

Press release: UK steps up fight against human trafficking in West Africa

Theresa May will unveil a series of measures to cut illegal and unsafe migration into Europe from West Africa and support victims of modern slavery as she visits Nigeria today (Wednesday 29 August).

- New support will help migrants and modern slavery victims rebuild their lives in Nigeria
- The UK will help Nigeria and Niger prevent trafficking across their border
- The HQ for the UK-funded border task force has been established at Lagos Airport

Nigeria is the fifth-largest country of origin for victims of modern slavery in Britain. Men, women and children are tricked into journeys to Europe that can lead to abuse, trauma, prostitution, forced labour and death.

Theresa May, who since her time as Home Secretary has led the UK government's response to this issue at home and internationally, will also announce plans to tackle the serious organised crime behind people trafficking and help victims rebuild their lives.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Modern Slavery is one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time and the UK is a world leader in making it an international mission to end this heinous crime.

Today we are stepping up our partnership with Nigerian authorities to find traffickers and bring them to justice. And because this is an international problem which needs international response, we are also launching a new project with France to strengthen border cooperation to prevent trafficking along key migration routes towards Libya and Europe.

But as well as targeting the smugglers and traffickers that cruelly exploit people for financial gain, it's vital that we support the victims who have suffered enormous trauma and are at high risk of being re-trafficked, and that is an important part of the support we are announcing today.

She will make a series of announcements to fight human trafficking and support victims of modern slavery in Nigeria and the region, including:

- Support to help up to 1,700 migrants and modern slavery victims returning to Nigeria from Libya with counselling to deal with the distress of their ordeal and training in business and vocational skills to help them get jobs and reintegrate into their communities. Most of these victims have suffered serious trauma and are at high risk of re-trafficking and psychosocial issues without this crucial UK support, delivered in partnership with the International Organisation of Migration.
- A new project – led by the UK and France – to help the governments of Nigeria and Niger strengthen their border cooperation to prevent trafficking along one of the main migration routes towards Libya and Europe. The project will ensure border posts are better equipped and staffed, enhance training for border officials, and work with NGOs to help victims of trafficking return home.
- The UK-funded headquarters of the Joint Border Task Force has been established at Lagos airport, where UK and Nigerian authorities have been working together to identify traffickers and bring them to justice. This year the Task Force helped secure the first prosecution of a British national for trafficking under the UK Modern Slavery Act, with Josephine Iyamu jailed for 14 years in Birmingham in July.

The UK is determined to lead global efforts to stamp out modern slavery. So far 68 countries – including Nigeria – have endorsed the Call to Action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking which the Prime Minister launched at the UN in 2017.

[Speech: 3 million civilians at risk in Idlib](#)

Protocol requires me to thank the Russian representative for his statement. I will turn to some of his allegations in a moment. In my Presidential capacity, please may I remind Members of the Council and other speakers of Rule 507 to keep remarks to five minutes.

I will now speak in my national capacity and I will certainly do that.

I want to join the speakers in thanking John Ging, and I want to pay tribute to humanitarian workers as others have done. They work in extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

I also want to reject the allegations we've just heard against the Department

for Political Affairs. To the best of my knowledge, everybody in the UN is trying to do their best for the people of Syria and they're trying to do their best for the political process.

I think it's clear from everything we've heard today that the situation especially in Idlib is dire. None of the list of achievements that the Russian representative read out, they are all a chimera, they will not help the people of Idlib. There are 3 million civilians at risk in Idlib, and the Syrian regime is yet escalating its military action against them. I would be grateful to know which forces have been relocated to Idlib and I would like to say that we will hold the commanders responsible for attacks on civilians.

I would also like to echo the words of the United States and France. The United Kingdom also will respond appropriately if the Asad regime repeats its illegal use of chemical weapons that has already had such devastating humanitarian consequences for the Syrian population.

