

Speech: Reiterating the call for a 30-day ceasefire, without delay, in Syria

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you also to Under-Secretary Generals Lowcock and Feltman for their clear and factual briefings and for reiterating to all of us on this Council the ongoing horror of the conflict in Syria, and in particular in Eastern Ghouta, because that is where it is clear the situation is most dire by a huge order of magnitude.

It was five days ago that we sat in this Council and all of us raised our hands in support of a 30-day ceasefire, which we hoped would provide some relief to Syria's people. This was a desperately needed step. A step that came too late for many. In Eastern Ghouta alone, Médecins Sans Frontières reported that at least 630 people were killed and 3,000 injured in the week before Resolution 2401 was agreed, with women and children representing nearly 60 percent of the wounded and 50 percent of the deceased. We continue, as well, to condemn attacks on Damascus from Eastern Ghouta.

Let us recall the demands of our resolution. It called for at least a 30-day ceasefire, without delay, to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical evacuation.

Without delay means right now. Immediately. That there should be no delay. We all voted for these demands and we committed to use our influence to ensure this.

In response, Russia has declared a five-hour daily humanitarian window. That is not what this Council demanded, nor what Russia agreed to use its influence to ensure. A five-hour window has not delivered and cannot deliver any meaningful improvement on the ground. Under-Secretary General Lowcock has made clear that the United Nations cannot get humanitarian convoys in and out within that timeframe, as has the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Humanitarian pauses of a few meagre hours are no substitute for a sustained ceasefire, which is vital to ensure delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance and medical evacuations. If Russia is able to deliver a five-hour pause, let it deliver a 24 hour one, as they agreed on Saturday.

Mr President,

Let us now take stock of the situation in Syria, and specifically in Eastern Ghouta where the situation is at its most desperate, and review if any real change has occurred in the past five days. Has the resolution been implemented? Has there been a ceasefire? Any delivery of humanitarian aid? Or any medical evacuations? Has the passing of this resolution bought any relief to the people of Syria?

The fighting has not stopped. All of the main armed opposition groups have

committed to the full implementation of Resolution 2401. The Assad regime has not, and has in fact ignored the resolution we passed. Reports of attacks and airstrikes by pro-regime forces continue. 22 airstrikes reportedly took place even during Russia's so-called humanitarian pause.

And, as if it could not get any worse, there have been disturbing reports of use of chlorine gas. Doctors in Eastern Ghouta reported to the Syrian American Medical Society that 16 patients, including six children, were suffering from symptoms indicative to exposure to chemical compounds following an alleged regime attack on Sunday, only one day after the resolution was passed.

Since Saturday, not a single aid convoy has been able to access Eastern Ghouta to provide relief to the desperate civilians.

The World Health Organisation estimates that one thousand people are now in need of medical evacuation from Eastern Ghouta. None have been evacuated since the resolution was passed.

The consequences of the failure to implement the resolution are clear. The casualties continue to rise. The horror continues. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights report at least 14 civilians, including three children, were killed on Sunday.

In short, in the words of one doctor from Eastern Ghouta, "nothing has changed."

Mr President,

It is the responsibility of us all to ensure that Resolution 2401 is enacted in full.

In the words of my Foreign Secretary, "The Assad regime must allow the UN to deliver humanitarian aid, in compliance with Resolution 2401, and we look to Russia and Iran to make sure this happens, in accordance with their own promises."

I implore all those with influence over the Syrian regime to act now to ensure that the ceasefire, which they supported in this chamber, is implemented in full and immediately.

To do anything less is an affront to this Council, this United Nations and the international system that we live by.

We will continue to monitor implementation of Resolution 2401 and commit to returning to this Council regularly until we see it respected.

Thank you Mr President.

[News story: Transport Secretary Chris Grayling commits to delivering a modern railway in the south-west resilient to extreme weather](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has today (28 February 2018) committed to delivering a modern railway in the south-west that is resilient to extreme weather, in the [government's response to a report by the Peninsula Rail Task Force](#).

Improving the resilience of the South West Peninsula is part of the biggest overhaul of the Great Western route since Brunel started work on the line more than 175 years ago, with £5.7 billion being invested in modernising the line and improving journeys for passengers. Central to this vision are upgrades to stretches of railway that run close to the sea through Teignmouth and Dawlish, safeguarding their future against damage as when storms washed away part of the line at Dawlish in 2014.

The government has already provided £15 million for Network Rail to design a long-lasting solution to this problem, in addition to the £40 million spent by Network Rail to repair the damage caused in the 2014 storm.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

We are investing in the biggest modernisation of our railway network since Victorian times, providing faster, more reliable and more frequent services for passengers across the country.

