

Speech: 13 years since Kyoto and the UK is still leading the charge to a low carbon future

This article first appeared in [The Times Red Box section](#).

Cast your mind back 13 years to 2005. The world was a very different place. The phrase 'climate change' was not exactly a buzzword and yet an extraordinary moment occurred. A groundswell of momentum across the globe brought the Kyoto Protocol into force, a pivotal agreement committing more countries than ever to internationally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Last week the impact of climate change on sports was in the headlines. Climate change affects us all – and if it takes melting ski slopes and waterlogged cricket pitches to get people's attention, then so be it.

Momentum on climate action is accelerating with the UK in the driving seat. Climate change is no longer just a phrase used by environmentalists and scientists, it forms part of our everyday narrative. This is the moment not only for global efforts to reduce our CO2 output, but also for the growth of green industries and for international climate collaboration.

Climate change crosses party political lines and doesn't respect borders. That cross-party support for climate action and UK leadership was demonstrated in 2008 with the introduction of the historic Climate Change Act, setting an ambitious legally-binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80% of 1990 levels by 2050.

But it was the Kyoto Protocol that truly kickstarted international action in 2005. When world leaders signed up to the charter, it signalled a sea change. Left unchecked, climate change would ravage our natural environment and, along with it, our health and prosperity.

Fast forward 10 years and in 2015 the UK was instrumental in securing the Paris Agreement, committing 175 countries to protect the world from catastrophic warming.

Three years ago in Paris, the UK and other developed countries committed a joint contribution of \$100 billion to help the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world cope with the increasing risk of droughts and floods and provide access to clean energy. We should be proud that the UK is regarded so highly for its climate action overseas as well as at home.

I'm proud that we have got our own house in order. In 2011, the government slashed emissions from 3,000 buildings across Whitehall by nearly 14% in a single year.

It is not only a moral imperative that we leave the world in a better place for future generations, there is an economic argument for tackling climate change. The UK has shown that reducing emissions and growing the economy can, and should, go hand in hand. Since 1990 our national carbon emissions have fallen even more and our national income has risen faster than any other nation in the G7.

The shift to clean energy presents a multibillion-pound investment opportunity for businesses. Our low-carbon sector already directly employs more than 200,000 people. We are clear: through our ambitious industrial strategy the UK is ready to embrace the economic opportunities presented by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

And there's more good news. Latest figures indicate that more than half of our electricity generation in 2017 came from low-carbon sources such as wind, nuclear and solar. Just 5 years ago, dirty coal power accounted for 40% of our electricity – this figure is now 7%. The government has driven this change, investing more than £52 billion in renewable energy since 2010 and committing to phasing out unabated coal power by 2025. We now have the biggest installed offshore wind capacity in the world, and the cost of offshore wind is constantly falling thanks to government support.

On the international stage the UK is leading the charge for clean, green energy. In November the Canadian environment minister, Catherine McKenna, and I launched the Powering Past Coal Alliance, a global coalition of countries, businesses and cities committed to ending unabated coal power. Coal is the dirtiest fossil fuel, emitting twice as much CO₂ as gas per unit of electricity generated. Phasing out coal will not only reduce pollution and carbon emissions, it will improve our health.

Our action at home and abroad is delivering real results and we are on track to meet or over-deliver against our first 3 carbon budgets. We have come a long way in the last 13 years, but we cannot step off the pedal now. Ambitious climate action must continue, with the UK leading the way to a low-carbon future.

Statement to Parliament: Safeguarding in the aid sector

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on my Department's response to the sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by charity workers in Haiti in 2011, and the measures we are taking to improve safeguarding across the aid sector.

I'd like to start by paying tribute to Sean O'Neill of The Times and the two sets of whistleblowers – those in 2011 and later – for bringing this case to

light.

On February ninth, The Times reported that certain Oxfam staff when in Haiti in 2011 had abused their positions of trust and paid for sex with local women. These incidents happened in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in 2010, which killed hundreds of thousands of people and left millions more homeless and reliant on aid for basic needs such as food and shelter.

This is shocking, but it is not by itself what has caused such concern about Oxfam's safeguarding. It was what Oxfam did next.

In chaotic and desperate situations the very best safeguarding procedures and practices must be put in to place to prevent harm, but when organisations fail to report and follow up incidents of wrongdoing that occur, it undermines trust and sends a message that sexual exploitation and abuse is tolerated. We cannot prevent sexual exploitation and abuse if we don't demonstrate zero tolerance.

