

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Moscow visit

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, has decided not to visit Moscow as planned on 10 April.

Developments in Syria have changed the situation fundamentally. My priority is now to continue contact with the US and others in the run up to the G7 meeting on 10-11 April – to build coordinated international support for a ceasefire on the ground and an intensified political process. I will be working to arrange for other like-minded partners to meet and explore next steps soon too.

I discussed these plans in detail with Secretary Tillerson. He will visit Moscow as planned and, following the G7 meeting, will be able to deliver that clear and co-ordinated message to the Russians.

We deplore Russia's continued defence of the Asad regime even after the chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians. We call on Russia to do everything possible to bring about a political settlement in Syria and work with the rest of the international community to ensure that the shocking events of the last week are never repeated.

Press release: Joint statement: India-UK energy for growth partnership

India's Minister for Power, New & Renewable Energy, Coal and Mines, Piyush Goyal, and the UK's Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Greg Clark, took forward the commitment of their Prime Ministers for an enhanced Energy for Growth Partnership between the two countries.

The ministers noted over 30 years of UK-India collaboration on energy spanning investment, research, policy, technical and commercial partnerships in the power, renewables, energy efficiency, civil nuclear and oil and gas sectors. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen energy cooperation between India and the UK.

Minister Goyal welcomed the UK's ongoing technical assistance and climate financing. The two ministers welcomed the current large scale private sector investments between the two countries in the area of energy.

The UK is the largest G20 investor in India with large investments in energy.

India is the third largest source of FDI projects in the UK including in the energy sector. They welcomed the productive discussions of the business round tables held as part of the energy dialogue in which opportunities for new partnerships were explored and they expressed their commitment to deepen business to business engagement including efforts to enhance technological collaboration.

Looking forward, they explored opportunities for new bilateral cooperation on shared strategic energy priorities such as security, affordability and sustainability. Secretary of State Clark announced up to £20m of additional technical assistance funding under the Energy for Growth partnership to support priority areas for collaboration on power, renewables, energy access and efficiency and oil and gas.

On power and renewable energy, the two ministers agreed that priorities will include helping India's power sector companies introduce smart technology to improve performance and reduce losses; support for increased energy efficiency; and work to accelerate deployment of renewable energy including through support at state level on planning for renewable energy. This will build on the existing £10m Power Sector Reform Programme that is focusing on efficient, reliable and sustainable electricity supply, increasing integration of renewable energy into the grid and improving energy access.

The ministers appreciated the strides made by Energy Efficient Services Limited (EESL) by investing in seven energy saving projects in the UK that have been in successful operation for more than two years yielding dividends. They welcomed the opening of operations in the UK by India's EESL.

The two ministers recognised the need for an accelerated rate of investment to meet PM Modi's ambitious energy plans. Secretary of State Clark welcomed the various support mechanisms introduced by Government of India to promote adoption of renewable energy resources including generation-based incentives (GBIs), capital and interest subsidies, viability gap funding (VGF), concessional finance and fiscal incentives. The two ministers welcomed the new instruments for raising finance such as green masala bonds on the London Stock Exchange as well as significant commercial investments in oil and gas and growing investment in renewables by UK companies.

Secretary of State Clark and Minister Goyal welcomed the decision by CDC to establish an independent renewable energy company in India. Secretary of State Clark announced that CDC will invest up to \$100m to support projects in the renewable energy sector. This follows the Economic and Financial Dialogue between UK and Indian finance ministers earlier in the week where green finance was an important focus.

This is in addition to significant UK climate funding through multilateral initiatives, such as the Clean Technology Fund for India that has approved an investment plan of US\$775 million for India, in which UK is the largest investor.

The two ministers reaffirmed their governments' commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris

Agreement to tackle global climate change and welcomed the early entry into force of the Agreement in 2016. They noted that the Paris Agreement calls for low carbon growth and India and the UK will work together to make the most of the opportunities this brings.