I have three questions relating to the humanitarian situation. They centre around the fact that UN convoys have not had access to 6,000 internally displaced persons in Damascus and Eastern Ghouta for two months; that 1 million people remain in hard to reach areas where only 11% of interagency convoys are able to conduct needs assessment and deliver aid; and that the UN continues not to be given the necessary security assurances so that humanitarian convoys can come through the Ar Ramtha border crossing from Jordan. And that's in violation as we've heard resolution 23 93. I hope the Syrian representative will be able to give us an explanation in his remarks.

The Russian representative referred to refugees going home. I think the ongoing military operations, the lack of humanitarian access, the bombing of schools, the arbitrary arrests, the bombing of hospitals show exactly why the situation is not right for refugees to go home en masse.

You said, Mr Ging, that Idlib represented a scale that we have not yet seen. We're used to superlatives in Syria. We're used to them being surpassed. You also mentioned Kofi Annan, and like others, I think the best tribute we can offer Mr Annan is to continue our efforts to accelerate the political process and bring peace to Syria.

I do want to make a point about reconstruction that our Syrian colleague set out and that has been echoed by every EU Member State and by the United States. There will be no reconstruction assistance until there is a credible and ongoing political process. There will not be a Marshall Plan for Syria. There will not be a Brussels Plan for Syria. If there is any plan, it will need to be a Moscow and a Putin plan.

I would now like to turn to some of the statements made by the Russian Ambassador.

The Russian Ministry of Defense today gave a briefing in which it said – and this has been echoed by members of his own Mission – that the United Kingdom and the White Helmets were involved in preparing chemical weapons attacks against the Syrian people. I did not use the word 'comical' in my press

briefing. What I said was that even by the egregious standards of Russian propaganda, this is an extraordinary allegation. It is wholly untrue and it has been denied by the commander of the British forces in Kuwait who is supporting the coalition. I am happy to repeat that denial now and I am happy to rebut any allegation that the British government or British forces engages with terrorists on the ground in Syria. The only plausible explanation we have for why these stories are being floated at the time other than to increase the amount of fake news in the system is as a smokescreen for a possible impending attack by the Syrian regime once again against its own people in Idlib, and I repeat, the statement that I, the French, and the Americans made earlier about responding appropriately. We have no information about chlorine being delivered and therefore, if the Russian Ministry does have that, the most probable explanation is that it is a preemptive attempt to set the agenda and the narrative for an appalling attack to come. And I would appeal to Russia to use all its persuasive powers to convince the Syrian authorities not to attack their own population and never again to use prohibited chemical weapons.

I would draw the Council's attention to the fact that we have had a letter from the Syrian authorities about warning of an impending attack, and I would recall for the Council that on 10th of March the Syrian authorities wrote to the Security Council to warn of a chemical attack in Eastern Ghouta, and one month later on the 10th of April this year, such an attack took place and is ascribed to the Syrian authorities. I repeat again our abhorrence of chemical weapons. And I repeat again that the British government will always uphold its commitment to prohibit the use of these weapons and will work with our international partners to ensure that that prohibition is upheld.

Speech: Ensuring a peaceful and democratic transition of power in DRC

I will now make a statement in my national capacity. SRS, I too would like to thank you and Monseigneur Utambi and Ms Furaha for those really helpful briefings. I think the whole Council has benefited from being able to hear from you and thank you too for all the work that MONUSCO does to try and bring peace and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I just wanted to say that I think at this crucial time, it's important that the Security Council receives information from key players and we are therefore, like others, disappointed that the DRC electoral commission CENI weren't able to join this briefing.

We very much share the concern about women's participation that in particular Bolivia and Equatorial Guinea set out so clearly after Ms. Furaha's briefing. We've noted the continuing progress on the electoral calendar and the closure

of the application process for presidential candidates and the confirmation that President Kabila will not run for a third term. As others have said, this is a critical step forward and it will help ensure that credible and inclusive elections in December lead to DRC's first ever democratic and peaceful transition of power. This is an immense prize, but it is still a vulnerable one.

