

Press release: International Development Secretary hails role of innovation and finance in helping developing countries to build back better after natural disasters

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt will today highlight the important role that science, innovation and the City of London can play in helping developing countries build resilience against and recover after natural disasters.

At an event at Lloyd's of London Ms Mordaunt will join Dame Inga Beale, CEO of Lloyd's of London, to showcase how science and technology are powering the design of innovative financial products which are helping developing countries recover more quickly after extreme climates and disasters.

At the event – held on the first day of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings this week – Ms Mordaunt will announce:

- A package of support to the Caribbean to help prepare for future disasters and explore how innovative finance products can provide much-needed pay-outs quickly, to help speed up the recovery of businesses and critical services, like hospitals, power and schools.
- An increase in continued support to the Pacific disaster risk insurance pool (PCRAFI) following the disaster wreaked by Hurricane Gita in Tonga last year, to strengthen its proven ability to pay out following future disasters.

Ms Mordaunt will also reflect on the progress of Global Parametrics, a UK aid-backed social enterprise that is using cutting-edge climatic, seismic and financial risk modelling to build products that make a real difference when natural disasters hit. This includes a recently launched facility with its first client, VisionFund, which will help 4 million people access crucial finance to rebuild their lives and businesses in the wake of natural disasters.

Speaking ahead of the event International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Last year Hurricanes Irma and Maria showed once again the destruction extreme weather events can cause – and the devastating effect this can have on the lives of families and communities.

When disaster does strike, it is crucial that finance is easily and quickly available to help people rebuild their homes and

livelihoods. The use of science, real-time data and innovative finance can be game-changing – helping to cut response times and get countries back on their feet faster.

Dame Inga Beale, CEO of Lloyd's of London said:

Insurance exists to provide critical support in times of disaster, enabling quick recovery and economic protection. Sadly, many of the world's most vulnerable countries also have the biggest protection gap, meaning that recovery is slow and costs so high that rebuilding takes significantly longer.

Lloyd's has worked in partnership with the Department for International Development to co-sponsor the Global Centre for Disaster Protection's first Innovation Lab focussed on developing new financial instruments that combine incentives for resilience with risk transfer. This initiative is part of a collaborative effort to help mitigate the devastating and long-term economic and social impacts of disasters most keenly felt by developing nations around the world and across the Commonwealth.

The International Development Secretary will also announce a partnership with the Met Office and the World Bank to strengthen weather forecasting systems and deliver new technologies and innovative approaches to help vulnerable communities use climate warnings and forecasts to better prepare for shocks across Asia.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt said:

Changing global climates will impact all our lives, but can have deadly consequences for the world's poorest people. By improving the use of forecasting information such as early-warning systems, and sharing the Met Office's world-leading expertise, we can help governments and communities prepare for these shocks, so fewer lives are lost each year to extreme weather.

Professor Stephen Belcher, the Met Office Chief Scientist, said:

The Commonwealth brings together a rich heritage and shared cultural values. But these aren't the only common bonds linking member states. Each is also inextricably connected by the shared impacts of weather and climate. Improving resilience and forecasting will provide a lifeline for vulnerable communities helping them to cope with weather and climate shocks through measures which improve food security and provide protection from extremes of weather.

There can surely be no better aspiration than sharing cutting edge climate science to improve the fortunes and prospects of people in their day-to-day lives.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings take place this week in London, bringing together representatives from business, civil society and government from across the Commonwealth.

Notes to editors

Caribbean – Package to strengthen resilience

- Following the devastating impact of last year's hurricane season, DFID is announcing up to £19m of additional support for Caribbean countries to strengthen capability for early recovery at a regional and national level, and to work with countries to develop options to strengthen disaster preparedness and financial resilience.
- This will be the highest priority of our new Centre for Global Disaster Protection in 2018. The Centre for Global Disaster Protection brings developing countries together with partners including the UK Government, the World Bank, civil society and the private sector with the shared goal of enhancing resilience to climate and disasters. The Centre works with governments to strengthen disaster preparedness, embed early action and enhance their financial resilience, including through the use of financial tools like insurance.
- In January, the Centre ran its first Innovation Lab in partnership with Lloyd's of London to explore how innovations in finance could help countries to build back smarter after disasters. The event brought together more than 50 people from across the finance, humanitarian, engineering and development sectors. A first report by Risk Management Solutions, Vivid Economics and re:focus partners on the outcomes of the Lab will be available from today (16 April 2018).

Asia – Regional Resilience to a Changing Climate programme

The UK will provide up to £23.5 million through the Met Office (£12 million), World Bank (£10 million), and activities directly executed by DFID (£1.5 million) over four years. The programme will deliver:

- At least ten pilots of new technologies and innovations to deliver climate information and advice to vulnerable groups of people;
- One regional and four sub-regional forecasting and early-warning systems, to provide targeted information on the impacts of weather events such as floods and storms;
- Improved access for 30 million people to climate information, services and early warning systems;
- Three regional bodies established to deliver seasonal and long-term climate projections and analysis;
- And will mobilise additional resources for building climate and environmental resilience from national, international and private sector sources.

