

Press release: Plans to strengthen protections for Britain's most valuable treasures at risk of export

New protections to prevent some of the nation's greatest treasures from being lost to overseas buyers have been outlined by the Government today.

The proposals, set out in a new public consultation, would introduce a formal, legally binding agreement with private sellers, instead of the current 'gentleman's agreement', and give museums and buyers in the UK first refusal on acquisitions.

It would mark the first significant change to the system in over 65 years, and reaffirms the Government's commitment to the protection of our national treasures, owners' rights, world-class museums, and the UK's reputation as a successful international art market.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

Over the past 65 years our export bar system has saved hundreds of our most valuable cultural objects for the benefit of the nation. However with many exceptional items increasing dramatically in value in recent years, it is right that we strengthen this process.

These plans would protect museums that fundraise in good faith and help to keep national treasures in the UK where they can be seen and enjoyed by the public.

The export deferral process introduces a pause in the export of national treasures overseas to give UK museums and buyers the chance to raise funds and keep them in the country.

Items saved for the nation through the current system includes a gold ring owned by Jane Austen, which was acquired by Jane Austen's House Museum and a steel dagger and scabbard owned by TE Lawrence that shaped the story of Lawrence of Arabia, which was acquired by The National Army Museum. Also saved was a sapphire and diamond coronet designed by Prince Albert in the year of his wedding to Queen Victoria, and worn by her following his death, that was acquired for £5 million for the Victoria and Albert Museum in August 2017.

Under the current rules, if a UK institution puts in a matching offer on an item subject to an export deferral, it is down to the seller to honour that commitment. The Government wants to strengthen this by introducing a mechanism to ensure that owners are legally bound to honour their commitment of accepting a matching offer from a UK buyer, and thereby remove the risk of reneging on the sale.

Over the last ten years, 40% of items at risk of export – worth a total of £97 million – were saved for the nation by UK museums and galleries.

However the remaining 60% of items at risk of export between 2007/08 and 2016/17 were sold overseas, at a cumulative value of £578.5 million.

The consultation follows an examination of how the export deferral process could be strengthened.

Notes to Editor

The [public consultation](#), 'Strengthening the Process for Retaining National Treasures' is now open. It will close at 00.01 on 24 February 2019.

Until 1939, the UK had no legal controls on the export of works of art, books, manuscripts and other antiques. The outbreak of the Second World War made it necessary to impose controls on exports generally in order to conserve national resources.

Items that are being sold abroad are assessed at the point of application for an export licence by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, which establishes whether it meets the 'Waverley criteria' to be regarded as a national treasure.

These are:

- Is it closely connected with our history and national life?
- Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?
- Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?

The export control process has always sought to strike a balance, as fairly as possible, between the various interests concerned in any application for an export licence.

Speech: Investigating crimes and seeking justice for victims in Darfur

Thank you Mr President.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Prosecutor for her 28th report on the situation in Darfur and for her briefing today. I would also like to commend the hard work that she and her staff have undertaken in relation to this investigation and their commitment to making progress and getting justice for the victims.

The UK welcomes reports that the level of violence against civilians in

Darfur has decreased throughout the last six months. As UNAMID draws down, we encourage the Government of Sudan to focus its efforts and resources on building the capacity of the Sudanese Police Force and judiciary to prevent, respond to and investigate human rights abuses and violations. We continue to support the Government of Sudan's stated aim of opening an Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights before next October. More broadly, we encourage the Government of Sudan to engage constructively with the Secretary-General's recommended benchmarks in order to ensure that the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Darfur is a success.

Whilst the situation in wider Darfur shows signs of improvement, the situation in Jebel Marra remains of serious concern. Of particular concern is the ongoing targeting and displacement of civilian populations, with up to 2 million internally displaced persons currently in Darfur. The United Kingdom urges the Government of Sudan to abide by its unilateral cessation of hostilities and to facilitate unfettered access throughout Darfur to UNAMID and humanitarian actors. We further urge the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdel Wahid to extend its unilateral cessation of hostilities, due to expire on 18 December, and engage immediately with the peace process.

The UK welcomes the recent signing in Berlin of the Pre-negotiation Agreement for the Resumption of the Peace Process in Darfur and the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) meeting in Addis Abba. The people of Darfur have already waited too long for sustainable peace, justice and accountability. We therefore urge all parties to build on the current momentum by swiftly agreeing a permanent ceasefire and engaging meaningfully in negotiations to reach an inclusive political settlement that addresses the root causes of the conflict.