Ambassador Haley set out forcibly how we are still four months from elections and there is a long way to go. This is about more than the timeline; it's about creating the conditions for free and fair elections. And we join others in calling on the government to implement the Saint Sylvestre Agreement in full, and that includes the confidence-building measures to demonstrate their credibility and potential for government.

We also look to the opposition we engage constructively. The electoral process should be transparent and it should proactively address the concerns of Congolese Civil Society. I'd like to make three points on that:

Firstly, we call on CENI to clarify election protocols to enable effective observation and to address concerns around the electoral register and the voting machines and many representatives they have set out those difficulties in full and we endorse their concerns.

Secondly, we note that CENI has refused MONUSCO logistical assistance to organise the elections, and we therefore urge CENI to clarify its logistical plan, or to accept MONUSCO's assistance urgently.

And thirdly, a vital element in building trust in the elections is inclusivity. We note with concern the lack of confidence of several opposition parties in the electoral process following the release of the provisional list of presidential candidates. Elections need to be fully inclusive and they need to see the engagement of all the Congolese people.

It is clear DRC faces many challenges and these have had a devastating effect upon the population. A number of speakers today referred to the violations of human rights across the country. The link between political uncertainty and instability and the other drivers of violence which the ongoing Ebola crisis risks exacerbating. And we would share those concerns and hope they can be addressed. I called again for the Saint Sylvestre Agreement to be implemented fully. Delays in elections and lack of public trust only risk further violence. This will have an effect not just on the DRC, but risks destabilising a wider region too.

[News story: New £1.6million investment](#)

in projects in North Yorkshire

New programmes worth £1.6 million will support young people and their families living on the North Yorkshire Coast with practical help to boost early learning at home and improve access to extra-curricular activities.

Parents who struggle to help their young children develop reading, writing and language skills will be supported by a £800,000 scheme that will offer support such as community workshops with early years experts.

The project will also fund the creation of 40 speech and language 'champions' to work with nurseries and preschools in the area, helping identify earlier when children might need better support and make sure they arrive at school ready to learn.

It will also provide support to more than 20 primary schools to improve pupils' speech, language and communication skills. Support could include an onsite therapist in more severe cases – an expansion of the Scarborough Pledge, which tackles educational disadvantage.

Alongside this, a second scheme also worth £800,000 will launch in September to improve access to sports, arts and cultural activities for more than 3,500 young people aged five to 18 in Scarborough, Whitby and Filey.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It was great to visit Scarborough today and hear first hand how the Opportunity Area programme is having a positive effect on families' lives and young people's opportunities.

The Opportunity Area programme is about making sure we create the right conditions to broaden the horizons of young people from disadvantaged areas, and give them the best start in life.

The funding announced today will help to support parents on the North Yorkshire Coast with their child's early language development and also help young people access extra-curricular activities that build the resilience and character they need to fulfill their ambitions, whatever they may be.

The Education Secretary launched the projects, all part of the government's £72 million Opportunity Area programme – of which North Yorkshire Coast is one of 12 – during a visit to Coventry University Scarborough Campus where he met with members of the Partnership Board and young carers who will benefit from the investment.

Some of the area's most deprived young people will have access to free extra-curricular activities from September through 18 new projects aimed at giving them the opportunity to develop lifelong skills in leadership and teamwork,

character, resilience and confidence so they can become successful adults.

These include:

- An out-of-school Life Skills Club at Stephen Joseph Theatre for young people across nine schools to engage with the performing arts, with sessions in street dance, drumming, drama, film-making, and singing;
- Workshops with Krash Labs, using computer gaming and digital tools to boost children and young people's social skills – particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; and
- Sports sessions through North Yorkshire Sport to teach young people about the values associated with those activities and deliver their own community social action challenge, such as a sports day or work with local schools.