The ministers also emphasised the vital importance of research and innovation on energy and reaffirmed their government's commitment to continued excellence with impact in this area. India and the UK are building on years of partnership including through the Newton-Bhabha programme. They welcomed wide-ranging jointly funded Research Council UK projects, spanning solar energy, bio-energy, a Joint Virtual Centre on Clean Energy with India's Department of Science and Technology. They also noted the long running collaboration in civil nuclear with India's Department of Atomic Energy including a fourth phase of research projects planned to be taken forward in 2017 and the MoU for cooperation with India's Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP).

Press release: Revenge Porn Helpline Given Further Funding

A helpline dedicated to supporting victims of revenge porn is to get additional funding, the Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years, Caroline Dinenage announced today.

The Revenge Porn Helpline launched in 2015 to help tackle the problem of people sharing intimate images online as a way of seeking revenge, humiliating or blackmailing individuals.

The service has been funded by the Government since its launch and was given £178,000 to run for two years. The service will receive a further £80,000 in 2017-18 to ensure victims continue to receive the support they need.

Since its launch the helpline has taken over 6000 calls. The service supports men and women but is part of a wider government commitment to eliminate violence against women and girls, backed by £100 million funding.

Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years, Caroline Dinenage said:

Intimate photos or videos should never be shared without a person's consent, let alone be posted online as an act of revenge.

For too long, people felt they had to face this problem on their own but we will not tolerate it. That's why we introduced new laws to make this an offence and set up this helpline to provide people

with help and advice.

This funding means we can help hundreds more people to get these images taken down, as well as helping them get the emotional support they might need as victims of this awful crime.

The helpline – run by South West Grid for Learning – links callers with law enforcement and internet companies to get content taken down, as well as providing information on legal help available and their rights.

It was set-up alongside the introduction of a new offence in the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, covering the sharing of images both online and offline. The offence carries a maximum sentence of up to two years in prison.

A breakdown of calls to the helpline since it was established shows that around 75 per cent seeking advice and support are female and 25 per cent of calls relating to men.

Laura Higgins, Online Safety Operations Manager for the helpline said:

We are absolutely delighted with the Minister's decision to provide continuation funding for the Revenge Porn Helpline. The service has seen an increase in calls in 2017 and there is clearly a need for our specialist advice and support.

Since launching in 2015 we have helped thousands of victims and have received incredible feedback from clients, we are glad that we can continue to do so.

The helpline is available on 0845 6000 459 from 10.00am – 4.00pm, Monday to Friday, and messages left outside these hours will be returned. Emails can be sent at any time to help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk

Notes to editors:

- For further information, please contact the GEO press office on 0207 783 8300.
 - For further information from the helpline or for media bids, please contact Laura Higgins on 07899 905638 or laura.higgins@swgfl.org.uk
-

Speech: “The United Kingdom supports the U.S. air strike on the Al Shayrat airfield because war crimes have consequences.”

Thank you Madam President,

I deeply regret that the previous speaker showed more outrage against the United States than against the Asad regime that on Tuesday deliberately dropped chemical weapons, killing over a hundred men, women, and children in the most barbaric fashion.

More than three and a half years ago, the Syrian regime made a pledge. They would join the 189 countries who had already signed the Chemical Weapons Convention. They would reveal the full extent of their chemical arsenal and proceed with its full destruction.

What spurred this pledge was a chemical weapons attack. That time in Ghouta. Hundreds if not thousands were dead. There were images of men, women, and children choking, foaming at the mouth, clearly asphyxiated.

Three and a half years after a historically heinous war crime was committed, after the stockpiles were supposed to be destroyed, Asad on Tuesday, showed us yet again – this time in Idlib – that he is capable of redefining horror. Tuesday’s attack must be fully investigated. Impunity cannot be the norm.

We will continue to work with our partners on this Security Council to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

The United Kingdom supports the U.S. air strike on the Al Shayrat airfield because war crimes have consequences. And the greatest war criminal of all, Bashar al Assad, has now been put on notice.

The US strike was a proportionate response to unspeakable acts that gave rise to overwhelming humanitarian distress. It was also a strong effort to save lives, by ensuring that such acts never happen again.

