

Speech: Preventing sexual violence in conflict

Thank you very much, Mr President.

And as a number of speakers have noted today, the United Charter makes clear that the United Nations itself was established to protect the dignity and worth of the human person and therefore, Mr President, we join other colleagues in thanking you for calling this debate today.

Mr President, I really do appeal to all speakers not to politicise this. This is one of the worst things we face in modern times. And I think it behoves all of us, Mr President, to treat the debate as a common problem which we are all committed to mitigating and eventually eradicating. For the avoidance of doubt, let me say incredibly clearly, the United Kingdom salutes the courage both of Ms. Sultana, for your fantastic work and I'm very glad that we've had the chance to hear this before the Security Council undertakes a mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar, but also to the SRSG for your efforts and for the very comprehensive report that you have given us today.

Mr President, a lot of people want to speak so I will be brief. I think it's really good that so many members of the UN want to speak. Like others, we are committed to preventing but also responding to sexual violence in conflict. We began a Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative some years ago and that showed how central tackling sexual violence is to conflict prevention and peace building.

Five years on from the Global Summit that launched this campaign, the United Kingdom plans to hold an international meeting in 2019 to maintain a global focus and we look forward to working very closely with everybody in the chamber today to achieve our common goals. Mr President, I do agree with our Russian colleague that sexual violence is one of those violations IHL that applies also to non-state actors and I think that's incredibly important. We have the UNGA declaration of 2013. We also have a 2013 G8 declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict and I hope that as work progresses on this we might be able to build on those two important documents.

I'd like to focus today if I may on three specific issues. The first is the importance of education, particularly girls education. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence in conflict. As we've heard from many people, including the last speaker and the Cote D'Ivoirian Ambassador, this is not to detract from the point that men and boys can also be victims but it is women and girls who suffer most. So by extension, creating a global environment where gender equality and women's rights exist and discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and practices do not, will obviously help that goal.

The British Foreign Secretary has set a personal target for the British diplomacy of helping other countries achieve 12 years of quality education

for all girls globally and we are investing our development assistance in girls' education as we know it contributes to a safer more prosperous world, reduces conflict and increases stability.

Secondly survivors stigma, the Polish representative very eloquently set this out so I will not repeat that, Mr President, but just to say that we completely agree with the focus he put on this area. The UK-led principles for global action on tackling stigma of sexual violence is a practical guide which we have drawn up to raise awareness among policy makers of the challenges. And we really do hope that the principles can be applied in all contexts where sexual violence has occurred.

Finally Mr President, justice and accountability. Again other speakers have referred to this. The survivors of sexual violence and children born through rape must receive justice for what has happened to them. This is a critical element of our prevention efforts. There has been some important progress, for example at the Kavumu trial in DRC late last year when 11 Congolese militia members were convicted of crimes against humanity for murder and rape against 37 young children.

But there is much more to be done. Although ISIL and Kosovo are not mentioned in the report, there continues to be a gap in justice and accountability for sexual violence cases from those conflicts.

In closing Mr President, can I say that we join others in urging all member states to implement the international protocol on the documentation, investigation of sexual violence in conflict. This provides guidance on achieving accountability for this truly abhorrent crime which we are all pledged to tackle.

Thank you very much.

Speech: Global economic outlook: trade, growth and the Commonwealth

Hello and let me add my welcome to London, and to the Commonwealth Business Forum.

It is great to see so many of you here, at what I am sure will be a very worthwhile and successful event.

One of the core stated aims of this Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting is to build a more prosperous future for the Commonwealth, its member states and all our citizens.

Prosperity is, of course, a key marker for human progress.

It is obvious to all that an increase in prosperity – or alleviation from poverty – at an individual level engenders personal liberty.

But prosperity on a national basis can create freedom on a far greater scale, providing the means for states to realise the wider aims of this meeting.

I have said many times before that trade is not an end in itself. Trade is a means by which we spread prosperity. Prosperity is the means by which we create and underpin social cohesion. Social cohesion contributes to political stability, and political stability is the essential building block of our collective security. It is a continuum that cannot be affected at one point, without affecting the whole. You cannot choose to have protectionism rather than free trade without there being consequences.