In such circumstances we must be able to trust organisations not only to do all they can to prevent harm, but to report and follow up incidents of wrongdoing when they occur.

In this duty Oxfam failed under the watch of Barbara Stocking and Penny Lawrence.

They did not provide a full report to the Charity Commission. They did not provide a full report to their donors. They did not provide any report to prosecuting authorities.

In my view Mr Speaker they misled, quite possibly deliberately. Even as their report concluded that their investigation could not rule out the allegation that some of the women involved were actually children.

They did not think it was necessary to report to the police in either Haiti or the country of origin for those accountable.

I believe their motivation appears to be just the protection of the organisation's reputation. They put that before those they were there to help and protect – a complete betrayal of trust.

A betrayal too of those who sent them there – the British people – and a betrayal of all those Oxfam staff and volunteers who do put the people they serve, first.

Last week, I met with Mark Goldring, Chief Executive of Oxfam, and Caroline Thomson, Oxfam's Chair of Trustees.

I made three demands of them –

That they fully cooperate with the Haitian authorities, handing over all the evidence they hold.

That, they report staff members involved in this incident to their respective national governments.

And, that they make clear how they will handle any forthcoming allegations around safeguarding – historic or live.

And I stressed that for me holding to account those who made the decision not to report and to let those potentially guilty of criminal activity slip away, was a necessity in winning back confidence in Oxfam.

As a result of those discussions, Oxfam has agreed to withdraw from bidding for any new UK Government funding until DFID is satisfied that they can meet the high safeguarding standards we expect of our partners.

I will take a decision on current programming after the twenty-sixth of February as I will then have further information which will help me decide if I need to adjust how that is currently being delivered.

Given the concerns about the wider sector this case has raised, I have written to every UK charity work working overseas that receives UK aid – 192 organisations – insisting that they spell out the steps they are taking to ensure their safeguarding policies are fully in place and confirm they have referred all concerns they have about specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities.

I have set a deadline of the twenty-sixth of February for all UK charities working overseas to give us the assurances that we have asked for and to raise any concerns with the relevant authorities.

We are also undertaking in parallel a similar exercise with all non-UK charity partners – 393 organisations in total and with all our suppliers including those in the private sector – over 500 organisations – to make clear our standards and remind them of their obligations, and we are doing the same with all multilateral partners too.

The UK Government reserves the right to take whatever decisions about present or future funding to Oxfam, and any other organisation, that we deem necessary. We have been very clear that we will not work with any organisation that does not live up to the high standards on safeguarding and protection that we require.

I will also be sharing details of this approach with other governments departments, who are responsible for the ODA spend.

Although this work is not yet complete it is clear from the Charity Commission reporting data – and lack of it from some organisations – that a cultural change is needed to ensure all that can be done to stop sexual exploitation in the aid sector, is being done.

And we need to take some practical steps. Now.

We should not wait for the UN to take action. We must set up our own systems now.

My department, and the Charity Commission, will hold a safeguarding summit on the fifth of March, where we will meet with UK international development charities, regulators and experts to confront safeguarding failures and agree practical measures, such as an aid worker accreditation scheme we in the UK can use.

Later in the year, we will take this programme of work to a wide-ranging, global safeguarding conference to drive action across the whole international aid sector.

And I'm pleased to say the US, Canada, the Netherlands and others have already agreed to support our goal of improved safeguarding standards across the sector.

The UK is not waiting for others to act. We are taking a lead on this.

I will also be speaking to colleagues across government and beyond about what more we can do to stop exploitation and abuse in the UN and broader multilateral system.

The message from us to all parts of the UN is clear – you can either get your house in order, or you can prepare to carry out your good work without our money.

I welcome the UN's announcement on the fourteenth of February that the UN does not and will not claim immunity for sexual abuse cases. This sends a clear signal that the UN is not a soft target, but we must hold the UN to account for this.

Further actions we have taken in the last week include the creation of a new Safeguarding Unit. We have also promoted our whistleblowing and reporting phone line to encourage anyone with information on safeguarding issues to contact us.

We have appointed Sheila Drew Smith, a recent member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, who has agreed to bring her expertise and her challenge to support my Department's ambition on safeguarding. She will report to me directly.

