

Speech: Lord Ahmad's speech on Global Peacekeeping Reform in Ghana

Good afternoon. I would like to thank the Minister for Defence, the Honourable Mr Dominic Nitiwul for hosting this event.

His Excellency Kofi Annan was a trailblazer – the first UN career official to be appointed Secretary-General and the first from Sub-Saharan Africa. This training centre which bears his name is also blazing a trail. It is at the cutting edge of peace support training and education in Africa, and the only centre of its kind on the continent to have a dedicated institute for Women, Peace and Security. Over fifteen thousand students from around the world have trained here since 2004. That's an impressive contribution to global peacekeeping. It's typical of Ghana's commitment to UN Peacekeeping, from Congo in the 1960s, to South Sudan today – Ghana has always been in the top tier of countries contributing peacekeepers. Back in 2015, when President Obama called on fellow leaders at the UN to commit more resources to peacekeeping operations, Ghana once again answered the call.

It is also typical of the contribution of other African nations. Currently almost half of the men and women in uniform at Peacekeeping missions around the world are African. I want to pay tribute to your commitment, and to remember those peacekeepers who have given their lives for peace.

Today I want to look to the future. I want to talk about the UK's commitment to better peacekeeping and the 3Ps reform agenda. I want to talk about our work on ending sexual violence and stigma. And finally I want to talk about getting more women involved in peacekeeping, and gender issues more broadly.

UK Support for Peacekeeping

The United Kingdom is a long-standing supporter of peacekeeping, although compared to Ghana I recognise that our contribution of troops is still modest. Today, we have around seven hundred British soldiers in blue berets. We have doubled our contribution since committing to do so two years ago, with two new deployments to UN missions in Somalia and South Sudan: our first in two decades.

UK Support for Reform – 3Ps

The UK is also committed to better peacekeeping. The joint Communiqué signed at the London Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial last September is a blueprint for peacekeeping reform.

It calls for improvement in three areas – the 3Ps of peacekeeping – planning, pledges and performance.

Planning

Better planning is about ensuring better coordination across the UN system so that we can get the right missions with the right skills deployed to the right place at the right time. The UK has invested significantly in the Secretary General's Strategic Planning and Analysis Unit, which has led to advances in the UN's ability to identify the needs of missions, and match them with the capabilities offered by member states.

Pledges

Pledges are about helping the UN to identify and meet the specific needs of each mission. In November the UK will co-host Canada's Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver. We will explore smart pledging and innovations in training; look at how we protect those at risk; and consider a rapid response to the early warning signs of conflict.

Performance

Finally, having the right plan and the right people in place only works if they perform effectively. That's why performance is so important. We need to see strong leadership of peacekeeping mission and ensure that troops are doing the job they have been sent to do. The UN needs to be able to take action against troops who do not meet this standard.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

When that performance falls below the level that is expected it puts the mission at risk. It can also bring the mission and the UN into disrepute. Such is the case with the appalling sexual abuse, committed by a small number of peacekeepers against the people they were sent to protect. Such crimes are abhorrent; they cannot be allowed to continue.

As the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence, as well as Minister for the UN, I applaud the efforts of Ghana and of this Centre in particular, to tackle this difficult issue, through courses addressing the challenges of preventing sexual violence in conflict. We want to see more coordination between member states that need training and those that can offer it.

For our part, I am proud that the UK has delivered training for more than seven thousand African peacekeepers each year since 2014, on gender issues and the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. We must do everything possible to improve the performance of peacekeepers and to ensure they properly protect the people in their care.

I know Secretary-General Guterres is reviewing the UN's peace and conflict prevention structures. I hope his recommendations will lead to improvements in planning, pledges and performance.

Women's Rights

I want to turn now to the role of women. Safeguarding women's rights; ensuring that they take part in political processes; and that they participate fully in conflict resolution are all priorities for the United Kingdom. We have given the UN £2m to help achieve this aim.

Tackling Stigma

I spoke earlier about my particular role with regard to preventing sexual violence. One of my priorities is tackling the stigma that many survivors of sexual violence face. The UK is developing a set of Principles for Global Action, to help policy makers understand how they can incorporate this critical issue into their own work. I look forward to working with Ghana on this initiative.