The 2014 storms caused devastation to Dawlish and huge disruption followed. It has been a key priority since I became Transport Secretary.

That's why we're investing in the infrastructure of the region – making it easier for people to get around and better connecting the south west to the rest of the country. And that's why sorting out the route through Dawlish is my number one national rail priority.

From the summer, passengers will be also able to take advantage of 29 Intercity Express trains running from London to Penzance. The new bi-mode trains will provide faster, more comfortable and more reliable services, adding an additional 1000 peak time seats compared to today.

Other improvements include:

- the start of a two-train per hour service between Plymouth and Penzance.
- the end of 'Pacer' trains

- free Wi-Fi on all GWR trains
- substantial car park extensions at stations across the peninsula including a completed scheme at Tiverton Parkway and further schemes at St Erth and Taunton
- investment of £9 million to update the Cornish sleeper service
- instructing GWR to examine how the line between Exeter and Okehampton could see the reinstatement of regular train services.

Elsewhere in the region:

- the government is investing more than £1.6 billion in upgrading the A303 near Stonehenge, linking the south-east and the M5 in the south-west to improve journey times, reduce congestion and improve air quality for millions of people, while also supporting 120,000 extra jobs and 100,000 new homes across the region
- local authorities will benefit from £1.3 billion funding to maintain local roads in the current funding period
- the government awarded more than £970 million in local growth funding to boost jobs and business in the area
- the government announced at the Budget to invest £79 million to build the A30 link road for St Austell
- the government is investing £60 million in a series of local road schemes, with funding from the National Productivity Investment Fund

Rail media enquiries

Media enquiries

020 7944 3021

Out of hours media enquiries

020 7944 4292

Switchboard

0300 330 3000

[News story: Applications now open](#)

We are pleased to announce that the Civil Service Fast Track Apprenticeship is now open for applications.

You'll need to complete an online application form. This will take about 20 minutes to complete and you can save your progress as you go.

The next stage will be the online tests, these are made up of 3 sections:

- Verbal and numerical reasoning tests (Take around 6 minutes for each

exercise)

- Situational judgement questionnaire (untimed, takes around 20-30 minutes to complete)
- Competency questionnaire (untimed, takes around 20-30 minutes to complete).

If you are successful at this stage you will be invited to attend the Fast Track Assessment Centre for a half-day event that will feature:

- a group task
- a written task
- a strengths-based interview.

Good luck with your applications, we look forward to meeting you soon.

Applications now open

[Apply now.](#)

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Burma in May 2018](#)

Mr Dan Chugg has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Burma in succession to Mr Andrew Patrick who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Chugg will take up his appointment in May 2018.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Daniel Patrick Brendon Chugg

Married to: Alison Chugg

Children: Two

2015 – present FC0, Head, Counter-Daesh Communications Department, Communication Directorate

2014 – 2015 FC0, Head, ISIL Taskforce and Iraq Department, Middle East and North Africa Directorate

2010 – 2014 Beijing, Counsellor (Political)

2007 – 2010 New Delhi, First Secretary (Press and Communications)

2005 – 2007 FC0, Press Officer later Deputy Head of Press Office

2001 – 2005 Hong Kong, Vice-Consul (Political)

1999 – 2001 Full time language training (Chinese)

1998 – 1999 FCO, Desk Officer, Hungary and Slovak Republic, Central European Department

Further information

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Media enquiries

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[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Sudan in April 2018](#)

Mr Irfan Siddiq OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Sudan in succession to Mr Michael Aron who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Siddiq will take up his appointment in April 2018.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Irfan Siddiq

Married to: Penélope Siddiq

Children: Two

2017 – 2018 Plan International, International Advocacy Director (secondment)

2016 – 2017 FCO, Head, Secondment Unit

2013 – 2016 Baku, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2011 – 2013 FCO, Head, Arab Partnership Department

2010 – 2011 Baghdad, Deputy Head of Mission

2007 – 2010 Damascus, Deputy Head of Mission

2005 – 2007 FCO, Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary

2004 – 2005 Washington, secondment to US State Department as Political Officer

2003 – 2004 Baghdad, Political Officer, Coalition Provisional Authority

2002 – 2003 Cairo, Second Secretary (Political/Press)

2000 – 2002 Full time language training (Arabic)

2000 – 2000 FCO, Desk Officer, Middle East Peace Process Section

1999 – 2000 New Delhi, Second Secretary (Economic/Commercial)

1998 –1999 FCO, Desk Officer, NATO

1998 Joined FCO

Further information

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