

Press release: UK Minister visits Nairobi for talks on sustainable blue economies and marine conservation

The UK Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, visited Kenya from 26 to 27 November 2018.

In addition to leading the UK delegation to the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, Lord Ahmad held talks with Cabinet Secretary Monica Juma and the Chief Justice. He also met with young Kenyans, refugees, and survivors of gender based violence. In addition to his ministerial role, Lord Ahmad is also the British Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, an issue which has long been a priority for the UK government.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference the Minister welcomed Kenya's leadership on economic development and underlined the UK's commitment to the sustainable use of our oceans. This includes the joint leadership of the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance (CCOA) with Vanuatu.

CCOA was launched at the April Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in London and unites countries around the Commonwealth in their shared ambition to tackle plastics in the marine environment.

Foreign Office Minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Lord Ahmad said:

We have all seen the devastating impact that plastic pollution is having on our oceans, ruining marine environments and affecting livelihoods. It is vital that we move towards a sustainable blue economy, where we stop treating the ocean as a bottomless, free resource.

The United Kingdom, Vanuatu and our Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance partners are determined to make sure our oceans are clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse. We call on all Commonwealth countries to pledge action now on plastic pollution, whether by following Kenya's lead by cutting down on single-use plastic bags or taking steps to eliminate avoidable single-use plastic waste, before it is too late.

Lord Ahmad also visited the organisation RefuSHE on Monday, which provides holistic services to unaccompanied refugee women and girls in Nairobi, many of whom are survivors of violence. Lord Ahmad heard from the RefuSHE women and girls about the challenges they face, and their hopes for the future. The British business community in Kenya is supporting these vulnerable refugees including with education and training.

Speaking after his visit, Lord Ahmad said:

It was wonderful to visit RefuSHE today, and to hear these brave women and girls discuss their stories, and their hopes for the future.

My visit to this inspirational organisation fell during the 16 days of activism to end Gender Based Violence, an issue which I care passionately about. The UK will continue to do all it can to raise awareness of gender based violence, and support efforts to tackle, and ultimately eradicate it, around the world.

On Tuesday evening the Minister met with young Kenyans for a wide ranging discussion on youth unemployment, tackling corruption, and human rights.

- The UK supported the delivery of the Blue Economy Conference through funding which allowed participation from Commonwealth Small Island Developing States.
- During her recent visit, the British Prime Minister announced a package of support responding to the issues the next generation care most passionately about in Kenya and around the region. This included support for the fight against corruption in Kenya, through the signature of a framework agreement which allows the return of assets of corruption from the UK to Kenya. It also included support for the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs through the catalytic Jobs Fund, which is due to be launched early next year. See a [full list of announcements made during the Prime Minister's visit to Kenya](#).

Further information