Women in Peacekeeping

I also hope that we can follow your example of deploying women at all levels in peacekeeping missions. One in ten of Ghana's peacekeepers are women, the highest percentage of the top 10 troop contributing nations. I am sure this is down to the excellent training this centre provides. This, and the Women, Peace and Security Institute here, demonstrate Ghana's commitment to this issue.

By way of comparison, 7% of UK Peacekeepers are women. We are working hard to increase that number and I am very pleased that we will have a female commanding officer leading our troops in South Sudan.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I have shown you the UK's commitment to working for better peacekeeping. It is a privilege to be discussing it with you – in a centre dedicated to doing just that. With the growing demands on peacekeeping, it is more important than ever that we work together to make the UN system and our missions as effective as they can be. I look forward to hearing about your experiences and your views on how we can tackle the many challenges ahead. Thank you.

[Press release: Students urged to apply for pioneering Cyber Schools Programme](#)

- £20m programme to train almost 6,000 teenagers due to launch in the autumn
- SANS, BT, FutureLearn and Cyber Security Challenge UK named as delivery partners

- Comes as £500k for GCHQ-accredited cyber security master's bursaries announced

Teenagers are being encouraged to register their interest in taking part in a cyber security schools programme being rolled out as part of plans to help the nation address the risk of a future skills shortage.

Today a [new website](#) has been launched where students, teachers and industry can register their interest.

Pioneering Cyber Schools Programme

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)'s Cyber Schools Programme will see thousands of the best and brightest young minds given the opportunity to learn cutting-edge cyber security skills alongside their secondary school studies through a nationwide network of extracurricular clubs, activities and a new online game.

It aims to support and encourage schoolchildren to develop some of the key skills they would need to work in the growing cyber security sector and help defend the nation's businesses against online threats.

SANS, BT, FutureLearn and Cyber Security Challenge UK have today been confirmed as partners to deliver the programme and prospective students, teachers, industry members and volunteers can now register their interest in advance of the scheme.

Minister of State for Digital Matt Hancock said:

Our Cyber Schools Programme aims to inspire the talent of tomorrow and give thousands of the brightest young minds the chance to learn cutting-edge cyber security skills alongside their secondary school studies.

I encourage all those with the aptitude, enthusiasm and passion for a cyber security career to register for what will be a challenging and rewarding scheme.

Up to £20m has been made available to deliver the programme which will see students take a comprehensive cyber curriculum mixing expert, instructor-led classroom and online teaching with real-world challenges, online games and hands-on work experience.

Students will be selected for the programme via a pre-entry assessment, and the scheme will provide them with clear pathways into the cyber security industry via direct contact with industry experts. Cyber security firms and industry volunteers are also encouraged to register their interest to be involved.

Applications are open to students aged 14 to 18, with hundreds of hours of extra curricular content designed to fill a four-year programme. It will be delivered in modules and students up 18 years old can join at any time providing they meet the right criteria. Older students, for example, may work through the content and challenges at a faster pace.

The target is for at least 5,700 teenagers to be trained by 2021. The pilot programme year will be launched in the autumn.

- The news comes as DCMS also confirms £500k funding to continue a pilot to help adults who want to retrain for a job in cyber security by taking a GCHQ-accredited master's degree.
- Up to £500k will be distributed between participating universities to help those who want to use their skills and work experience to move into a cyber security career.
- Those interested in applying must first be accepted onto participating courses and apply for the bursary through the university.

These initiatives are all part of the Government's National Cyber Security Programme to find, finesse and fast-track tomorrow's online security experts. This also includes:

- The Government's Cyber Security Apprenticeships for Critical Sectors Scheme which is supporting leading employers in critical sectors including telecoms, broadcasting, energy and transport to develop the next generation of cyber security professionals through higher apprenticeships. It is currently open for applications for its second phase [here](#).
- The CyberFirst bursary funding scheme offers grants of up to £4,000 for up to 1,000 students by 2020 to study a relevant degree, do a placement or attend a summer school, and, depending on meeting requirements, the chance to work in national security on graduation.
- There are also 1,250 free places on CyberFirst in 2017 and an additional CyberFirst Girls Competition, where teams of 12-to-14-year-old young women can pit their wits against one another to crack a series of online puzzles.

