

News story: David Mundell statement on Supreme Court hearing

The Advocate General for Scotland, Lord Keen, will today [Tuesday 24 July] set out the legal case in the UK Government's referral of the Scottish Parliament's Continuity Bill to the Supreme Court.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

Given the view of the Scottish Parliament's Presiding Officer that the Continuity Bill was not within the legal scope of the Parliament, we believe it is important to ask the Supreme Court to provide absolute clarity. The legislation which set up the Scottish Parliament anticipated such a situation, and we are simply following the legal process set out in the 1998 Scotland Act.

Press release: UK calls for action to address 'global injustice' of discrimination against disabled people

UK calls for 'move from rhetoric to action' to address 'global injustice' of discrimination against disabled people

• The Department for International Development will today host the UK Government's first ever [Global Disability Summit](#) at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London • The Summit will shine a light on the discrimination and stigma faced by up to 1 billion people globally who have a disability • The UK will pledge to ambitious commitments to tackle the scale of the problem

The UK will today [Tuesday, 24 July] host its first ever Global Disability Summit and call on international partners to tackle the prejudice faced by disabled people.

The International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, will lead a global call to 'move from rhetoric to action' on improving the lives of disabled people, including some of the poorest and most vulnerable in the world.

As part of the UK's commitment, Ms. Mordaunt will announce a new innovative UK Aid Connect programme which will work with different organisations within

small communities to support disabled people into jobs in the developing world.

The landmark summit will be co-hosted alongside the Government of Kenya and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and will see the UK challenging established practices to ensure that equal rights of disabled people are upheld.

Participants will be expected to commit to real, transformative action, and the International Development Secretary will call on delegates to hold each other to account on delivering pledges made at the event.

The UK-led event will bring together government ministers, business leaders, and disabled people from all over the world to tackle what is a burning global issue. Governments and other organisations will commit to work in partnership with each other to put disabled people and their representative organisations at the front and centre of their work.

The Summit will feature a keynote speech from President Moreno of Ecuador; a world leader who has a disability himself. Participants will also have access to a marketplace of organisations showcasing new policy and technology for disabled people. Over the two days there will be range of spotlight sessions exploring issues affecting disabled people and a screening of the Oscar winning short film *Silent Child*, alongside a Q&A. In advance of today's Summit, the Prime Minister has called for real and substantive change.

The Prime Minister, Theresa May, said:

"The path a person takes in life should not be dictated by their disability and yet people are forced, every day, to deal with prejudice and even violence.

"That is why the UK's first ever Global Disability Summit is dedicated to bringing together our international partners and transforming the lives of the world's most vulnerable and why we are committed to ending discrimination and stigma against disabled people."

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, said:

"Discrimination and stigma against disabled people is a global injustice – one that has been ignored for too long – and one we need to fix urgently.

"Today I am calling for countries around the developing world to stand alongside disabled people in their countries and commit to end stigma and fully value the contribution disabled people can give to the success of those nations.

"This isn't just the right thing to do for humanity – it is also the smart thing to do because it's impossible to end extreme poverty if a significant part of your society is left out of the deal.

"Today we will learn from each other and will make commitments to enable disabled people to reach their full potential."

Ms. Mordaunt, who referenced the importance of this Summit when she became the first Minister to use sign language at the despatch box of the House of Commons earlier this month, has committed the UK Government to a number of initiatives to demonstrate our commitment and leadership.

These include:

- a new global partnership – ‘AT Scale’, to transform access to and affordability of life-changing devices and basic technology, such as wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids and glasses; this would be aimed at reaching 500 million people globally by 2030 by bringing organisations together to share data and consider how best to tackle issues of innovation, affordability and availability – work that would benefit disabled people in the UK and overseas;
- a new innovative UK Aid Connect programme, led by charities Sightsavers and Leonard Cheshire Disability, which will work with organisations within small communities to support disabled people into jobs in the developing world;
- a new six-year programme to design ways to help 100,000 disabled people to access health services, 10,000 disabled children to access education, and up to 45,000 disabled people to increase their incomes. This programme will also help to improve policy making in the UK;
- increasing DFID’s work with businesses around the globe, supporting disabled people as employers, employees and consumers.