The resolution that we adopted three and a half years ago provided a framework for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria. It had a clear author and a clear guarantor. At the time Russian assured us that Asad would fully declare his chemical arsenal and would continue to cooperate with international inspectors. Perhaps that was the assurance that Russia received from Asad.

And perhaps Russia has now learnt the hard lesson that backing a war criminal comes with its own consequence: humiliation.

Russia has barely any support from the Arab world for its policy of propping

up the criminal Asad regime as it carries out chemical weapons attacks against its own people. Russia needs to listen to this Council, listen to the Arab world, listen to the rest of the international community, above all listen to the Syrian people. Their message is clear: end Asad's bombs, his use of chemical weapons, his torture dungeons.

Instead, Russia has given Assad everything he could dream of. Without Russia's seven vetoes in the Security Council defying the views of other members of this Council, Asad would now have faced sanctions and justice. And what did Russia get for its unconditional support?

Assad ignores Russia's requests for him to obey a ceasefire. Asad defies Russia's request for him not to gas his own people. Asad thumbs his nose at Russia's calls for Asad to join a peace process. Russia sits here today humiliated by its failure to bring to heel a puppet dictator entirely propped up by Russia itself, and Hizbollah, and Iran.

And let me bust some myths about our private negotiations over the last couple of days. We were seeking agreement on a draft resolution. I repeatedly asked the Russian Federation: why could you not support our draft resolution? If you want the truth why did you not want the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to have access to the places, the people, and the information they need? What possible excuse do you have for keeping that information away from the investigators? What reason do you have to carry on protecting Asad? If you care about the UN Charter, why protect a dictator who has violated international law time and time again? Answer came there none.

There is another way for Russia and I appeal to the Russian Federation to abandon its failed strategy. To join the rest of this Council in our call for justice and accountability. To end your protection of a war criminal. To join us, all of us, in supporting a genuine political progress that would lead to a transition to a more legitimate and representative government.

The only reason why we are here. Why these discussions are being had in this moment, in this chamber, is because the international community has not done enough.

Things can be different.

The difference that can be made. The difference that must be made, lies in a political solution. And that won't happen if we take the familiar route that has plagued this Council and the countries of the region, millions of Syrians looking for a future. The new road must see the Syrian regime engage. The new road must have Russia and Iran not only at the table, but negotiating in good faith.

We are sitting in the halls of the organisation that was built to guide us when peace seems out of reach. The United Nations has a vital role in convening those negotiations and helping the parties to resolve their disputes

The agenda has been set and it is long overdue that a proper negotiation on the future Syrian-led transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people happens. Asad must engage in serious discussion about that future to meet those aspirations of all Syrians.

Madam President in conclusion,

The United Kingdom supports the U.S. action as an appropriate response to a heinous act by a brutal and uncaring dictator. By a dictator who thinks that gassing his people is somehow a legitimate step on the road to stability.

It is time now to get a genuine political process back up and running. Those discussions may be long and difficult. But the people of Syria deserve nothing less.

And if we want to ensure that the shocking images that have haunted us this week are truly confined to history, then this is our duty.

Thank you.

Press release: Minister condemns persecution of LGBT community in Chechnya

Reports from international human rights organisations suggest that over 100 gay men have recently been detained in Chechnya, with some reports suggesting that at least three have been killed and many have been tortured.

The detention and ill-treatment of over 100 gay men in Chechnya is extremely concerning. Reports have also suggested that at least three of these men have been killed. The statement by the regional Government, implying that such treatment towards LGBT people is acceptable, is particularly abhorrent. We condemn any and all persecution, and call on the authorities to promptly investigate and ensure that perpetrators of human rights abuses are brought to justice.

The human rights situation for LGBT people in Russia has deteriorated significantly in recent years and we continue to voice our serious concern with Russian authorities at all levels. Russia's international human rights obligations require them to protect citizens who may be at risk of persecution. We expect the Russian government to fulfill its obligations to this end, and to uphold the rule of law.