Uplift to Pacific disaster risk insurance pool (PCRAFI)

- The UK is providing a further £1.3 million to the PCRAFI, in the wake of major devastation to Tonga following hurricane Gita on top of £6.2 million of capital already provided.
- At the Commonwealth Summit in 2015 the Prime Minister announced £15 million to help extend an international disaster risk insurance fund to the Pacific Islands.
- In February this year, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji were hit by Cyclone Gita. Gita was particularly severe when it hit Tonga and there was widespread damage. The nation's parliament building was amongst the buildings destroyed.
- Tonga is one of 5 Pacific nations that has disaster risk insurance in place with PCRAFI, thanks to UK support. The Government of Tonga received £2.8 million (\$3.5 million) within 10 days of being hit, which helped speed recovery.

Global Parametrics

- Global Parametrics is a UK social enterprise – started with funding from DFID and KfW – with a focus on using cutting-edge climatic and seismic risk modelling to offer financial products that improve recovery and resilience in the event of natural and climatic disasters
- DFID has invested £1.5m into Global Parametrics. In addition, DFID has also provided a loan of £6.4m.
- Global Parametrics products are backed by the Natural Disaster Fund. Like an insurer, the Natural Disaster Fund collects premiums and makes pay-outs when natural disasters occur.
- DFID has invested £25 million in the Natural Disaster Fund over 20 years, in order to support pioneering new products from Global Parametrics.
- Global Parametrics has partnered with microfinance institution VisionFund to launch the world's largest non-government climate insurance scheme.
- The scheme will provide automatic disaster-linked pay-outs to microfinance institutions in Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Zambia, Cambodia and Myanmar, allowing them to provide new loans to allow families and small businesses to get back on their feet after a disaster.
- DFID made £2m available to finance disaster recovery loans by VisionFund during last year's El Niño. Following loan repayments, DFID was able to reinvest all of that money in other development projects

General media queries

Email

mediateam@dfid.gov.uk

Telephone

020 7023 0600

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Press release: National primary offer day

- 90% per cent of pupils offered their first choice of primary school and 97.2% were offered a place at one of their top three last year
- Disadvantage gap index at Key Stage 2 down 10.5% since 2011
- 825,000 new school places created since 2010 – with 90,000 more over 2016-17 alone

Pupils across the country will find out today (Monday 16 April) which primary school they will be going to in September, amid rising education standards in England.

Figures show 97.2 per cent of pupils were offered one of their top three primary schools in 2017 and follows the creation of 825,000 new school places since 2010.

Families will receive their offers as standards continue to rise thanks to the government's reforms and the hard work of teachers, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 and nine out of ten schools awarded this rating at their last inspection.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

This morning, thousands of pupils and their parents will find out which primary school they will be going to this September. Thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, academic standards in our primary schools are rising across the country. Our young readers are among the best in the world, the proportion of primary school pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and maths standards went up 8 percentage points last year and the attainment gap between children from wealthier and poorer backgrounds has narrowed by 10.5% since 2011.

A good primary school education lays the foundations for success at secondary school and beyond, so it is right that we help make sure every child reaches their potential from the moment they start their education. That's why we're investing £5.8 billion to create even more good schools and good school places – building on the 825,000 we've created since 2010 – resulting in 9 out of 10 pupils securing one of their top three choices of schools.

Academic standards are rising following the introduction of a more rigorous primary school curriculum to match the best education systems in the world, with latest performance data showing:

- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in a combined measure of English, reading and mathematics has decreased in each of the last six years, narrowing by 1.3% in the latest year and 10.5% since 2011;
- There are now 154,000 more six-year-olds on track to become fluent readers than in 2012, with England's recent rise up the international PIRLS rankings putting the success of the government's reforms on a global scale; and
- In 2017 72% met the expected standard in reading, 75% in maths and 77% in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

On top of this, the government has invested in programmes to help raise standards in these crucial early years of education, including a £26 million network of specialist English Hubs around the country to improve pupils' literacy and £41 million to follow the same approach to teaching maths as world leading countries through the Shanghai Mastery for Maths programme. □This is on top of wider changes to the primary assessment system which will reduce unnecessary workload for teachers so they can focus on what really matters in the classroom.

[Speech: Airstrikes show we stand up for principle and civilised values: article by Boris Johnson](#)

There is a very simple reason why it was right for the UK to join our closest allies in launching strikes against the Assad military machine.

This is about our collective future. It is about the kind of world we want our children to grow up in.

It is about – and exclusively about – whether the world should tolerate the repeated use of chemical weapons and the human suffering they cause.

The problem with such weapons is not just that their effect is hideous. Anyone looking at the pictures from Eastern Ghouta can see the kind of suffering involved: the foaming at the mouth, the floppy bodies of children, and the particular terror those weapons deliberately inspire.

Vile, sick, barbaric though it is to use such weapons – that is not the principal objection. These munitions are not just horrible. They are illegal.

It is now centuries since humanity first recoiled against the use of poison in warfare. The French and the Holy Roman Empire were so disgusted by the use of poisoned bullets they signed a treaty to ban them in 1675.