The Department already pledged in April this year to support disabled girls into education as part of the flagship [Education Challenge programme](#).

The Global Disability Summit has been designed to mobilise new global and national commitments on disability, and showcase good practice, innovation and evidence from across the world.

There will be four central themes for the Summit, around which the participants will build commitments and showcase best practice. These are:

- [tackling stigma and discrimination](#)
- [inclusive education](#)
- [routes to economic empowerment](#)
- [harnessing technology and innovation](#)

The Chair of the International Disability Alliance, Ana Lucia Arellano, said:

“IDA is welcoming this historic Global Disability Summit and commends the UK Government for this timely initiative. We, as a representative organisation of persons with disabilities, are committed to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and we see the Summit as a critical impetus into its implementation in every corner of the world.

“We believe that we can achieve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society only through the meaningful and genuine stakeholder partnership between organisations of persons with disabilities, governments, the private and all actors involved. We are committed to supporting Governments and all participants of the Summit in the implementation of their commitments that they are expressing today.”

Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Labour and Social Protection, Ukur Yatani, said:

The Global Disability Summit provides nations, together with civil society, a rare and welcome opportunity to act in tandem on this important issue of disability – an area which has been neglected for too long.

We need to delve into the causes of the existing and emerging gaps in the sector and provide realistic trackable actions that will immensely improve the situation for people with disabilities from the countries represented in this unique summit.

Notes to Editors

- An estimated one billion people – 15% of the world’s population – have some form of disability and an estimated 80% of these people live in developing countries – [\(World Disability Report, jointly published by the WHO and World Bank \(2011\)\)](#)
- Disabled people are often the poorest and most excluded in their communities, and face significant barriers that can prevent them from realising their rights, living with dignity, and fully participating in social, economic and political life.
- Around the world, disabled people continue to face appalling levels of stigma, discrimination and abuse, and all too often miss out on the opportunities that are the right of every person.

For images and videos of the stories of people with disabilities around the world go to this link [link](#) If used please credit DFID.

[News story: Victoria Atkins chairs business against slavery forum today](#)

Victoria Atkins met with some of the most influential business leaders in the UK, including chief executives from Aviva, Co-op, Associated British Foods, BT and Sky, who joined with government representatives at the business against slavery forum to discuss what more can be done to accelerate progress in tackling modern slavery.

Speaking after the forum, Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

This government is proud to lead the world in ending this terrible injustice through the Modern Slavery Act and an advanced law enforcement response. However we know that, hidden from view in the supply chains that produce the goods and services we consume, there is an underbelly of forced labour that we must eradicate.

The companies here today are leading the way by taking robust action to prevent slavery in their supply chains, but other businesses have failed to fulfil their legal obligations or have published weak statements which are lacking in detail.

All businesses need to step up and help eliminate slavery. My department will be writing directly to the CEOs of businesses which continue to flout their legal obligations – and if this persists they can expect to face tougher consequences.

Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, it is a legal requirement for companies with a £36 million turnover to publish a transparency statement and explain what they are doing to stop modern slavery occurring.

During the business against slavery forum, a number of company-led initiatives were discussed, such as Co-op's bright future programme, giving survivors a pathway to paid employment, and HSBC's survivor bank accounts.

The meeting included some of the largest companies in the UK which collectively employ over 800,000 people with a combined turnover of more than £140 billion a year. The forum was launched last year in partnership with the government to enforce greater transparency in supply chains. It is attended by Aviva, Co-op, Associated British Foods, BT, Sky, Hewlett Packard, WPP, Barclays and HSBC.

The Modern Slavery Act was introduced in 2015, the first piece legislation of its kind in the world, transforming our response to modern slavery, both in the UK and internationally. Last year, there were over 600 police investigations – 3 times higher than 2015 – with thousands of potential victims identified.

[Speech: Tell MAMA annual report launch](#)

Thank you, Iman, it's a real pleasure to be here for the launch of your [important report](#).

