

Press release: UK triples support for action against landmines on 20th anniversary of Princess Diana's iconic Angola visit

The UK will dramatically increase its support for demining, tripling the amount of UK aid supporting action against landmines.

Speaking at a Kensington Palace event hosted by Prince Harry to mark the 20th anniversary of Princess Diana's iconic visit to the minefields of Angola, International Development Secretary Priti Patel today announced a package of support to make safe the equivalent of over 20,000 football pitches and help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines.

Speaking at the event, Ms Patel highlighted the "global scourge of landmines" that led to a "destruction of opportunity and hope".

She spoke of Global Britain's "historic role in tackling the indiscriminate and lethal legacy of landmines" and highlighted how the efforts of her Royal Highness, Diana, Princess of Wales brought landmines to the world's attention 20 years ago and led to international action.

The Department for International Development will support global efforts to tackle landmines through a £100 million UK aid package over the next 3 years.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Landmines are a global scourge that destroy opportunity and hope. We do not have to accept this.

Global Britain has had a historic role in tackling the indiscriminate and lethal legacy of landmines, but there is still more to do. Our new support will make safe the equivalent of over 20,000 football pitches and help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines.

It is for causes like this that we have made our commitment to the overseas aid budget. This is just one of the many ways that UK aid is making the world safer, healthier and more prosperous for us all.

UK action on mines:

- The UK's work removes and destroys landmines, but also focuses on education to ensure the local community is aware of the risk.
- The UK was a founding signatory of the Mine Ban Treaty and a number of UK organisations such as Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and the Halo Trust are at the forefront of global efforts to make the world mine-free.
- With concerted effort we can make a real difference. Through the support of UK aid, Mozambique was declared mine-free in 2015, joining 26 countries that have completed mine clearance in the past 20 years.
- More than 60 million people still live with the daily threat of injury or death and the basic rights of safe access to health services, education, agricultural land and infrastructure continue to be denied to communities around the world.

Notes to editors:

1. The Mine Ban Treaty, signed in 1997, is one of the world's most widely accepted treaties: over 80% of the world's countries are parties to it.
 2. Collectively, states party to the treaty have destroyed more than 51 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines and cleared nearly a thousand square kilometres of mined areas. In 2015 the only states to lay landmines were Syria, North Korea and Burma.
 3. Yet more remains to be done. More than 60 million people still live with the daily threat of injury or death. In 2015 alone almost 5,000 people were injured and over 1,600 killed by landmines or other explosive devices left behind by conflict. Three quarters of those were civilians; more than a third were children.
 4. The basic rights of safe access to health services, education, agricultural land and infrastructure continue to be denied to communities around the world.
 5. The £100 million includes committed programmes in Afghanistan and DFID's Global Mine Action programme totalling £6.25 million in 17/18. New funding includes an extension of the Global Mine Action programme for £8.1 million in 17/18, plus a new programme of at least £85 million which will be allocated later this year to take funding up to 2020.
 6. [Read Priti Patel's full speech from tonight's event.](#)
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Speech: “Darfur will remain unstable and unpredictable so long as the root causes of conflict remain unaddressed.”

Thank you Madam President,

Allow me to begin by stressing my condolences to the representative of the Russian Federation for the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg yesterday that was such a senseless loss of life. I would also like to wish you Madam President all the very best for your month in the hot seat and many thanks for your kind words about last month. And I would also like to congratulate the Joint Special Representative Kingsley. A very warm welcome and congratulations on your appointment and thank you for the briefing that you have just given us.

Madam President, Darfur is at a crossroads. Down one path lies continuation of 14 years of conflict, 14 years of bloodshed, impunity. It's a path that has forced 2.6 million people from their homes. It's a path littered with persistent violations of international humanitarian law, human rights violations and abuses, and persistent sexual and gender based violence. And it's a path, simply, that Darfur has been on for too long.

But there is another road to take. In recent months, we have seen a welcome absence of violence between the Government of Sudan and opposition groups. We've seen UNAMID granted access to areas previously cut off. Vital humanitarian assessments are now underway.

So today we need to send a clear message to the Government of Sudan; choose the right path. Choose the path that will improve the lives of the people of Darfur, choose the path to sustainable peace.

This means tackling the culture of criminality and banditry in Darfur. It means ending the abundance of small arms and light weapons which are only adding fuel to the fire. And it means bringing to justice, domestically and through the International Criminal Court, all those who have carried out violence, all those who have failed to respect international humanitarian law and human rights, no matter their allegiance, no matter their links to the government.

In truth, Darfur will remain unstable and unpredictable so long as the root causes of conflict remain unaddressed. So let us all encourage the Government of Sudan to use the current cessation in violence to shift its efforts away from counter-insurgency and towards building a sustainable peace. They will need the support of this Council and the international community as a whole as they do so.