If you choose not to have global free trade do not be surprised if you get increased mass migration. Or increased radicalisation.

But prosperity is also the means by which nations can build a fairer and more sustainable future.

So, although it may be a view that you expect from the Secretary of State for International Trade, I believe that building our prosperity is the most important issue of this CHOGM, underpinning our other aims.

I would even go further and say that prosperity and its economic foundations offer a blueprint for the future direction of this organisation.

Its members would be the first to acknowledge that the Commonwealth of Nations is unlike any other intergovernmental organisation.

It is not a military alliance like NATO, nor is it simply a political entity.

It is not an alliance based on geographical proximity, or an international rule-setting body like the WTO.

Rather, it is a group of nations brought together by the ties of history, culture, friendship, family, and sometimes language.

These ties were not created by design. But the Commonwealth is an acknowledgement that, as much as our countries have been part of one another's past, we will also be an essential part of one another's future.

In many ways, this is an approach that stands us in good stead as we meet the challenges of an increasingly globalised world.

Increasingly, challenges, opportunities and solutions are multinational affairs, requiring co-operation that extends beyond the borders of nations or continents.

I firmly believe that the strength of the Commonwealth lies in its diversity. Our members range from some of the largest and most populous countries on earth, to the smallest.

Such variety presents disparate challenges, but also a wide range of experience.

Likewise, the different levels of development of our members should not be seen as detrimental.

Instead, it is an opportunity – a chance to use our collective strengths to support our fellow members and help to unlock our collective economic potential.

The UK believes that free and open trade is the greatest catalyst for poverty elimination and lasting economic development.

Development in the modern era must be about developing economic and commercial capacity – nurturing new industries in less developed countries and creating lasting opportunity.

The Commonwealth, with all of our rich experience and expertise, can lead the world in unlocking this approach.

Development should no longer be focussed simply on giving and receiving aid, but on commercial partnership, and working together to realise our economic potential.

Make no mistake – that potential is vast.

Intra-Commonwealth trade is currently estimated at around \$560 billion. An impressive figure but, as the Prime Minister said earlier, it is projected to grow rapidly, to over \$700 billion by 2020.

And, as the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, we have the opportunity to re-invigorate our Commonwealth partnerships and usher in a new era, harnessing the movement of expertise, talent, goods, and capital between our nations in a way that we have not for a generation or more.

Yet beyond this obvious economic advantage, I believe that the Commonwealth has the potential, and the responsibility, to take a principal role in the defence of global commercial freedoms.

In an era when free trade is increasingly threatened by the siren call of protectionism, we have the opportunity to reject insularity in favour of economic openness and co-operation.

It is the United Kingdom's ambition to become the foremost global champion of free trade, using our economic and diplomatic influence to support free trade.

This will mean leading by example, and where better to begin than with our friends and partners in the Commonwealth?

Earlier today, the Prime Minister outlined a range of commitments that the United Kingdom is making to liberalise intra-Commonwealth trade and investment.

Foremost among these is the Commonwealth Trade Facilitation Agreement Programme – a decisive show of support for the rules-based international system that will reduce trade costs and boost economic activity across the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister also outlined the creation of a Commonwealth Standards Network, an exciting initiative which will create a new platform for dialogue and co-operation between national experts, and work directly with developing countries to build standards capacity to ensure those benefits are felt by all.

And, of course, the Prime Minister highlighted the launch of the SheTrades Commonwealth Programme, an ambitious venture to boost the role of women from across the Commonwealth in international trade, unlocking the economic potential of hundreds of millions of people.

But SheTrades is only one part of the UK's ambitions for gender-responsive trade.

As we establish an independent trade policy, we will ensure that we create a framework that delivers for female exporters and upholds gender equality.

What the Prime Minister also touched on is the need for more and better data to help drive inclusive policy making across the Commonwealth. We need to understand the barriers that women may face in trade.

That is why we are working with the International Trade Centre to launch the 'Global Outlook' on trade and gender.

The first of its kind, this index will provide member governments with the data needed to understand how they can improve opportunities for women, identifying good practice and tracking progress over time.

