilians and I think that point bears repeating.

I endorse what other speakers have said about humanitarian access.

And then lastly Mr President, I wanted to make common cause with the French Representative on what he said about Northeast Syria. We too welcome the American announcement. It's very important. There is more to do against Daesh even as the territorial manifestation of Daesh is being defeated. So I hope that we can continue to collaborate on combating terrorism but that ought to be in the context of assisting an overall political settlement in Syria. I repeat again Mr President, it isn't an excuse or a justification for going after the Syrian people by the Syrian authorities.

Thank you.

Press release: Secretary of State extends appointment of Children's Commissioner

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, today announced that she has reappointed the current Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland, Koulla Yiasouma, for a further four years.

In the absence of Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive, this reappointment was made under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018.

The first four year tenure of office of the current Commissioner expires on 1 March 2019. The Secretary of State has reappointed Ms Yiasouma for a further term, until 1 March 2023.

The Secretary of State said:

My priority is to continue working hard to restore devolved government at Stormont. Until that is achieved, I have taken steps to ensure continued good governance and the delivery of public services in Northern Ireland.

The role of Commissioner for Children and Young People is incredibly important. I am pleased to reappoint Koulla Yiasouma, who over the past four years has diligently brought her weight of experience to safeguard and promote the best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland. I wish her all the best in her new role.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Commissioner for Children and Young People

The principal aim of the Commissioner for Children and Young People is to promote and safeguard the rights and best interests of children and young people.

The Commissioner has five statutory duties:

1. To promote: (a) an understanding of the rights of children and young persons; (b) an awareness of the importance of those rights and a respect among children and young persons for the rights of others; and (c) an awareness of matters relating to the best interests of children and young persons.
2. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the rights and welfare of children and young persons
3. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for children and young persons by relevant authorities
4. To advise the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and a relevant authority on matters concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons
5. To take reasonable steps to ensure that: (a) children and young persons and their parents are made aware of: (i) the functions of the Commissioner; (ii) the location of the Commissioner's office; and (iii) the ways in which they may communicate with the Commissioner; (b) children and young persons are encouraged to communicate with the Commissioner; (c) the content of any matter published by the Commissioner takes account, so far as practicable, of the age, understanding and usual language of any children or young persons by whom it is intended that such matter will be read and of the effect of

any disabilities they may have; (d) the views of children and young persons and their parents are sought concerning the exercise by the Commissioner of his functions; (e) the services of the Commissioner are, so far as practicable, made available to children and young persons in the locality in which they live.

The Commissioner has a number of powers, including conducting investigations, conducting or commissioning research and issuing guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the interests of children and young people.

NICCY Reappointment

The reappointment of the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People takes effect from 2 March 2019 to 1 March 2023. Ms Yiasouma has served a first term from 2 March 2015. This appointment is remunerated and attracts a salary of £75,000. Koulla brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the job having dedicated much of her working life to championing the rights of children and young people.

Koulla Yiasouma does not hold any other public appointments. The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 provides for the Commissioner to be appointed by the First and Deputy First Ministers acting jointly. The role is sponsored by the Department for Communities. In October 2018, the Secretary of State for NI introduced legislation in Parliament; the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 received Royal Assent on 1 November. This legislation provides for the appointment of specified offices by the Secretary of State. The Northern Ireland (Ministerial Appointment Functions) Regulations 2019 came into force on 18 February. This Instrument specifies further offices to which the Secretary of State may make appointments, including that of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The other additional offices provided for by the Instrument are: – Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland; – Northern Ireland Housing Executive; – The Attorney General for Northern Ireland; – Northern Ireland Livestock and Meat Commission; and, – Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee

CPANI Code of Practice

This reappointment was made in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland requires the political activity of the appointees to be published. Koulla Yiasouma has not declared any political activity in the last five years.

Statutory Requirements

These appointments are made by the Secretary of State with regard to the equality provisions set out in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003; and, the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018, as amended by the Northern Ireland (Ministerial Appointment Functions) Regulations 2019.

Press release: Secretary of State extends appointment of Children's Commissioner

Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland, Koulla Yiasouma, reappointed for a further four years.

