

UN Human Rights Council 51: General remarks on human rights in Xinjiang

Thank you, Mr President

Permit me to make a few remarks after the vote in relation to the Draft Decision to hold a debate on the Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang.

Members of the core group that proposed the Decision align themselves with this statement.

Let me begin by thanking every member of this Council who voted in favour of the Draft Decision, as well as every nation which co-sponsored the draft. We welcome the support of each and every one of you.

Our aim in proposing this Draft Decision was to bring before the Council an issue, which clearly warrants this Council's attention. No state should be free to avoid scrutiny over allegations of possible crimes against humanity, whatever their region, whatever their size, or whatever their influence. And to be clear, that includes the UK.

It has been clear from talking to colleagues over recent weeks, that almost everybody in this room acknowledges that there are serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. The recent OHCHR assessment confirms these concerns with meticulous rigour, drawing extensively on first-hand testimonies and information published by Chinese authorities.

While the Decision was not adopted, the many discussions around the draft decision in Geneva and in Human Rights Council member capitals, have served to highlight the scale, and the nature, of the terrible violations being faced by Uyghur and other Muslims in Xinjiang.

It was therefore correct for the Core Group to seek a debate at the Council. To have done otherwise would have been to ignore the plight of those subjected to arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment, forced labour, sexual and gender-based violence, forced sterilisations and enforced disappearance. It would have been to disregard the testimony of those who have experienced these violations first hand and helped to bring them to light, despite huge personal risk. It would have been to look the other way, when faced with allegations of possible crimes against humanity, committed against huge numbers of people from minority groups based on their ethnicity and religion.

Mr President, dear colleagues,

Problems don't go away by ignoring them. So, we will continue to raise our concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, in international fora. We will continue to urge China to change course, and to cease the practices which the OHCHR assessment has described to us, in such clear and disturbing detail. And we will not forget the plight of the Uyghurs in China.

Thank you

UK and US meet to make positive progress on data and tech

- New annual dialogue established as part of landmark tech partnership
- UK and US make significant progress towards a data adequacy agreement to benefit businesses and boost digital trade

Today UK Digital Secretary Michelle Donelan and US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo paved the way for a new data adequacy agreement in the coming weeks as they met to discuss a range of digital issues.

Currently organisations transferring personal data from the UK to the US have to use costly and time-consuming transfer tools, such as international data transfer agreements, which slow down data flows and create administrative burdens.

Data adequacy agreements allow personal data to be transferred freely from the UK to countries with high protection standards. New deals with other countries will unlock more growth and allow us to share crucial information, such as life-saving research and manufacturing details across our borders.

Reducing barriers to data flows makes it easier for businesses to trade and grow in international markets and brings benefits for consumers such as better access to higher-quality products and lower prices. Exports of British data-enabled services to the US, like finance and computer services, were estimated to be worth more than £69 billion in 2020 and are set to grow once expensive and time-consuming transfer mechanisms are removed.

The UK Digital Secretary and US Secretary of Commerce discussed the UK's adequacy assessment of the new US Data Privacy Framework, a framework to securely send UK data to organisations in America. They discussed some of the robust protections that will be in place for UK data under a potential agreement and agreed to conclude the adequacy work in the weeks ahead.

The Digital Secretary welcomed the publication of the [Executive Order](#), signed by President Biden this afternoon, which strengthens the safeguards and establishes new redress routes for UK data processed by US authorities.

The ministers also committed to [a new official dialogue](#), led by DCMS and FCDO and the US Departments of Commerce and State, to build on the [landmark tech agreement](#) between the two countries announced in 2021. The annual

meeting will bring together senior officials from across both governments to progress shared tech priorities and deliver joint initiatives. The first meeting will focus on data, critical and emerging technologies, and resilient digital infrastructure.

UK Digital Secretary Michelle Donelan said:

The United States shares our democratic values, digital priorities and commitment to high standards of data privacy.

Data and tech are creating new opportunities for growth and connection between our two countries, including between our world-leading tech industries.

I look forward to working together to bring these benefits to people on both sides of the Atlantic.

US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said:

Today's announcement affirms our shared commitment to promoting responsible innovation and digital policies, while also supporting growth and opportunity. This partnership reflects our deepening cooperation on bilateral data and tech issues, as well as our commitment to closer engagement and global leadership as these issues continue to evolve. I look forward to working closely with Secretary Donelan as we continue looking for ways to balance the needs of privacy and responsible data use while removing barriers for critical business needs.