And to pay tribute to Tell MAMA's vital work – in combatting the scourge of

Islamophobia and helping build a strong society – a society that thrives on its diversity.

A diversity that is all the richer for the immense contribution of our Muslim community.

A community from one of the great faiths, of people who:

- run our businesses
- keep our public services going
- are the pillars of their communities
- enrich our cultural life – and, yes,
- make us proud when they represent our country, in places like here in Parliament, or out on the sports field

Extraordinary, inspiring individuals like Mohammed Mahmoud, the Imam whose vital intervention prevented further tragedy after the Finsbury Park attack.

Last month, as we marked one year since that terrible attack, I had the privilege of meeting him.

I thanked him for his courage, presence of mind and commitment to society – a society in which people from all backgrounds can come together.

And we should not forget how British Muslims, along with so many others, have stepped up so magnificently in times of crisis – after the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London and the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower.

It's essential we do more to celebrate these tremendous achievements, especially given the challenge we face when it comes to Islamophobia.

In recent months, we've seen some abhorrent incidents of Islamophobia – such as the Punish a Muslim Day letters.

This is utterly unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

Someone has been charged in relation to it and it will go to trial later this year.

Because the message is clear: if you target any communities in our society in this way, you will be made to answer for it.

But I know we need to do more.

Once again, Tell MAMA have reported their highest number of anti-Muslim incidents in 2017.

Your report shows, abusive behaviour and physical attacks remain the 2 most common forms of Islamophobic incident reported.

Your report also highlights the majority of anti-Muslim hatred is directed at Muslim women and that their visibility can be a factor in this – over 50% of reported incidents featured a visibly Muslim woman as the victim.

We need to do more to ensure that British Muslims feel safe to go about their lives as much as anyone else.

It also shows a growing concern online, with a 16.3% rise in reports in Islamophobia online.

I know Tell MAMA works incredibly hard with social media companies to combat anti-Muslim hatred that appears on their platforms, and your “Trusted Flagger” status is a valuable tool helping companies streamline reporting and content removal.

For our part, this government recently responded to the [Internet Safety Strategy green paper](#). It considers hateful harmful behaviour online and will feed into our hate crime action plan.

Whether it happens on our streets or online, we simply cannot tolerate Muslims being harassed, threatened, abused or facing violence and the fear and division this spreads in our society.

This government has been clear that no-one should be a target for hatred because of who they are – be that their religion, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

And with that in mind, our first priority is to support victims of Islamophobia, protect communities and encourage anyone who has suffered such appalling abuse to speak out and report what they’ve experienced.

Islamophobia has no place in our society. It does not reflect our British values of freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

It is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

We are committed to stamping out all forms of hatred.

It’s why we’re refreshing our [hate crime action plan](#) later this year; to reinforce our strong, preventative approach.

As well as supporting victims and communities and encouraging reporting, the plan also focuses on developing a better understanding of hate crime.

It encourages us to take stock of the progress made – and what more we need to do.

Work to tackle Islamophobia will continue to be a key element in this plan.

The [recent government-commissioned report](#) from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services, notes many examples of good practice, for example within the police.

With support from police leadership, we expect other forces to learn those important lessons.

In addition, last month the government announced [funding for specialist](#)

[training for call-handlers](#), to help them support hate crime victims from the moment they report an incident.

We have also opened up the appointments process for Independent Members to sit on our [Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group](#)...

...and I would encourage anyone with expertise in tackling hatred and an understanding of Muslim communities to put themselves forward.

I'm pleased to see that Tell MAMA will continue to be represented on the Working Group...

...and look forward to continuing to work with you to not only put an end to Islamophobia but to stand up to all kinds of prejudice and bigotry.

And it's this refusal to tolerate any form of hatred – to any community – that really makes Tell MAMA and your work stand out.

You've been at the forefront of the fight against anti-Muslim hatred, yes:

- by tapping into grassroots activism
- educating people about how to report and respond to hatred, and
- building trust with communities so they feel confident their complaints will be treated seriously and sensitively

But Tell MAMA has also shown incredible solidarity:

- with Jewish communities fighting anti-Semitism
- LGBT communities fighting homophobia, and
- transphobia and people with disabilities fighting hatred and discrimination

You know that Islamophobia cannot be beaten on its own.