I have asked to meet leaders of the audit profession to discuss what more they can do to provide independent assurance over safeguarding to the organisations that DFID partners with globally.

And I have held my own Department to the same scrutiny that I am demanding of others. I have asked the department to go through our centrally held HR systems and our fraud and whistleblowing records as far back as they exist.

I am assured that there are no centrally recorded cases which were dealt with incorrectly.

Separately, we are reviewing any locally reported allegations of sexual misconduct involving DFID staff. To date our review of staff cases has looked at 75% of our teams across DFID and will complete in a fortnight.

Our investigations are still ongoing and if, during this process, we discover any further historic or current cases, I will report on our handling of these to Parliament.

DFID, other government departments and the National Crime Agency work closely together when serious allegations of potentially criminal activity in partner organisations are brought to our attention and we are strengthening this, as the new Strategy Director at the NCA will take on a lead role for the aid sector.

I am calling on anyone who has any concerns about abuse or exploitation in the aid sector to come forward and report these to our counter fraud and whistleblowing team. Details are on the DFID website and all communications will be treated in complete confidence.

Later today I will have further meetings, including with the Defence Secretary, regarding peacekeeping troops, and the Secretary of State at DCMS regarding the Charity Sector.

My absolute priority is to keep the world's poorest and most vulnerable people safe from harm. It is utterly despicable that sexual exploitation and abuse continue to exist in the aid sector.

The recent reports should be a wake-up call to all of us. Now is the time for us to act, but as we do so we should note the good people working across the world in this sector – saving lives often by endangering their own – and all those from fundraisers to trustees who make that work possible across the entire aid sector.

In the last week alone UK aid and UK aid workers has helped vaccinate around 850,000 children against polio.

And we should also recognise that work can only be done with the support of the British people.

I commend this statement to the House.

[Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement following an increase in violence in Eastern Ghouta, Syria](#)

Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Alistair Burt, said:

The Asad regime's brutal siege of Eastern Ghouta, coupled with escalating bombardment and reports of chemicals weapons use, is

causing unprecedented levels of suffering. The enclave has become a crucible of misery and violence, which is simply unacceptable in the 21st century.

Airstrikes, artillery and rocket attacks by pro-regime forces are at some of the most intense levels seen in the besieged area in years, leading to scores of civilian casualties. Over 700 people need medical evacuation, but the regime continues to refuse to allow this.

We call on the regime and its backers to cease this campaign of violence, to protect civilians and allow rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. As the international community has made clear to the Assad regime and its backers: the world is watching.

Further information

- Follow the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa on Twitter [@AlistairBurtUK](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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[News story: Farm inspection review announced](#)

The review, to be led by Dame Glenys Stacey, will look at opportunities for improving regulation and enforcement pre and post EU Exit, seek out ways to reduce duplication and allow farmers to concentrate on upholding key

environmental and animal welfare standards as they produce fantastic British food.

For example, the current inspection regime can result in farmers being visited by as many as five different bodies – the Rural Payments Agency, Natural England, the Animal Plant and Health Agency, the Environment Agency or their local authority – all asking for similar information.

Each visit adds to the burden on farmers, and rigidity of the Common Agriculture Policy rules require inspections of precise criteria such as field margin dimensions and the specific placement of trees in fields. Equally, inspections over lapses such as slurry management and welfare standards are often haphazard.

The review comes as the government is preparing to publish an agriculture Command Paper that consults on future policy in this country after we leave the European Union.

Speaking at the NFU Conference today, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

The rules associated with current subsidy payments are unwieldy and, very often, counter-productive. They require farmers to spend long days ensuring conformity with bureaucratic processes which secure scarcely any environmental benefits and which, in turn, require a vast and inflexible bureaucracy to police.

As does the current farming inspection regime, which, despite several recent attempts at simplification, remains as unwieldy as ever. Every year, farmers are confronted by a barrage of inspections from different agencies, often duplicating costs in both time and money.

I am delighted to announce that Dame Glenys Stacey will be conducting a thorough and comprehensive review of this regime, seeing how these inspections can be removed, reduced or improved to reduce the burden on farmers, while maintaining and enhancing our animal and plant health standards.

This review is not only long-required but also very timely as we guide our future approach and maximise the opportunities of leaving the EU. It will provide answers to some key general questions to guide our future approach, subject to the outcome of our negotiations with the EU.