Following their meeting, the Digital Secretary and Secretary of Commerce met with senior leaders from industry, academia, and civil society – including Meta, IBM and the London Stock Exchange – who welcomed the positive progress between the UK and US.

Julian David, CEO of techUK, said on today's announcement:

Today's progress on UK-US data sharing will be welcomed by businesses across the UK. An agreement will provide business with the legal certainty and confidence needed to access new markets and create opportunities for innovation. This will enable the UK to leverage its world-leading industries such as financial services and tech to drive wider economic growth on all sides of the Atlantic.

Duncan Edwards, CEO BritishAmerican Business, said:

Business has been clear that it needs an open, safe and legally

secure environment for transatlantic data flows. A new, bilateral agreement should provide businesses with more certainty to make data-related investment decisions and remove legal uncertainty and burdensome administration from their day-to-day business activities. Further UK-US cooperation in this area is a welcome step towards strengthening the transatlantic partnership and will help create a more consistent set of international data transfer rules.

Vivienne Artz OBE, Chair of the Data Committee, International Regulatory Strategy Group, said:

In a world fragmented by increasing data localisation measures, it is all the more important to continue to build meaningful, outcome focussed data transfer bridges, to support business and individual engagement in our inter-connected and global world. A UK-US data partnership is a fundamental building block supporting the strong economic and social ties between these two nations.

Zahra Bahrololoumi, CEO Salesforce UK and Ireland, said:

As our reliance on digital tools and services grow, cross-border data flows will be key to driving productivity and economic growth. At Salesforce we welcome today's commitment to strengthening the trusted exchange of information, ideas and technologies. Removing barriers and complexity of data management will spur innovation and improve productivity, helping businesses to better serve their customers, reduce costs and create new opportunities in the digital economy. It also puts the UK in a strong position to build on its status as a global hub for the free and responsible flow of data.

This summer the UK announced its first independent [adequacy decision in principle with the Republic of Korea](#), one of Britain's [priority countries](#) for a data deal after leaving the EU. Data enabled service exports to the UK's top six priority partners (Australia, Colombia, Dubai International Finance Centre, Republic of Korea, Singapore and the USA) are already worth more than £80 billion.

Notes to Editors:

[Historic import of british sheep](#)

genetics

Cabaña Las Magnolias received its first shipment of Texel embryos, a British sheep breed of high genetic value. Las Magnolias had taken the previous steps to import embryos of Hampshire Down and Texel sheep on 21 September, with the advice of Cabaña Don José de Uruguay for the Texel breed, and Cabaña Don Luís for the Suffolk breed.

This acquisition comes a year after the opening of imports from the UK, achieved through coordinated work between the Paraguayan Association of Sheep Breeders (APCO), the Association of Texel Producers, the National Animal Health and Quality Service (SENACSA) and the British Embassy in Paraguay.

Speaking to local media, Las Magnolias owner Johanna Bottrel said:

It was a historic event for Paraguay (. . .) the arrival of the Texel breed embryos from the UK, they are the first embryos to arrive in our country.

It is something to celebrate at a national level for the sheep-culture, especially for the Texel breed, it is like moving ten steps forward.

As part of the local activities for the promotion of British genetics, the Texel Paraguay Association and Cabaña Las Magnolias will present a field trip "Why use Texel?" next Saturday, October 8th from 9:00 to 13:00 hours, at the headquarters of Las Magnolias in Coronel Oviedo. For more information about this event, please contact (0972) 139 560.

Sheep development cooperation

The Department for International Trade (DIT) of the British Embassy in Paraguay began conversations in mid-2020. Working with SENACSA and its British counterpart, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Paraguay opened its market for imports of British sheep genetics after a 10-month bilateral technical dialogue.

Following the opening of the market, DIT in conjunction with the British Organisation for Technology, Genetics and Agriculture (UKTAG) organised a trade mission to the UK in June 2022. Three sheep breeders from Paraguay participated and visited the genetic establishments in England.

Gonzalo Grosso, DIT Officer in Paraguay said:

All this is possible thanks to the joint work, and especially thanks to the collaboration with SENACSA. We will continue to build on the progress made so far, promoting British sheep farming in Paraguay.

UK's ovine leadership

The UK is one of the top 10 sheep-producing countries in the world, and the largest in Europe in terms of numbers and exports, with some 90 sheep breeds. Paraguay already has local producers breeding British breeds of sheep, such as Hampshire Down and Texel, the latter being a British-Dutch hybrid. This new achievement reaffirms Paraguay as a centre for the production of world-class sheep genetics.

