

## **Press release: Government announces new Code of Practice to tackle sexual harassment at work**

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## **Press release: Government announces new Code of Practice to tackle sexual harassment at work**

Government will introduce a new Code of Practice so employers better understand their legal responsibilities to protect their staff as part of a package of commitments to tackle sexual harassment at work.

Responding to the Women and Equalities Select Committee report, the Government Equalities Office also promised to carry out awareness raising work with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Equality and Human Rights Commission and employers on how to prevent and address sexual harassment at work; to work with regulators to ensure they are taking action; and commission survey data on the prevalence of sexual harassment at work.

The government will also consult on:

- Non-disclosure agreements
- How to strengthen and clarify the laws in relation to third party harassment
- The evidence base for introducing a new legal duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace

ComRes, in their 2017 research for the BBC, claim that 40% of women (and 18% of men) have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour at work at some point.

Minister for Women Victoria Atkins said:

“Sexual harassment at work is illegal, but sadly that disgusting behaviour is something that many women still experience today.

“We are taking action to make sure employers know what they have to do to protect their staff, and people know their rights at work and what action to take if they feel intimidated or humiliated.

“Everyone has the right to feel safe at work.”

Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

“It continues to disappoint me that in this day and age some women still face discrimination and harassment at work.

“One part of this is the minority of cases where non-disclosure agreements are used unethically, and employees may not be aware of their protections and rights. We will be consulting on these.”

Going beyond the recommendations in the WESC report, the government has also promised to consult on whether additional protections are needed for volunteers and interns, (looking at all the protections in the Equality Act 2010, not just those on sexual harassment), and to explore the evidence for extending the time limits to bring any workplace discrimination and harassment case under the Equality Act 2010 to an employment tribunal.

Notes to editors:

The government is developing next steps on this package.

The government will:

- Introduce a new statutory code of practice on sexual harassment, which will be developed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission under its Equality Act 2006 powers
- Run awareness raising work with Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), Equality and Human Rights Committee (EHRC) and employers
- Commission a survey to gather regular data on the prevalence of sexual harassment
- Consult on non-disclosure agreements
- Consult on the evidence base for a new legal duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace
- Consult on strengthening and clarifying the laws on third party

harassment in the workplace

- Consult on whether further legal protections are required for interns and volunteers
- Consult to explore the evidence for extending employment tribunal time limits for Equality Act 2010 cases
- Ensure the public sector takes action to tackle and prevent sexual harassment
- Work with regulators for whom sexual harassment is particularly relevant to ensure they are taking appropriate action
- Consider whether further learnings can be taken from the criminal justice system to use in the employment tribunal system, to ensure vulnerable claimants have appropriate protection
- Check that the list of organisations who can receive 'whistleblowing' information includes the right bodies

The ComRes research can be found [here](#)

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## **Speech: Sustainable normalisation through dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia**

Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council Briefing on Kosovo

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## **Speech: Sustainable normalisation through dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia**

Thank you Mr President. Thank you to the Under-Secretary-General for his briefing.

I've listened very carefully to what President Vučić and President Thaçi said today.

Mr President, we believe that the development of its own armed forces is within Kosovo's sovereignty as a self-governing independent state in close consultation with KFOR and we urge Kosovo to do this – and I hereby join the

French representative – in close consultation with NATO and the wider international community. And I note from the Kosovo announcement that this development is to take place over the course of ten years.

Since Resolution 1244 was passed in 1999, Kosovo has become an independent, self-governing state recognized by over 100 members of the United Nations and its decision to extend the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force should be viewed in this context. The United Kingdom's interpretation of Resolution 1244 Mr President is that it does not – I repeat, not – contain anything that precludes the future transition of the mandate of the KSF. In fact Mr President, I re-read it at lunchtime. I then went on to read the document that followed it, the constitutional framework and the UN Ahtisaari Plan, the so-called "comprehensive settlement." I can assure the Council that nothing in any of those three documents precludes the transformation of the KSF. The constitutional framework set up a Kosovo Protection Force. The Constitution builds on that proposal and this recent decision builds on the Constitution so I just wanted to set that out Mr President.

That said, we continue to urge Kosovo to act responsibly, to act transparently and in consultation with NATO allies and to uphold Kosovo's existing commitments to arrangements with KFOR and what President Thaçi said about his assurances today in that respect are welcome, but of course Mr President, we look for them to be put into action.

I've noted the claim that the transition of the KSF is a threat to the Kosovo-Serb community. This claim is not borne out by Kosovo's genuine efforts to make the KSF a multi-ethnic force as NATO allies have requested and the United Kingdom regrets that these multi-ethnic efforts have been undermined by external pressure. We encouraged the Kosovo Government to continue its outreach to the Kosovo-Serb community to allay any anxieties. And it's a long time Mr President since the Council visited Kosovo, but I was on one of the earlier trips and we went into the Kosovo Serb community in the north where we heard from many people, but not all of them, supported the account given by President Vučić and the Russian Ambassador today.

We don't share Belgrade's perception that the expansion in size and mandate over the next decade risk jeopardizing regional stability either and we look to Belgrade to respond in a measured way, including in their public statements.

In this light Mr President, the United Kingdom considers assertions made by senior politicians and officials about the use of force by Serbia to be unhelpful and rejects the idea that such use of force might even be floated. I think it is irresponsible that they should have been repeated by one member of the Council today. I do agree with that member that there is a risk of a return to turmoil, but it is not Mr President caused by this decision. It is caused by those from outside Kosovo who would seek to exploit it for their own ends.

I do however take encouragement from listening to the Russian support today for NATO, which I think may be a first in this Chamber.

Mr President, as other speakers have noted, the reason that we are here, the fundamental reason these problems persist is because of the lack of normalisation. At every step, settlements, progress have been blocked. The UN has tried, the EU, the US and Russia have tried, and unfortunately Mr President, at every stage of trying to settle this issue, there has been a blockage and I am sorry to say that it has come from Belgrade. But the only way is normalisation and we look to both Kosovo and Serbia to make progress in that way.

We note with optimism the resolution passed by the Assembly of Kosovo on 15 December to establish a cross-party negotiating team and I join my French and other colleagues in urging both sides to return to negotiations through the EU-facilitated dialogue. Progress on the dialogue is vital for stability, security and prosperity in the two countries in the region. Final agreement itself needs also to contribute towards local, regional and global stability. And the two sides need to keep in mind that any proposals they put forward through the negotiations need to enhance the safety and security of all – I repeat, all – their citizens.

Mr President I don't find it surprising that there was an EU-8 statement today. Obviously, I took part in it but it's not surprising because it is our region. We have cared and still care very deeply about what happens in the western Balkans and EU countries and the EU itself have put a lot of effort into helping stability and security there. But it is their future. It is the future of Kosovo and Serbia. I urge them, as other speakers have done today, I urge them to make all the steps necessary to normalise their relations through the EU-facilitated dialogue and I call on all their leaders who have been elected to represent their people's interests. I call on all their leaders to enable this to happen. Both countries must now focus on a sustainable normalisation agreement through the dialogue which enhances security, enjoys popular domestic support and benefits both countries. And we stand ready Mr President, as we have always done, to support such an agreement. Thank you.