These formal mechanisms are only part of our approach.

I have spoken already about how the Commonwealth can take a leading role in shaping the future of global trade.

What better way to signal our intention than by taking positive action to increase women's role in global commerce and ensure that trade delivers prosperity for all our citizens?

And what better way to counter rising anti-globalisation sentiment than by ensuring that everyone has an equal stake in the global economy?

Linked to this is our work on trade and human rights.

I am pleased to announce that the UK is supporting the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva to build its human rights and trade capacity.

Our twofold approach will see technical human rights expertise made available to Commonwealth Small States, facilitating their effective participation in the work of the Geneva-based international Human Rights mechanisms.

We will also provide dedicated trade advisers to increase the meaningful participation of CSS in international trade and facilitate their fuller integration into the multilateral trading system.

The flagship programmes that the Prime Minister and I have touched on rightly have pride of place in our steps towards realising this CHOGM's ambition to build a more prosperous future for the Commonwealth.

But as Secretary of State for International Trade, I know that we are doing far more to promote trade, investment and wealth creation between our member states.

I lead a department that was created not only to design a favourable legislative and policy framework to govern UK trade, but also to support British businesses operating overseas, encouraging exports, and attracting investment into this country from abroad and promote outward investment from the UK.

In the first instance, we are taking decisive action to strengthen our post-Brexit trade relationships with our Commonwealth partners.

India and the UK, for example, have collaborated closely to produce a Joint Trade Review of bilateral trade.

This ground-breaking work has enabled both countries to clearly identify and understand the trade barriers for key sectors, as well as building relationships between us, laying a foundation for a possible future trade agreement.

Both the UK and India have benefited greatly from the Joint Trade Review process and agreed at the Joint Economic and Trade Committee in January 2018 that we should seek to share the experience with other Commonwealth countries.

To that end, the Review guide will be posted on the Commonwealth Secretariat website and Commonwealth members can – if they wish – use the same methodology to improve trade with other member states.

We want the trade elements of this CHOGM to become a process and not an event.

We are proud of the early success of our inter-governmental work. But as we all know, trade is not conducted between governments, but between businesses.

That is why the Department for International Trade is making a concerted effort to improve and expand the commercial links that already exist between the UK and our Commonwealth Partners.

Our extensive programme of overseas investment support is designed to make it easier than ever before for UK firms to invest in Commonwealth countries.

In developing economies particularly, Britain has the expertise to guide key industries, from infrastructure to education and healthcare, that will in

future drive future economic growth.

Creating these commercial partnerships is clearly mutually beneficial. My department's work involves exploring overseas opportunities on behalf of UK firms, and connecting them with potential customers.

But we also offer important practical support. UK Export Finance offers support to UK exporters, and to those Commonwealth companies who buy goods or services from the UK.

With a total capacity of some £20 billion to support new businesses, buying from the UK offers a certainty no other nation can offer.

In the last year, UK Export Finance has almost doubled its ability to finance projects across Commonwealth markets, facilitating trade and supporting growth and development across all our members.

Their support is also available in a wide range of Commonwealth currencies, from the Australian Dollar to the Zambian Kwacha, helping buyers to 'buy British, pay local'.

We have a formidable offering for Commonwealth businesses. But our proactive support here is mirrored by wide-ranging investment promotion by the UK within our Commonwealth partner nations.

The Investment Promotion Programme is a proposed four-year initiative to build the capacity of 4 national governments, including Nigeria, India and South Africa, to attract and manage more foreign direct investment.

Its primary purpose is to bring the broader benefits of trade that I've spoken about – economic growth, jobs, infrastructure and education.

It will also, of course, serve to strengthen the commercial ties between the UK and some of our key Commonwealth trade partners, creating opportunities for UK exporters in these high-growth economies.

Such programmes hold the key to future prosperity. As we meet to decide the direction of the Commonwealth, those countries with the power to shape must not forget the key role that prosperity plays.

The Commonwealth may be moulded by its history, but our vision is fixed firmly on the future, and all the opportunities it will bring.

For the opportunities are great, and the prizes historic.