The first step has to be political. A political agreement between the parties to the armed conflict would not only secure a permanent cessation of hostilities, but would also be a significant step towards addressing the drivers of intercommunal violence. So we call upon all parties to the armed conflict to engage meaningfully with the African Union High Level Implementation Panel peace process to secure a political agreement.

The second step towards a long term solution is long term access to Darfur. In order for UNAMID to fulfil its mandated duty to protect civilians, the mission requires unfettered access throughout Darfur, not just for a few days, or even for a few weeks, but on a sustained basis. The recent access is welcome, but it will count for little if it is not maintained.

We are concerned that Government of Sudan security agencies continue to impose unnecessary access restrictions on UNAMID. This is particularly troubling when the mission is prevented from accessing vulnerable populations of the internally displaced and those most in need. So let us insist today that UNAMID is given unrestricted access throughout Darfur to enable the mission to fulfil its mandate effectively.

And this brings me to my final point. As pen holder here in New York on the UNAMID Mission, we believe that if there is to be sustainable peace in Darfur, UNAMID must evolve alongside the security situation. The strategic review will be crucial in this respect, and we welcome the Government of Sudan's help for the visit by the Strategic Review team to Darfur. We're encouraged that they could visit all five states, including areas previously denied, such as Golo and Nertiti in Jebel Marra.

However, if UNAMID is to be adapted as we hope, we all need to be confident that the Government of Sudan is willing and able to protect its civilians in areas where UNAMID's presence is altered. This needs more than just unfettered and reliable access; it requires the Government of Sudan to commit to the principle of operational flexibility for UNAMID and to commit to improving its own ability to protect civilians.

In conclusion, Madam President, until the Government and parties to the conflict take these steps, Darfur will remain at that crossroads. The people of Darfur cannot afford a wrong turn; they have suffered for too long. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that the path chosen is the right one; the one that will improve the lives of civilians and lead to sustainable peace.

Thank you.

[**News story: HS2 Phase One Community**](#)

Information Events 2017

We invite you to attend one of our informative events about the High Speed Two (HS2) project and what it means for your local area.

During the events, there will be experts available to explain the technical aspects of topics such as ground investigations, environmental impacts, construction, land and property compensation and assistance schemes for people affected by the line of route, as well as information about [our community funds](#).

We hope you will take this opportunity to talk to the project team, view maps, ask us questions, and learn more about the construction and design of the new railway.

We'll be updating this page regularly once the times and dates of planned events are confirmed.

Current and future events

Date	Area	Venue	Time	Theme
Thursday 13 April	Handsacre	Armitage Village Hall, 51 Shropshire Brook Road, Armitage, Rugeley, WS15 4UZ	3pm to 7pm	Community, construction, engineering, property, environment, utilities
Tuesday 18 April	Steeple Claydon	Steeple Claydon Village Hall, Queen Catherine Rd, Steeple Claydon, Buckingham, MK18 2PZ	3pm to 7:30pm	Community, construction, engineering, property, environment, utilities

News story: HS2 Phase 2a information events 2017

We are holding a number of information events, to share all the latest details about our plans for building and running the new railway.

You'll be welcome to discuss any of this new information with us, including:

- the 3 Phase 2a route changes we consulted on last year and recently confirmed
- how you can track what's happening with the Phase 2a bill as it goes through Parliament

- assistance available to property owners

Date	Venue	Time
Saturday 12 August	Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Eastgate Street, Stafford, ST16 2LT	11am to 5pm
Wednesday 16 August	Whitmore Village Hall, Coneygreave Lane, Whitmore, ST5 5HX	2pm to 8pm
Wednesday 23 August	The Madeley Centre, New Road, Madeley (near Crewe) CW3 9DN	2pm to 8pm

Past events will be removed as new events added on a regular basis.

The section of HS2, known as Phase 2a, will extend the high speed line from the West Midlands to Crewe, and provide reduced journey times further north by connecting to the West Coast Main Line at Crewe.

It will open in 2027, 6 years earlier than planned, bringing benefits to the North of England sooner.

[News story: PHE annual conference 2017: bookings open](#)

Public Health England's (PHE) annual conference takes place at Warwick University on 12 and 13 September 2017.

The [PHE annual conference](#) brings together over 1400 participants from a wide range of organisations, to learn, and share knowledge and experience to help improve public health.

This year's conference focuses on 3 key themes across the programme:

- promoting world-class science and evidence
- making the economic case for prevention
- working towards a healthier, fairer society

Key note speakers at this year's conference will include:

- Nicola Blackwood MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation
- Sir David Spiegelhalter, Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk at Cambridge University
- Professor Dame Margaret Whitehead, WH Duncan Professor of Public Health, University of Liverpool
- Dr Jennifer Dixon, Chief Executive at The Health Foundation

[Abstract submissions](#) are invited in work that clearly link to one or more of the conference themes, introducing new ideas, research findings and advances in public health practice and outcomes.