Dame Glenys Stacey said:

I am delighted to be asked to lead the much needed review of the farm inspection regime. With farming at the heart of the quality and safety of the food on our plate as well, and central to the

stewardship of our wildlife, land and rivers, this is an excellent time to be working with farmers and their representatives, and all those who inspect farms, so as to get to a sensible inspection regime, post Brexit.

Dame Glenys has over twenty years' experience in driving reform within public sector organisations. As a former Chief Executive of Animal health, a precursor to the current Animal and Plant Health Agency, she is well versed in the inspection challenge facing our farmers.

The Command Paper will provide further detail on government proposals to design agricultural support fit for the future after we leave the EU.

Notes

1. Dame Glenys is an experienced regulator, chief inspector and chief executive. A solicitor by profession, she has over twenty years' CEO experience, having led the start up or turnaround of a number of public sector organisations responsible for legal and/or regulatory services. As the former CEO of Defra's Animal Health Agency she has valuable experience of farm inspection regimes, and the nature and value of farming in the UK.
2. Dame Glenys brings regulation and inspection experience from other public services. She joined Ofqual, the exams regulator in 2011 as its CEO and Chief Regulator, leading the implementation of the government's planned reforms to qualifications in England and providing advice to government on how best to deliver government's policy aims for qualifications. In March 2016 Dame Glenys took up the post of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Probation. The inspectorate sets standards and drives improvement in probation services, with the joint aims of reducing reoffending and protecting the public.

[News story: Attorney General attends Overseas Territories Attorneys General Conference](#)

The Attorney General for England and Wales, Jeremy Wright QC MP, representing the UK Government, and the Attorneys General of eight of the UK's Overseas Territories (Anguilla; Bermuda; the British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Montserrat; Pitcairn; the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia; and

the Turks and Caicos Islands), the Senior Advisory Counsel of Gibraltar, Solicitors General of the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey and Jersey, and a representative from the US Department of Justice met in Bermuda from 13-15 February 2018 to discuss a range of topics relating to the rule of law and administration of justice in the Territories and to enhance our mutual cooperation.

The Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP said:

During the conference we discussed cooperation on a number of important topics, including anti-corruption, transparency in the financial services industries in the Territories, child safeguarding, human rights, hurricane recovery efforts, criminal justice issues and support for the Territories' good governance. We also had the opportunity to discuss the Territories' interests in our Exit from the EU.

We celebrated the extension to Bermuda and St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha of the UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women demonstrating our shared commitment to raising human rights standards across the Territories.

We also welcomed continued work by the Territories with financial centres to support international efforts to tackle criminal financing and to promote tax transparency, in particular the implementation of bilateral arrangements on beneficial ownership, and the example set by the Territories as early adopters of the OECD Common Reporting Standard.

We also highlighted important developments in anti-corruption, including ongoing work in Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands towards extension of key conventions to their jurisdictions.

Those in attendance committed to:

1. Continue involving the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in negotiations for leaving the EU, ensuring their interests are taken into account as we move to Phase 2. The UK Government has also committed to supporting the Overseas Territories Governments and the Crown Dependencies in their preparedness planning for EU Exit.
2. Continue to work in partnership with Territory governments to ensure that our financial sectors are hostile to illicit finances, to implement the bilateral arrangements on beneficial ownership, and to support each jurisdiction to adopt and implement international standards, including compliance with Financial Action Task Force standards, where they have not done so.

3. Work with the Overseas Territories Criminal Justice Adviser and Law Enforcement Adviser and with in-Territory stakeholders to build the legislative framework necessary to support reform of the criminal justice system, improve efficiency in the investigation and prosecution of crime, as well as efforts to prevent crime, supported by UK programme funds where necessary.
4. Continue to support efforts by relevant Territory governments on hurricane preparedness and recovery, including continued coordination and support between Territories.
5. Support the Territories to achieve extension of core Human Rights conventions where these have not been extended, and to complete a review of outstanding reservations against core UN human rights treaties.
6. Further enhance cooperation on child safeguarding through progress under the Overseas Territories Memorandum of Understanding and finalisation of National Response Plans and work towards extension of the Lanzarote Convention.
7. Work in partnership with Territories to address gaps in legislation pertaining to maritime obligations.