Notes to editors

Media enquiries – please contact the DCMS News and Communications team on 020 7211 2210 or out of hours on 07699 751153.

- This initiative is part of the Government's £1.9 billion investment to significantly transform the UK's cyber security. The 2016-2021 National Cyber Security Strategy sets out how the UK Government will deliver a UK that is secure and resilient to cyber threats; prosperous and confident in the digital world. The National Cyber Security Programme managed by the Cabinet Office coordinates the work undertaken to implement the UK's National Cyber Security Strategy.

About the Cyber Schools Programme delivery partners

SANS

SANS Institute was established in 1989 as a cooperative research and education organisation and is now the largest provider of cyber security training and certification to practitioners at governments and commercial institutions worldwide. The SANS curriculum spans more than 60 courses across multiple cyber security disciplines. SANS has successfully run programmes for school age students and is passionate about encouraging young people to pursue a career in cyber security.

BT Security

Employing more than 2,500 security professionals and with security operations centres all around the world, BT Security addresses the entire range of consumer, business and governmental security needs – from antivirus and parental controls that protect families in their home, through to complex managed security solutions used by multinational companies, banks and national governments. Ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills is critically important to addressing those needs.

Cyber Security Challenge

Cyber Security Challenge UK is a Cabinet Office-backed not-for-profit organisation with the sole purpose of finding, nurturing and placing more individuals into jobs within cyber security. The Challenge brings together key government, public and private organisations to host a programme of activities, spreading the word about cyber security as a varied and lucrative career..

FutureLearn

FutureLearn is a social learning company, enabling online learning through conversation. FutureLearn's online community provides collaboration tools to support cluster leaders and equip them with the confidence to support the students enrolled in the programme.

Press release: Foreign Secretary welcomes Qatar's commitment to combat terrorism

The Foreign Secretary comments that the Emir of Qatar's commitment to combat terrorism will help resolve the dispute.

On Friday 21 July the Emir of Qatar pledged to resolve current Gulf tensions through dialogue and negotiation via Kuwaiti mediation.

The Foreign Secretary has welcomed a statement made by the Emir of Qatar, in which he outlined Qatar's opposition to terrorism, commitment to resolving differences through dialogue, and his country's support for Kuwaiti mediation.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I welcome the Emir of Qatar's commitment to combat terrorism in all its manifestations, including terrorist financing. The Emir also pledged to resolve the remaining differences with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain through dialogue, negotiation, and Kuwaiti mediation. These steps will help to resolve the dispute.

We hope that in turn Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain respond by taking steps towards lifting the embargo. This will allow substantive discussions on remaining differences to begin.

The UK will continue to engage our partners in the region to help them reach a solution, including assisting Kuwait's important efforts in whatever way we can.

Further information

News story: More people will be able to give blood following scientific review

The government has announced changes to blood donation rules following a review by the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs

(SaBT0).

As a result of the latest clinical evidence, more people will be given the opportunity to donate blood without affecting the safety of the blood supply, from early 2018.

Current blood donation rules prevent people who engage in some sexual behaviours from giving blood for a 12 month period. As a result of scientific advances and improved understanding of the tests used, the deferral period for these people will now be reduced to 3 months.

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) will also be looking at ways to allow more people to donate blood without impacting blood safety. This includes more personalised risk assessments.

Deferral Criteria	Current deferral period/ testing regime	Recommended deferral period
A man who has had oral or anal sex with another man (with or without condom)	12 months	3 months
Commercial sex workers	Permanent	3 months
Sex with a high risk partner	12 months	3 months
Sex with a partner who has been sexually active in areas where HIV is common	12 months	3 months

The UK has one of the safest blood supplies in the world and these rules are in place to keep blood donors and the patients who receive their blood safe.

These reductions are based on the most up to date scientific evidence and medical advances.

The government will now work with NHSBT to implement the changes to deferrals for sexual behaviours from early 2018.

