

Speech: “Whole of UN” approach in West Africa

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, SRSG Chambas, for your briefing and for your team’s work in West Africa and the Sahel. Your efforts continue to be an invaluable bulwark against the forces of instability in the region.

Mr President, the United Kingdom welcomes the progress set out by the SRSG this morning, but remains concerned by the security and political situation in large parts of the region. Many of our concerns are reflected in the Secretary-General’s report, including the threats from terrorist groups such as Boko Haram in countries including Nigeria, and other groups operating in the Sahel that wreak havoc on vulnerable populations and systematically violate women’s rights.

As we have discussed many times before in this Council, both military and non-military action is required to address these threats. We must understand their root causes and the political, security, development and humanitarian needs of the population. And it is essential that we adopt a coherent “whole of UN” approach to tackle existing problems and prevent further deterioration in the region.

Mr President, I would like to begin by addressing the situation in the Lake Chad Basin. The magnitude of this crisis is profound. The combination of terrorism, extreme poverty and climate change has rendered some 10 million people dependent on humanitarian aid. Over 2.4 million people have been forced to abandon their homes. The cholera epidemic is the worst in nearly a decade.

A regional response to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin has been critical. We therefore welcome collaboration between UNOWAS and UNOCA and the joint ECCAS and ECOWAS Summit held in July, which demonstrated the commitment of both organisations to strengthen their cooperation.

Leaders of the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin region also met in December to reinforce the region’s approach to tackling Boko Haram. Regional CT cooperation is vital to addressing a threat that does not respect borders. The Secretary-General’s report reminds us that cooperation between terrorist groups is growing in the Sahel region.

But the region cannot be left to manage this crisis alone. That is why the UK led the drafting of Security Council Resolution 2349 in 2017, and it is why at last September’s high-level conference in Berlin, the UK committed \$186 million to support an integrated response to the crisis.

Mr President, it is vital that we follow up the success of the Berlin Conference and ensure that the international community strengthens its commitment to tackling the problems of the region, including through supporting implementation of the UN Support Plan for the Sahel.

In light of the importance of the Sahel, the UK is in the process of scaling up our diplomatic, defence and development assistance in the region. We are opening new embassies in Niger and Chad, and increasing our presence in Mali. We have deployed Chinook helicopters to provide logistical support to the G5 Joint Force through Operation Barkhane, and will be significantly increasing our development assistance to the region in the coming years.

Mr President, at last month's Council briefing on the implementation of the UN Integrated Support Strategy for the Sahel, we called on international actors to ensure that organisational responsibilities were clearly delineated and strong lines of communication were set up between them. I am encouraged in this respect by the close cooperation between UNOWAS, the Office of the UN Special Adviser for the Sahel, ECOWAS and others.

We also recognise UNOWAS's efforts elsewhere in the region, and the close engagement of the Special Representative with national efforts to sustain peace, as in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. UNOWAS has a crucial role supporting states in the subregion to hold timely, transparent and inclusive elections and in supporting efforts of ECOWAS and others to lay the groundwork for structural prevention of election-related violence. With elections scheduled in several countries of the region in 2019, this will be an important theme of the year to come.

Mr President, one of UNOWAS's strengths has been to act as a bridge between national players and regional and international actors. We would encourage this to continue. In Burkina Faso, for example, regional cooperation and international support will be vital to tackle instability and the risks to the wider region, and UNOWAS has the credentials to leverage and facilitate such cooperation.

The UK also welcomes the role that the Peacebuilding Fund and its implementing partners are playing in supporting reconciliation in Burkina Faso and hope that the UN will maintain its commitment to using PBF resources to support reconciliation activities across the region.

Mr President, UNOWAS has demonstrated that it can be a valuable partner for regional governments and organisations. We look forward to engaging with the strategic review process later this year to ensure that UNOWAS is best equipped to fulfil its mandate.

Thank you, Mr President.

News story: New free schools to benefit children with additional needs

Pupils with additional and often complex needs are set to benefit from more

than 120 new school places, as two special free schools have been given the green light to open.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi has announced (9 January) that the two new specialist schools will be built in Essex and Hounslow, helping to meet the local need for school places for children with some of the most complex social, emotional and mental health needs.

It follows the [publication](#) of a significant package of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in December, when the Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced an extra £350 million funding to provide them with specialist support and tailored facilities, and boosting the school choice available for parents.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

I know how important it is for parents to feel their child is getting the support and education they deserve. My ambition for children with special educational needs is the same as for any other child – to achieve well in their education, find employment and live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every school is a school for children with special education needs – but parents rightly want choice in their child's education, which is why our reforms to the system put families at the heart of the process so their views are heard.

The two new special free schools in Essex and Hounslow will help support children with these additional needs to get the skills they need to fulfil their potential.

The two special free schools due to open in September 2020 include:

- one in Hounslow, providing 64 specialist places for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, aged between 11 and 19-years-old. It will be run by Orchard Hill College Academy Trust; and
- one in Chelmsford, Essex, on the site of the former St Peter's College, to offer 64 places to pupils aged seven to 16 who have severe and complex social, emotional and mental health needs. It will be run by the Beckmead Trust, which is in the process of becoming a Multi-Academy Trust with the Beckmead Family of Schools, a special school in Croydon rated outstanding by Ofsted.

Today's announcement is part of a government drive to ensure more families have access to a good school place, which will see the creation of one million places between 2010 and 2020 – the fastest increase for two generations.

It also builds on confirmation from the Education Secretary that he will approve all high quality bids in the current round of special and alternative provision free schools applications. Alongside this, he also confirmed that

councils will receive an additional £250 million in their high needs budgets over the next two years – on top of the £6 billion already provided – and an extra £100 million investment to create more specialist places in mainstream schools, colleges and special schools. This could include more state-of-the-art facilities, such as sensory rooms and specialist equipment.

Together, the funding will provide parents with increased choice for their child's education, and give more children and young people access to a good school or college place that meets their individual needs.

Councillor Tom Bruce, Cabinet Member for Education, Children Services and Youth Services, Hounslow Council, said:

We're delighted to be given the opportunity to open a new special school in Hounslow. The number of children diagnosed with having special educational needs and disabilities has been rising in recent years.

This new school will help meet the increased demand for school places and will support many children in our borough, ensuring that they receive the high quality education that they deserve.

Councillor Ray Gooding, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Education, said:

We are delighted that the Beckmead Trust has been appointed by the Department for Education to open a new special school in Chelmsford and pleased to have been able to work in partnership with both organisations to make the site available.

The new school will ensure pupils with a range of complex needs are fully supported within an appropriate environment and help to ensure that every child in the county is given the best chance to thrive. This is fantastic news for Essex and I look forward to the official opening of the new school.

Press release: Privy Council appointment: First Minister of Wales

Mark Drakeford AM sworn of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council.

Press release: Privy Council appointment: First Minister of Wales



The Queen has been pleased to approve that the First Minister of Wales (Mark Drakeford AM) be sworn of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council.

This follows the recent appointment of Mark Drakeford AM as First Minister of Wales.

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