There will be challenges ahead, but we have the talent, the resources, and the will to overcome them.

Truly, there is no limit to what we can achieve. It is our level of ambition that determine our future together.

Thank you.

Press release: Bridging payments delivered to 3,200 farmers

More than 96% of farmers in England signed up to the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) have now received their full payments and the RPA is working to make the remaining 4% of payments which require more complex processing and therefore take longer to complete.

Over 18,000 2018 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) applications have already been submitted since the application window opened in March. A record 90% of the applications made so far have been online, as farmers continue to make the switch from paper forms, with over 16,500 online entitlements so far.

RPA Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

We have made solid progress in delivering payments to farmers this year, with more than 96% now paid, and I am pleased so many of this final 4% have now received their bridging payments.

As always, there is more to do, and the RPA will continue working to make the final remaining payments. But now is also the time to get online to make sure your application for 2018 is in before the deadline closes in May.

Farming Minister George Eustice announced in January the commitment to provide a bridging payment to any farmer not paid by the end of March and highlighted how the burden of EU rules continues to be a barrier to processing some of the remaining claims. These bridging payments are worth 75% of their full allocated amounts.

The RPA is encouraging farmers to apply online now, to ensure that their application is submitted before the deadline of 15 May 2018. Applying online means farmers and agents can quickly check and update existing personal and business details, as well as view and transfer land and entitlements.

Throughout the application process, help and support is available through our online guidance, 'How to' videos and by telephone.

Online and paper applications

Anyone who applied online for the Basic Payment Scheme in 2017 has been emailed all they need to apply online for BPS in 2018. Those who did not apply online in 2017 and did not use an agent have been sent a paper form and guidance on how to apply online.

Support available from the RPA

Farmers and anyone helping them with their claim can find step-by-step guides on transferring land, transferring entitlements and a general overview of how to apply online in useful 'How to' videos. Further guidance and scheme rules can be found on GOV.UK. On-screen help is also available, going through the application process screen by screen. A copy of this on-screen guide is also available for download or print.

The application deadline for BPS 2017 is midnight on 15 May 2018. Late applications will be accepted until 9 June but will incur a penalty. More information on how to claim or amend applications in the penalty claim period can be found in the Key Dates section of the 2018 guidance.

Mapping queries

This is the first year that hedges are shown in online digital maps. For those that want to use hedges as part of their application it's important that they read our guidance on 'How to check and change your hedge information'. This guidance explains how to check the information we hold about hedges, whether applicants need to tell us about changes and what to do if changes do need to be made.

Where an RLE1 form is necessary as part of a BPS 2018 application, farmers should submit their main application first and on time (by 15 May 2018). They can then submit any queries and send the RLE1 form to the RPA with the sketch map before 6 July 2018. This is to reduce the burden on applicants and allow them more time to complete the extra information required.

Press release: New team to help Commonwealth citizens confirm their status in the UK

The new dedicated team will work across government to help individuals identify and gather evidence to confirm their existing right to be in the UK. The team will include a dedicated contact point and aim to resolve cases within 2 weeks once the evidence has been put together. In addition, no one affected will be charged for the documentation which proves their right to be here.

The package of measures is being introduced to support individuals, who have resided in the UK for an extended period of time, and encourage them to come forward and regularise their stay. It will help guide individuals through the process and use data from across government to help build a picture that will evidence a person's right to be here.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

This is about individuals, people who have built their lives here in the UK and contributed so much to our society. I don't want them to feel unwelcome or to be in any doubt about their right to remain here. There is absolutely no question about their right to remain and I am very sorry for any confusion or anxiety felt.

The vast majority will already have documentation that proves their right to be here. For those that don't I am announcing a new dedicated team that will be set up to help these people with getting the documentation they need and do it quickly.

We've also set up a webpage and have been speaking to charities, community groups and High Commissioners about providing advice and reassurance to those affected and we will set up a dedicated contact point to ensure this is resolved as soon as possible.

The new team will work with HM Revenue and Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and other relevant bodies to help people evidence their right to be here.

The Home Office has also published a [new web page](#) which provides information and guidance for former Commonwealth citizens.

