

Speech: International cooperation vital in tackling scourge of landmines

Thank you Mr President and thank you to ASG Zouev for your briefing and through you I'd like to extend the UK's appreciation for all the work carried out by UN staff working on mine action, especially in UNMISS.

Mr President, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the implementation of Resolution 2365. The United Kingdom reiterates its support for this resolution in which, for the first time, the Council calls for action against the lasting threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices to civilians and peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel.

Twenty years after the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention landmines remain a major threat. As discussed in the Secretary-General's report, landmines continue to kill and maim indiscriminately. It is civilians, and all too often children, that are the victims of these brutal weapons.

Although a great deal has been done and achieved to rid the world of these horrific weapons, it is clear that there is more to do. Mr President, the United Kingdom fully agrees that instruments of international law provide protection against the proliferation of explosive weapons. We remain fully committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which we chaired in 2017; the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention; and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We call on any states not already party to these Conventions, to accede to these key international disarmament initiatives without delay. It is only when we stop producing these atrocious weapons, that people will stop being killed by them.

The UK will continue to uphold our own commitments under the Convention. We are working to clear landmines in the Falkland Islands, the only part of our territory that is contaminated with landmines. We are also proud to offer substantial international assistance. Last year, we tripled our funding for Mine Action and will spend \$130 million over three years to tackle the humanitarian and development impact of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. This support is making 150 square kilometres of land safe, which will help 800,000 people, and ensure that every year, over 100,000 people – especially children – fully understand the dangers posed by landmines and how to avoid them.

Mr President, we welcome the significant role played by the UN and in particular, the UN's focus on Strengthening National Capacity and the importance of Partnerships. In support of this, we provide funding to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the United Nations Mine Action Service and, through the UK military's Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search branch, have supported the UN to develop the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards. We welcome their completion and recognise the role they

will play to ensure the safety of UN personnel who take part in demining activity.

As identified in the SG's report, there is an appalling trend of increased use of improvised explosive devices by non-state actors. The United Kingdom supports Resolution 2370 which restricts terrorist actor's access to weapons. We the call for more stringent national measures to deny terrorists ready access to weapons and explosive precursors. We also support the second UN General Assembly Resolution on Countering the Threat Posed by Improvised Explosive Devices.

Mr President, international cooperation is vital to tackle the criminal and terrorist networks facilitating and using IEDs. The UK is actively engaged in facilitating discussions amongst the international community on the topic of IEDs and Mine Action. The conference we hosted in May considered the challenges of realising a mine-free world, and looked at how we could overcome them. Much of the remaining clearance challenge stems from recent indiscriminate contamination by mines and IEDs. It is vital that we continue to assess the challenges ahead and collaboratively consider the means to meet these challenges. We must augment our efforts where we can so we can collectively tackle the scourge of landmines.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: Troika statement on South Sudan on 29 June

The members of the Troika (the UK, US and Norway) commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) efforts to drive forward the South Sudan peace process, and take note of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement Between Parties of the Conflict of South Sudan agreed between President Salva Kiir, Dr Riek Machar, and other opposition parties in Khartoum on 27 June. We welcome the Government of Sudan's role in hosting the latest round of discussions.

We hope that the principles outlined in the declaration will help to build confidence between the parties and guide the difficult discussions that must follow to reach a credible and comprehensive wider agreement.

While we welcome the renewed commitment to a ceasefire, all sides must stop fighting now – that is the only secure foundation upon which any agreement can be built. The effects of the renewed commitment to a permanent ceasefire must be seen on the ground. It must allow the return of South Sudan's refugees and displaced people, and the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. It must lead to improved security for communities and an end to the horrendous abuses endured by civilians at the hands of security forces.

“Self-monitoring” will not be sufficient to assess adherence to the ceasefire. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) must continue to play a central role, with full access throughout the country and support in publishing timely reports.

The new ceasefire does not negate the need to respond to the continued and repeated serious violations by all sides of the December 2017 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA). We will continue to seek measures at the UN Security Council to return the region to peace and security, including consequences for spoilers to the peace process. The international community therefore stands ready to support action by IGAD and the African Union to signal an end to impunity by delivering punitive measures against those responsible.

The parties must work to solidify this agreement. They need robust security and enforcement mechanisms, inclusion of a wide range of constituencies, and clear limits to executive power. There is a need for specific and realistic benchmarks throughout the transitional period, which lead to free and fair elections that allow for a peaceful transition in leadership in the most expeditious and responsible manner. The international community will encourage any oil arrangement to include transparency and accountability and ensure that new oil revenues directly benefit the South Sudanese people, rather than fuel more conflict.

All this will be critical to ensure that the failures of past agreements are not repeated and the confidence of international donors is secured.

We appreciate IGAD’s ongoing efforts and look forward to further progress in the next phase of talks.

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News story: British diplomats have won the battle to name chemical weapons culprits: article by Boris Johnson

Within hours of the gas attack on the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun, the conspiracy mongers were out in force.

They claimed that nothing had happened and the whole incident had been a stunt, or perhaps the town had gassed itself in a bizarre act of self-immolation, or someone – anyone – was responsible for the atrocity other than Bashar al-Assad's regime.

This episode last April showed the convergence of two scourges of our age: the use of chemical weapons and the proliferation of fake news designed to hide the guilty.

There is only one rightful response to this pernicious combination. The international community must be able to uncover the truth by means of independent inquiry, empowered not only to say whether chemical weapons were employed but by whom.

And it is that vital power to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria that British diplomacy has just helped to restore.