It is now almost 100 years since the great post World War One treaty to prohibit use of chemical weapons – and in that period we have seen nation after nation sign up to the global consensus that this particular means of killing is evil and should be banned.

Indeed, the universal abhorrence of chemical weapons, and the destruction of declared stockpiles, must be considered one of the great achievements of the modern world.

The global community simply cannot afford to turn a blind eye to what is happening in Syria.

In 2013 the Syrian regime committed to destroy its chemical arsenal while Russia – the mentor of the Assad Regime – guaranteed to oversee the process.

Since then the Assad Regime and Russia has made a complete mockery of that pledge.

A significant body of information, including intelligence, suggests the Assad regime was behind the chemical attack at Douma on April 7 that killed about 75 people and resulted in hundreds of casualties.

Multiple accounts located a regime Mi 18 helicopter in the vicinity at the time. The opposition does not have helicopters and no other actor in the Syrian theatre is thought capable of launching a chemical strike of that scale.

The only reasonable conclusion is that the regime has become so hardened and cynical that it is willing to exploit the extra potential of these weapons for removing entrenched urban resistance – in complete defiance of global disapproval and the norms of civilised behaviour.

The Douma atrocity alone would be enough to demand a response. But it is not a one off.

The Douma massacre is now part of a pattern of use of chemical weapons by the Assad Regime. International investigators mandated by the UN Security Council have found the Assad regime responsible for using chemical weapons in four separate attacks since 2014.

The UK and our allies have done everything in our power to deter the barbaric use of these weapons. The EU has imposed sanctions on key figures linked to chemical weapons use in Syria.

We have tried countless resolutions at the UN. But Russia has repeatedly shielded the Assad Regime from investigation and censure, vetoing six

separate UN Security Council resolutions, including torpedoing the UN mandated Investigative Mechanism set up to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

Instead, Russia has repeated its lies and obfuscation that we have seen in this country since the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, including the grotesque assertion that the UK is somehow behind the attack in Douma.

Last year we had a military response from the US, when about 20 Syrian planes were destroyed at the Shayrat airfield after the chemical massacre of civilians at Khan Sheikhoun.

Now the world is forced to act again – not only to protect those who would otherwise fall victim to Assad's monstrosities, but because unless we do so his regime will continue to weaken what has become an effective global taboo, with significant humanitarian consequences for many more.

If we do nothing there will be other people and other governments around the world who will look at the impunity of Assad and ask themselves: they got away with it – why shouldn't I?

Unless we act there is a risk of moral contamination, a coarsening and corruption of what we have until now thought to be acceptable.

Yes of course it was also right for the UK to stand shoulder to shoulder with America and France – close allies who were instrumental in helping to forge the 28 strong group of countries that expressed their palpable outrage at the Salisbury attack by expelling more than 150 Russian diplomats.

Yes of course there are diplomatic considerations – but this is about more than diplomacy. It is about principle.

And in its specific focus on the use of chemical weapons – and the consequences that must flow – this action is limited, and we must be both acutely aware of those limits and clear about them.

These carefully targeted and calibrated strikes are not designed to intervene in the Syrian civil war or effect regime change.

The action was carried out to alleviate further humanitarian suffering by degrading the Syrian Regime's Chemical Weapons capability and deterring their use.

At a time of understandable tension in our relations with Russia it has been important to stress that this action does not entail some attempt to frustrate Russian strategic objectives in Syria.

In short this does not represent any major escalation of UK or western involvement in Syria – and we should have the courage to be honest about that.

In degrading Assad's chemical weapons capabilities we intend to do what we

can to protect his people from that specific form of cruelty.

We are standing up for principle and for civilised values.

We may not end the barbarism – but we are telling the world that there is one type of barbarism that is banned and that deserves to be banned.

Press release: PM calls with world leaders: 14 April 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

Following the successful strikes made against the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons sites earlier today by the UK, France and United States, Prime Minister Theresa May is speaking to a number of her fellow world leaders.

Those who she has spoken to so far are Mohammad Bin Salman Al Saud; King Abdullah of Jordan; Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia; President Erdogan of Turkey; President Anastasiades of Cyprus; Prime Minister Gentiloni of Italy; Chancellor Merkel of Germany; EU President Donald Tusk; Prime Minister Turnbull of Australia and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada.

The PM explained that the action the UK has taken with our American and French allies was limited, carefully targeted and designed to alleviate humanitarian suffering, degrade the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons capability and deter their use in the future. The response was not just to the Douma attack but to a series of devastating assaults on the Syrian people by their government.

All of the leaders agreed with the Prime Minister on the importance of restoring the international norm that the use of chemical weapons is never acceptable.

NOTE: The PM is continuing to speak with her fellow leaders and updates will be issued in due course.

Press release: PM calls with President Macron and President Trump: 14 April 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

In separate calls, the Prime Minister this afternoon spoke with President Macron and President Trump.

The three leaders agreed that the military strikes taken against the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons sites had been a success.

The Prime Minister welcomed the public support which had been given by fellow world leaders for the strong stand the UK, France and the United States had taken in degrading Syria's chemical weapons capability and deterring their use; defending global rules; and sending a clear message that the use of chemical weapons can never become normalised.