The Opportunity Area Partnership board is also match-funding £50,000 of investment from the Two Ridings Community Foundation as part of the #iwill fund. This fund aims to increase volunteering among young people in the area by 50% by 2020, encouraging them to fundraise, give up their time or campaign for a chosen cause.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with additional needs can face the greatest barriers in their early development, so it is important that where that help is needed it is in place as early as possible – such as through the government's free childcare offer for two-year-olds from lower income families, which has been used by nearly 750,000 children.

The funding builds on the Education Secretary's vision to halve the number of children finishing reception year without the early communication or reading skills they need by 2028, and on £20 million of investment already announced to improve early language and literacy for disadvantaged children around England.

Chair of the North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity Area Partnership Board, Sir Martin Narey, said:

I'm delighted the Secretary of State is visiting the North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity Area to see the efforts we are making to improve social mobility along the coast.

I know that improving social mobility has long been a priority for this Education Secretary, and I want him to see the encouraging progress we are making. Too many children along the coast do not fulfil their potential. The Opportunity Board, all volunteers and which I chair, is determined to address that.

Each of the Government's 12 Opportunity Areas receive a share of £72 million for a tailored plan to improve social mobility for children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

North Yorkshire Coast's plan, which covers the district of Scarborough,

focuses on improving the quality of the early years' education available, boosting maths teaching in primary and secondary schools, developing children's literacy skills and creating more good secondary school places.

[News story: Education Secretary's visit to promote English as global export](#)

One of the most widely spoken languages in the world, English is the language of businesses and trade across the globe. At Anglolang College in Scarborough, a British Council accredited college, partnerships and collaboration with other European countries is helping to build a global Britain and creating vital links between the local community and international students.

During his visit, the Secretary of State met staff and students at the college to discuss how English language programmes – such as Erasmus+ – are contributing to the success of this country by giving opportunities to foreign students to train and study in the UK, learn our culture and contribute to our education system.

The Education Secretary also spoke to senior leaders at Anglolang about the government's overall plan for leaving the EU, setting out how the White Paper proposal will ensure a deep and long future relationship with the EU, including on Erasmus+, while also taking back control of our laws, borders and money as voted for in the referendum.

Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds said:

English is a global language and today it was a pleasure to meet international students who have a love of our language which they will share through teaching it across the world. It is the language of business, of trade, and of course that will continue when we leave the EU in March.

We place enormous value on international exchange schemes and collaboration – like Erasmus+ – all of which is part of our vision for a global Britain. That's why we have guaranteed funding for students and organisations participating in this programme to continue to the end of 2020.

A British Council accredited college, Anglolang has provided training for more than 1,000 teachers of English as a foreign language from the EU,

through the Erasmus+ programme. Colleges like this are driving a global Britain by linking local communities and international students to benefit through the exchange of cultures and skills.

The Education Secretary met teachers from around the European Union who are training at Anglolang to teach a range of subjects in English to non-native speakers. Trainees stay anything from one week to a year at Anglolang, living on campus or with local host families, and use the stay as an opportunity to develop their English skills, network with other teachers, visit local schools and learn more about British culture.

An Anglolang Academy spokesperson said:

We have been successfully running EU funded teacher training programmes for over 14 years, most recently the Erasmus Plus KA1 programme. This enables our school to operate year-round in a highly seasonal marketplace, thus providing employment and income to staff and accommodation providers in Scarborough, not to mention the extra spending in the local economy and leisure venues.

Additionally, the resulting intercultural awareness and understanding has benefitted local people and Europeans alike and enabled us to cooperate and network together for our mutual benefit.

The Erasmus+ programme, which offers international exchanges for students, provides funding for education, youth, training and support projects up to 2020. The UK is a key country in the programme, with 35,000 higher education students and staff coming here under the Erasmus programme in 2016.

To ensure that the UK continues to benefit from this, the government has guaranteed that – subject to discussions with the EU commission – that funding will be available for UK institutions for projects which are agreed before 2020, so they can continue with any Erasmus+ programmes they are involved in where possible.