Mr President, the United Kingdom was pleased to co-host the Arria-formula meeting in July which resulted in productive discussions on the relationship between the Court and the Council. We encourage further discussion on ideas generated from that meeting to improve this relationship, including addressing non-compliance by States Parties. We call on all States Parties to cooperate with the ICC and abide by their Rome Statute obligations.

We note the Government of Sudan's continuing complete disregard for its obligations under UN Security resolution 1593 to cooperate with the Court and to fulfil its international obligations. We yet again urge the Government of Sudan to cooperate fully with and provide assistance to the Court and the Office of the Prosecutor.

The United Kingdom continues to be frustrated that fugitives of the Court, including President Al-Bashir, are still travelling overseas unhindered, including to the territory of States parties to the Rome Statute. The United Kingdom will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant governments and we renew our call to all States to cooperate with the ICC in relation the Darfur situation as required by the Security Council resolution, and to States Parties to abide by their obligations under the Rome Statute. We would urge any State that feels unable to co-operate with the Court for any reason to consult the Court's authorities. We also support France's proposal that States which, according to the Court, have not complied with their

obligations to cooperate with the Court be invited to address the Security Council.

Finally Mr President, we acknowledge the Prosecutor's dedication to her continuing investigations, and welcome the report that significant progress has been achieved by the Darfur Investigation team within this reporting period. We recognise the importance for the victims and their families, some of whom I understand are with us today, of hearing regularly from the Prosecutor on progress in this investigation, and it is important for this Council to hear from her too. For this reason we support the 6-monthly reporting cycle and would be opposed to any suggestion of less frequent reporting to the Council. The UK again thanks the Prosecutor for her report, and her Office for its persistent pursuit of justice for victims in Darfur. We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the UK's commitment to supporting the Court, both as a State Party to the Rome Statute and as a member of this Council.

Speech: Steps towards peace in Yemen

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

Speech: Steps towards peace in Yemen

Thank you very much indeed Mr President and welcome to the new Yemeni Representative here.

This is a good day for all of Yemen. I want to congratulate, commend Martin and his team for the work that they have done to bring about these developments. But as Martin himself said we should also thank and commend the Swedish Government, the parties themselves, the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, President Hadi, representatives from Kuwait, Emirati and Oman Government. And my Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, Mr President, was very pleased to have been able to join his Swedish counterpart in Stockholm for these important developments. But above all I just want to stress how much we owe to Martin and his team and of course to the Secretary-General.

If I may say so Mr President, this is what the UN is for. This Council's united support has helped, I think, Martin and the UN get to this point.

I will speak briefly today Mr President because I think we all have important work to do now to support Martin. I will come on to what Mark said in a

minute. I was very struck by what Martin said about trust between the parties and what he said about international consensus.

For the first time in two years Mr President the people of Yemen have been put first and we commend all the parties for taking that important step. We recognise their leadership. We endorse the agreements that they have reached but Martin's cautions about it being a humanitarian stopgap are very well taken.

I want to refer now to what Mark said about the humanitarian situation on the ground. That's a very sobering reminder of the human consequences that are still at stake and of how many starving, sick and desperate people remain in the most vulnerable of situations.

So Mr President we have no time to lose. As Mark said we need to bring about tangible improvements for the people of Yemen and we need to do that as swiftly as we can.

Thank you to the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland for agreeing to hold a pledging conference. Mark set out an update on his five asks and refined them. We support those.

From our side Mr President as the penholder the United Kingdom will resume work on the Security Council resolution with all our colleagues. We plan to endorse the agreements reached, support their implementation and set out urgent next steps. As requested we will of course work with colleagues to address the monitoring requirements. We welcome the news about General Cammaert. I think that's an extremely good step forward. We understand the importance of monitoring the compliance and we understand the importance of the UN having a leading role in supporting the ports. And we hope to be able to work expeditiously with colleagues to bring about a Security Council resolution which will give the firmest possible support to what has been achieved so far and provide Martin and the parties with a solid foundation as they move towards the end of January agreement on his framework and we wish him the best of luck with that.

It's vital Mr President, it's vital that the parties who have made such good steps so far continue their good faith and take urgent steps to put these agreements into full implementation. I'm sure I speak for all colleagues on the Council to join me in pledging that the Council will do its very best to stay united and to work tirelessly together with partners throughout the UN membership to support what's been achieved and move it on to the much desperately needed next stage.

Thank you Mr President.

Speech: Speech by Minister for Asia and the Pacific on disinformation

Disinformation: democracy and social stability at risk?