Our efforts became necessary because of what followed the Khan Sheikhoun attack. In October 2017, a joint investigation by the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) found that one of Assad's military aircraft had dropped a bomb laden with sarin nerve gas on Khan Sheikhoun (contrary to the energetic outpourings of the conspiracy theorists).

This was the fourth time this joint investigation had named the Assad regime as responsible for chemical weapon attacks in Syria. The terrorists of Daesh were held culpable for two other incidents.

But Russia chose to respond by protecting Assad and vetoing the renewal of this investigation in the Security Council last November. We then entered a period when the OPCW's experts were able to investigate chemical attacks in Syria, provided they did not say who was responsible.

They were effectively asked to indulge a fiction whereby chemical weapons might descend from the sky of their own volition, without any agent or perpetrator. It was as if a vow of omerta had to surround the identity of the guilty party.

The OPCW reported that chemical weapons had been used twice more in Syria – in the towns of Lataminah in March 2017 and Saraqib in February this year. But they did not identify the perpetrator.

I sensed that a new and profoundly damaging taboo was slowly emerging, a taboo that applied not to the use of chemical weapons but to naming whoever was responsible. It was as if the real offence was not killing people with poison gas, but daring to identify the perpetrator of such wickedness.

Hence the importance of the change that was achieved this week. On Wednesday, a special conference of states parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adopted a British-drafted "Decision" to allow the OPCW to make full use of its powers to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria.

If you had joined me in The Hague, you would have shared my pride in the British diplomats who were lobbying scores of countries, convincing the waverers and countering the frantic efforts of Russia and Iran to scupper the plan.

Our network of embassies threw itself into this campaign, working alongside countries across the world. I spent much of the day meeting or calling dozens of my counterparts. In the end, our proposal carried the day by 82 votes to 24 – a better result than we had dared hope.

Thanks in no small measure to British diplomacy, the OPCW will be able to answer all the vital questions about any future incident: what happened when and where – and who was responsible.

We are placing the taboo back where it belongs: over the singular horror of using chemical weapons. If any such attacks happen again, there will once more be international investigators empowered to discover the culprit. You can be proud of the British diplomats who did so much to bring this about.

Find out more about the international community coming together to [strengthen the global ban against chemical weapons use](#).

Further information

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Press release: Media advisory notice – Hillsborough proceedings

Criminal proceedings against six individuals arising out of the investigations into the tragic events at Hillsborough on the 15th of April 1989 and its aftermath are currently active. The first of three criminal trials is due to start in 10 weeks' time.

The Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP wishes to draw attention to the requirement not to publish material, including online, which could create a substantial risk that the course of justice in these proceedings may be seriously impeded or prejudiced, thereby jeopardising the defendants' right to a fair trial.

In particular, the Attorney General draws attention to the requirement not to publish material that asserts or assumes, expressly or implicitly, the guilt of any of those who face trial, whether in relation to the events of the 15th of April 1989 or to subsequent events. That is an issue to be determined solely by the three juries on the evidence that they hear in court.

The risks may also arise by commentary which prejudices issues that witnesses may give evidence about or which asserts or assumes wrongdoing on the part of organisations by whom the defendants were employed.

The Attorney General's Office will be monitoring the coverage of these proceedings.

Editors, publishers and social media users should take legal advice to ensure they are in a position to fully comply with the obligations they are subject to under the Contempt of Court Act.

They are also reminded of the terms of the order made under section 4(2) of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 by Sir Peter Openshaw DL on 29th June 2018.

News story: UK exports at record high

Exports grew faster to Canada (up 12.7 per cent), India (31.8 per cent) and China (15.3 per cent) than to the EU (10 per cent).

Goods exports were up 10 per cent, driven by a demand for manufactured goods, while services exports rose 4.2 per cent due to strong global interest in the UK's prestigious financial and travel services.

Non-EU countries remain the main destination for UK services (£167.4 billion), making up 60.4 per cent of all services exports.

The figures also reveal the trade deficit continuing to narrow over the last year by £7.7 billion to £23.1 billion.

Over the same period, the UK's current account deficit also narrowed to £80.3 billion, down by £12.2 billion from twelve months earlier. This is the narrowest deficit as a percentage of GDP since 2012.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of UK businesses up and down the country, exports of goods and services rose to a record high of £620 billion. Demand for high quality British products remained strong from countries outside the EU including China, India and Canada and we are putting companies in position to benefit from growing global opportunities.

Far from the negative forecasts after the EU referendum, there is every reason to be optimistic. Our trade deficit narrowed and UK business is delivering for Britain and succeeding on the world stage. As an international economic department we are banging the drum for the growing demand for our goods and services.

The country also remains a strong destination for investment with nearly 76,000 new jobs created as a result of inward investment from foreign direct investment projects in 2017/18, more than the previous year.

Figures from the Department for International Trade published this week show 2,072 new projects recorded, creating 75,968 new jobs and safeguarding 15,063, amounting to nearly 1,500 new jobs per week across the country.

Through GREAT.gov.uk, the department gives UK businesses access to millions of pounds' worth of potential overseas business. It also puts firms in touch with global buyers and since its launch it has promoted 17,500 export opportunities, and helped around 3.6 million users either begin or grow their exporting journeys (from November 2016 – May 2018).

Research from Barclays Corporate Banking found that 64 per cent of consumers in India, 57 per cent in China, and 48 per cent in the UAE were prepared to pay more for goods made in the UK, because they perceive the quality as higher. [Brand Britain – Export opportunities for UK businesses, February 2018]

Working to promote the UK as a great trading nation, DIT has set up 14 trade working groups covering 21 countries to scope our future trade deals and strengthen commercial ties with key trading partners.

Background:

- [Figures from the ONS Balance of Payments 29 June](#)