Speech: Addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President. Thank you to the Special Envoy – and it's very good to know that your office in Myanmar is up and running. Could I say at the start, Mr President I apologise if I may have to slip away before the Council session is over. I am hosting an event for Brian Urquhart who turned 100 today. Colleagues will know that Brian Urquhart was one of the original officials in the United Nations – working closely with very many Secretaries General and indeed was instrumental in setting up peacekeeping and also the IAEA. So please forgive me if I need to step away for this event.

I think there has been such attention by this Council on the events in Myanmar and particularly of the Rohingya. And I think it's fair to say Mr President it remains one of the most pressing issues before us. The displacement – the forced displacement – of several hundreds of thousands of people across an international border is bound to be something the Council needs to keep before it. And the alleged crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya also deserve the most serious attention of the Council. And I'm also very grateful to the Special Envoy for setting out the situation across the country, which I think we also need to have regard to in the

Council.

I wanted to start if I may Mr President on political developments. We as the United Kingdom: we are a long standing supporter of the Burmese people's efforts to emerge from many decades of military rule and to transition to democratic civilian government. As – did the Special Envoy- we recognise that Burmese democracy is still young and it's fragile. But the upcoming elections next year are an important moment and that efforts to consolidate the democratic transition are ongoing. This is why it was very good to hear about the constitutional amendments. As I said: we recognise that conflict continues across Myanmar and the loss of life and displaced people that we've seen is also of great concern. And I think it's beyond doubt that a nationwide peace settlement which guarantees rights and security for all the peoples of Myanmar is also a very high priority.

I think we should be clear, Mr President, about two particular things. It is the Burmese military who are the root cause of these longstanding problems. And in our pronouncements I think it's very important that the Council make very clear: that we united are on the side of all those in Myanmar who want peace and democratic change and that we will help them in that.

But just to concentrate on the Rohingya if I may, Mr President, for the reasons I outlined. I think we're very disappointed that more hasn't been possible that there hasn't been more progress on getting the refugees back - and that obviously includes creating the conditions where the refugees feel able to go back – which is why the proposal that the Rakhine Advisory Commission became so important. I want to be clear Mr President, we as the United Kingdom are not ideological about the refugees returning home. They need to return home but they can only do so on the basis of the UNHCR established principles that returns are safe that they are voluntary and that they are dignified and that they are secure. And we really want those principles to be upheld. We know that ASEAN has taken a very strong interest in returns and this is welcome. Possibly the Indonesian Ambassador will be able to say more. We know that the AHA center has been involved. We know that the Chinese Envoy has been making strenuous efforts. I repeat Mr. President, we don't mind from our perspective; we are not dogmatic about who helps the refugees to get back but we do want to see the UNHCR principles adhered to because they are there for a reason. They're to ensure the safety of ordinary people.

I also want to pay tribute in the presence of his excellency the Minister – to the generous support that Bangladesh has given and continues to give to the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar and on their territory. And they have made enormous efforts to help the Rohingya people and we believe that the international community should continue to support Bangladesh in this.

The Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations – still to our mind – remain the best blueprint for Rakhine. We will be very interested to see the Myanmar government take three initial steps.

We would like the UN coordinators offer to develop a transparent Joint Implementation Plan to be accepted. We would like UNHCR and UNDP to have

unconditional and widespread access in Rakhine. They have had some. But it isn't enough, Mr President, to make the proper assessments of conditions on the ground that could encourage refugee return. And we would like to see freedom of movement granted to those Rohingya who do remain in Rakhine. This would be a good start and enable the international community to have a platform to offer support and there is a clear will among the international community to do that, as I've said.

The Special Envoy touched also on accountability – I think this really goes to the heart of everything Mr President. Firstly it's essential for the refugees to have confidence that they can go home and that they will be secure. It is also essential though because it's important to uphold the norms of international justice. I know this is a difficult concept for some on the Council. But the scale of what has been done to the Rohingya Muslims and the allegations of crimes against humanity really mark this out as one of the most terrible events of this century so far. I think we need to keep that in mind.

I'm very grateful to the Special Envoy for all her efforts to encourage complementarity between the different UN instruments and the Independent Commission of Inquiry. I think the more the ICoE and Rosario Manalo can work with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the better outcomes we will see there. But I just want to conclude if I may by saying we remain committed to finding the way forward – as the United Kingdom – and we can remain committed to working with our partners on the Council with Myanmar and Bangladesh, with the Special Envoy. Thank you.