That hatred can only be defeated when all of us stand together and work together.

I share this determination.

A determination for strong, thriving, well-integrated communities. Communities where people of all backgrounds can take advantage of the opportunities our country offers.

It's the thinking behind our new [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#).

Work is underway to trial a new localised approach to tackling integration challenges in 5 areas.

And we will also be hosting a Communities Conference to inspire policymakers and showcase the incredible impact cohesive communities can have.

It therefore only remains for me to, once again, thank you for all your efforts in confronting Islamophobia...

...and ensure our proud and peaceful Muslim community feel safe and can live free and full lives as part of an open and inclusive society.

Thank you.

Press release: Environment Agency responds to impacts of dry weather

The Environment Agency has stepped up its incident response to tackle the impacts of continued dry weather, following the driest June since 1925.

Record-breaking temperatures and very low rainfall throughout May, June and much of July is taking its toll on the environment, with wildlife suffering as river levels drop. EA teams have responded to 44 significant environmental incidents since the end of June including moorland fires, algal blooms, dry boreholes, low river flows and fish rescues.

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency convened today (Monday 23 July) to discuss the operational approach to managing water supplies and review preparation for the pressures ahead.

The group is made up of 30 organisations including water companies, regulators and environmental groups. During the meeting, water companies explained how they were implementing activity set out in their drought plans and increasing efforts to reduce leakage.

NDG members set out how they had stepped up activity on all fronts and urged everyone to reduce water use and wastage to conserve supplies and protect the environment.

See the NDG's full position statement [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611111/ndg_full_position_statement.pdf)

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive Environment Agency said:

The water that comes from the tap is taken from our rivers and reservoirs and the amount we use has a direct effect on people and the environment around us.

As we prepare for drought in the North West and dry weather continues around the country, we have stepped up our response to minimise wastage and tackle the impacts of low river flows on wildlife.

We all have a part to play to protect this precious resource. I expect water companies to step up their efforts to ensure supplies

are well-managed and people at home should use water wisely.

The lack of rain has led to a rapid decline in reservoir levels in the North West. The EA is preparing for drought in the region and United Utilities have announced a hosepipe ban affecting 7 million people from early August. The company have applied for 2 drought permits and 1 drought order across Cumbria, which the EA are now considering. The company is preparing a further 3 drought permits to be submitted before the end of July.

Dry weather is also affecting a number of sectors, notably agriculture with concerns about water supplies needed for irrigation and potentially lower yields. The EA is meeting with affected groups to provide practical advice about conserving water and planning for drought, should the dry weather continue.

Further action the EA is taking includes:

- Frequent river monitoring and 50% increase in incident response for this time of year – mostly associated with extreme hot weather and prolonged dry conditions.
- Working closely with water companies to ensure they are following drought plans and implementing actions in a timely way.
- Robust regulation including increasing the number of inspections for businesses abstracting water to ensure compliance with licences.
- Operating strategic water transfers to help maintain river flows.
- Moving staff to affected areas to deal with increasing demand for incident response and regulatory work.
- Leading by example – from late July, not cleaning EA fleet vehicles or office windows to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Around the country, water companies have enough water to maintain supplies if resources are managed properly and if the public use water wisely but a dry end to the summer and dry autumn could see the risk of restrictions and further environmental impacts spread across the country.

Reducing the amount of water we use helps protect the environment and conserves supplies during extended periods of dry weather. There are a number of ways the public can use water wisely including:

- Avoid using sprinklers, use hosepipes sparingly and don't water your lawn – it will recover quickly when rain returns
- Ditch the paddling pool and head to the beach – [find your nearest bathing water](#)
- Water plants after 9pm – the water is less likely to evaporate
- Fit a water butt, so when the rain comes you'll have stored water for your garden
- Take a shorter shower
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth
- Always put full loads in your washing machine and dishwasher

You can find more water saving tips at [waterwise](#)