It gives examples of the type of evidence that can be provided to support applications including exam certificates, employment records, your National Insurance number, birth and marriage certificates or bills and letters.

Press release: UK joins International Solar Alliance to help provide over 1 billion of the world's poorest people with clean, affordable energy

The UK is joining the Indian-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) to give over 1 billion of the world's poorest people access to cheap, clean, renewable energy, the International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has announced today (Monday 16 April) ahead of the Indian Prime Minister's state visit later this week.

Narendra Modi's flagship climate treaty has already brought together more

than 60 countries who have pledged to increase solar power that will ensure homes remain lit, children can be educated in schools, health facilities can provide life-saving treatment, and businesses have access to vital mobile and internet services.

At an event held at the London Stock Exchange as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM), the UK cemented its membership to the ISA, which is aiming to raise \$1 trillion of private and public finance to provide affordable and sustainable energy for all by 2030.

The International Development Secretary has championed the UK's world-leading innovation and expertise – including from the City of London, the leading global centre for green investment finance – that will enable the ISA to deliver more effective programmes and help more of the world's most vulnerable people.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt said:

The signing of this treaty is a momentous occasion for the UK, and demonstrates our continued commitment to providing the very best of British expertise to the renewable energy sector. With the UK joining the International Solar Alliance, the lives of almost a billion of the world's poorest people, across the Commonwealth and beyond, will be changed for the better.

Partnering with like-minded countries and businesses who share the UK's commitment to delivering clean, affordable energy will help end poverty while also delivering benefits for the UK by opening up business opportunities for UK renewable energy and green finance companies.

Without India's leadership, the Alliance would not have come so far and so fast. By increasing access to solar energy, millions more babies will now be delivered safely, millions of farmers will be able to grow more crops and better support their families, and millions more children can be better educated.

The UK will support the ISA to develop solar water pumping projects, where farmers can use cheaper solar power – rather than diesel pumps – to water their crops. This will build on the success of similar initiatives in Uganda and Bangladesh where farmers are already growing higher value vegetable crops and increasing their incomes.

UK expertise will also help increase the number of 'mini grids' supplying power to remote areas that cannot be reached by the main electricity grid. These energy sources are a life-line for rural communities, helping to power business and homes, making sure the poorest people no matter where they live can access clean, reliable and affordable energy quickly to lift themselves out of poverty.

This new collaboration means the ISA will be able to make solar power cheaper

by helping countries join forces to procure solar energy systems. Currently twelve ISA countries, including Commonwealth countries Bangladesh and Malawi want to purchase over 720,000 solar pumps through ISA. The joint purchase will see a significant reduction in solar pump costs for each of the participating countries and up to five million people in developing countries will benefit from this collective purchase.

Notes to Editors:

Traditional financial aid to India ended in 2015. The UK now provides the country with world-leading expertise and private investment which boost prosperity, create jobs and open up markets, while generating a return for the UK at the same time. This is firmly in our interests.

The UK is providing technical expertise and private sector investments to support India's development in areas where the UK has globally recognised expertise and commercial capability.

The International Solar Alliance aims to raise \$1,000 billion to deliver clean and affordable energy to almost a billion people who currently lack access.

The UK will be the 62nd country to join the ISA. Others included Australia, Bangladesh, Tuvalu, Benin, United Arab Emirates Brazil, Vanuatu, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and France.

The UK will provide the best of British expertise and advice to help the effective delivery of the Indian-led initiative. The UK will only provide expertise to the ISA, there will be no monetary contributions.

UK expertise will enable UK, NGO's, researchers and businesses to collaborate with ISA partners to generate innovation and investments that will help meet the ISA's target to provide affordable sustainable energy for all by 2030.

The UK is supporting the ISA through existing initiatives and partnerships that will open up new solar markets for UK companies. This will include sharing UK experiences that supported the UK solar market to become viable and as a result no longer need taxpayers' support.

A number of countries DFID works in have already signed up to join the ISA and will benefit from the additional expertise that the UK is providing. Countries include: DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra-Leone, Uganda, Yemen, Rwanda, Nigeria, Somalia and Tanzania.