United Kingdom offers export certification for:

- sheep semen and embryos to the 27 members of the European Union
- semen to Brazil, Canada and the United States
- semen and embryos to Chile, Guyana, Mexico, New Zealand and other countries

[Sheep leaflet](#) (PDF, 1.03MB, 8 pages)

[The Student Loans Company pays £2.6bn in funding to students across the UK](#)

Over £2.6bn has been paid to 1.1m students in the first term of the 22/23 academic year, according to figures released today* by the Student Loans Company (SLC).

The organisation, which administers student finance on behalf of the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, has now completed the majority of first term Maintenance Loan payments to students across the UK. Payments will continue to be made to students who are due to start courses in the coming weeks.

For the third year in a row SLC has increased the number of applications that it has had processed and ready to pay to students by term start.

Chris Larmer, Executive Director of Operations, at SLC said: "SLC exists to enable opportunity for students to invest in their future through access to trusted, transparent, flexible and accessible student finance services. We are pleased to have reached this important milestone where we have completed first term Maintenance Loan payments for the majority of students, ensuring they have started the new academic year with their funding in place."

Although the majority of students will now have received their first payment, not all of them will get their full entitlement straight away. Eligible applicants who applied late will be awarded the minimum Maintenance Loan amount first, followed by a top-up payment if they are entitled to more funding. Payment can only be released to students once their higher education

institution has confirmed their registration. [More information about applying late can be found here.](#)

SLC has continued to develop its provision of online information throughout this payment cycle – creating new resources including a common questions area, with a dedicated section on payment, which students can access via their online accounts.

Chris added: “September is always our busiest month, and this year has been no exception. We have experienced a high volume of calls and we are grateful to our customers for their patience when contacting us. We have made important improvements in our online experience this year – we are committed to improving our customer experience and this work will continue.

“Our focus now turns to paying Tuition Fees on behalf of students, with payments starting to be made to education providers from early November.”

SLC does not set the minimum or maximum amount of financial support that students can receive each academic year, however, the organisation is aware that many students will have concerns around this time about their finance and we will continue to help promote the support available to them.

For example, if a student’s application is income assessed and their household income has decreased by 15% or more since the last tax year, they can apply for a Current Year Income Assessment (CYI). This means their application can be reassessed using their estimated current tax year income instead. More information can be found at :

<https://www.gov.uk/support-child-or-partners-student-finance-application/current-year-income>. Students are also encouraged to check they have applied for the maximum amount of funding available to them which they can do via their online account.

Chris said: “We want to assure customers that we will support them as best we can. However, if a student is experiencing financial hardship, they should speak to their university or college in the first instance. They may be able to offer help and advice as well as access to financial support via hardship funding. They may also direct students to other organisations offering support.”

Further Information to help students understand their living costs can be found at [Understanding student living costs – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

*Please note these are provisional figures. Full year figures are published in SLC’s Student Support for Higher Education statistical release, which will be published on 24 November 2023.

UN Human Rights Council 51: UK statement on Syria

Thank you, Mr President,

I have the honour to present draft resolution L.18 on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of a group of states: France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Mr President,

Month after month, year after year, the situation on the ground in Syria continues to deteriorate before our very eyes. Human rights violations remain widespread and systematic. The now critical humanitarian situation is exacerbated by the insecurity which the regime and its backers continue to provoke.

The Commission of Inquiry recently warned this Council that we risk further dire consequences if this trajectory continues.

In our draft resolution, we specifically focus on developments in Syria over the last six months.

Targeted attacks on civilians, in their homes, at markets, have killed innocent women and children.

Civilians are being deprived of food, water, and the basic needs required simply to survive.

Those in detention continue to suffer appalling conditions, ill-treatment and torture.

Meanwhile families endure a different type of torture, that of not knowing if and when they will see ever their loved ones again.

Mr President,

This Council cannot turn away, cannot stay silent, when it comes to the regime's blatant disregard for the rights and lives of its people.

The resolution put forward today condemns the lethal violence inflicted on the Syrian people; demands that critical humanitarian aid is delivered without hindrance; and calls for further support for those seeking the fate of their loved ones, in the face of very real threats to their safety and their livelihoods.

Let me, Mr President, thank all those delegations who have engaged constructively in the informal consultations on this resolution.

Given the lives lost, the suffering endured and the unwillingness of the regime to protect the Syrian people, the very least this Council can do is to adopt this resolution. Together, we can send a message that the world has not forgotten the people of Syria.

If a vote is called on this resolution, I urge our fellow members of this Council to vote in favour of it.