SaBT0 Chair and Consultant Physician, Professor James Neuberger said:

SaBT0 has made these recommendations following a review of the latest scientific evidence. The UK now has a better understanding of infection transmission and is leading the way after this comprehensively researched and validated 3-month deferral period.

The UK has one of the safest blood supplies in the world, and experts from around the country have analysed the latest information so even more people can have the opportunity to donate blood.

Dr Gail Mifflin, Medical and Research Director at NHS Blood and Transplant said:

NHS Blood and Transplant welcomes the Department of Health's decision to amend the rules around blood donation related to specific activities. These changes will offer more people the chance to give blood.

They take into account the latest available medical and scientific evidence. This included more extensive information now available about the risk of acquiring infections that can be passed on in blood and also more evidence that supports the reliability of the blood screening tests we use.

We have one of the safest blood supplies in the world. Anyone may require a blood transfusion in the future and so it's in all our interests to ensure that we work hard to keep blood safe for patients.

This starts with selection of donors before they give blood. Everyone must answer questions on their health and lifestyle before they donate, and answering these questions correctly is crucial, in order to keep blood safe.

In addition, the government will be submitting the evidence for the committee's full recommendations on deferral periods including for acupuncture, piercing and tattooing, and flexible endoscopy as part of a wider European evidence evaluation. There will be a further announcement of the following recommendations in due course:

Deferral criteria	Current deferral period/ testing regime	Recommended deferral period
Tattooing (licensed in UK)	12 months or 4 with negative Hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core	No deferral
Tattooing (non -UK or unlicensed)	12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core	3 months
Body Piercing(licensed in UK)	12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative Hep B anti-core	No deferral
Body Piercing(non-UK or unlicensed)	12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core	3 months
Acupuncture, cosmetic (qualified practitioner in UK)	12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core	No deferral
Acupuncture, cosmetic (non UK or unqualified practitioner)	12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core	3 months
Endoscopy	6 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core	No deferral

Any history of non-prescribed
IM or IV injecting drug use,
including body-building
hormones and steroids

Permanent

12 months

For more information visit the [NHSBT website](#).

Press release: Foreign Secretary to hold trade and security talks in New Zealand

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson will hold talks on trade, foreign policy and international security issues during a two-day visit to New Zealand.

He arrives in Wellington today (Sunday 23 July 2017) ahead of meetings with New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English, Foreign Minister Gerry Brownlee and other senior politicians.

During the visit the Foreign Secretary will also:

1. Unveil a new UK War Memorial in Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, and lay a wreath to commemorate the shared sacrifice of the armed forces of both countries and honour the memory of the New Zealanders who died in conflict since World War One. The striking memorial has been designed by Weta Workshop, the design company responsible for the production design and graphic effects in the Lord of the Rings movies.
2. Promote deeper UK-New Zealand engagement on infrastructure planning, funding and delivery in an event with Minister for Infrastructure Steven Joyce and Minister for Transport Simon Bridges. The UK has world-class expertise in infrastructure investment.
3. Travel to Kaikōura with the Minister for Civil Defence Nathan Guy to thank the community who helped 200 Britons in the aftermath of the earthquake in November 2016, by providing food and shelter. He will receive a traditional powhiri Maori welcome and see the work underway to bring the town back to its pre-earthquake vibrancy.
4. Discuss the illegal wildlife trade with the New Zealand Minister for conservation Maggie Barry during a visit to the Zealandia eco-centre.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Britain and New Zealand share a long standing and historic friendship so I'm delighted to be here to see for myself how we work together on so many issues and how we can build on these links.

My visit comes just after around 25,000 Brits came here to cheer for the British and Irish Lions, and the warm welcome they received shows just how close the relationship between our people is.

Nowhere was that welcome warmer than on the South Island, so I wish a speedy recovery from the bad weather to the people of Christchurch, Dunedin and nearby towns.

Last year, the people of Kaikoura opened their homes and their hearts to British travellers who were in distress after the devastating earthquake, and I am pleased to be able to express personally our gratitude.

The Foreign Secretary's visit to New Zealand is the second stage of a three country trip. He held two days of positive talks in Japan last week and will travel to Sydney later this week.