

A global leader in the fight against corruption: Foreign Secretary statement to General Assembly

Mr President, your Excellencies,

Corruption is a scourge.

It is the acid burning away the rule of law, democracy and public trust in their institutions.

It stunts development, it drains poorer nations of their wealth, and keeps their people trapped in poverty.

Over 2% of global GDP is lost to corruption every single year.

And it adds 10% to the costs of doing business right around the world.

So, we really need to take action.

I'm proud that the UK is a global leader in the fight against corruption.

Since 2006 the National Crime Agency's International Corruption Unit has frozen, confiscated or returned over £1.1 billion of assets that were stolen from developing countries.

Most recently, we signed an agreement to return £4.2 million to Nigeria.

That was money that was recovered from associates of the former Governor of Nigeria's Delta State, James Ibori.

The UK was the first in the G20 to establish a public register of the beneficial owners of companies.

It was an important step in tackling the use of anonymous shell companies to move corrupt money around the world.

Over 4.6 million companies are now listed on that register.

Over 100 countries are now committed to some form of beneficial ownership transparency.

Four years ago, we established the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre in London...

Which has helped freeze over £300 million of suspected corrupt assets worldwide, and it has also led to dozens of arrests.

We know that the UK's status as a global financial centre makes us an attractive location for investment. That's hugely welcome.

But it also means that we must redouble our efforts to stop corrupt actors and their cronies from laundering their dirty money through British banks or British businesses.

So, with our Anti-Corruption Strategy we are pioneering innovative methods of asset recovery such as Unexplained Wealth Orders and Account Freezing Orders.

We imposed sanctions on individuals who have been involved in serious corruption from 6 different countries.

And that included sanctions slapped on 14 individuals involved in the \$230 million tax fraud in Russia, perpetrated by an organised criminal group, and disclosed by Sergei Magnitsky.

It includes sanctions on a Sudanese businessman for the misappropriation of state assets in one of the poorest countries in the world, fuelling instability and conflict.

Through asset freezes and travel bans, we can help prevent corrupt actors from using the UK as a haven for their dirty money, while also at the same time deterring corruption around the world.

But if we are going to stop corruption, it must first be exposed..

By the spotlight of the media and investigative journalists,

By strong civil society bodies,

And by the authorities who are prepared and able to act.

And we have got to stand up for these institutions.

So, the UK is the co-chair of the global Media Freedom Coalition which now has 47 countries signed up. We are dedicated to supporting journalists doing their vital work without fear or favour.

And through our G7 Presidency this year, we are taking action to strengthen open societies, shared values and the rules-based international order.

We have agreed a G7 statement for this Special Session that demonstrates our united resolve.

And G7 Interior Ministers will take further action on corruption in their meeting in September.

So, we urge all countries to follow through on the declaration that we have signed up to today, to deliver transparency of company ownership through establishing beneficial ownership registers, more open procurement, greater transparency in the management of public finances, and a safer environment for journalists to shine a light on corruption.

In addition to all of that, we call for the participation of NGOs and others in the UN Convention Against Corruption reviews, to make sure that that

process is as robust and as rigorous as it possibly can be.

Because corruption is not a victimless crime.

By lining their own pockets, corrupt actors cause untold damage and hardship on the countries and communities which they exploit for their own predatory greed.

We must work together to bring these corrosive practices to an end.

By doing so we will promote trust and certainty,

Boost investment to help re-build economies that work for everyone,

And take a vital step towards delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals.

And as a force for good in the world, global Britain will play our full role in that effort.

Calling on Russia to immediately cease its aggression against Ukraine and end its occupation of Crimea

The following is a joint statement by Albania, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Estonia, Federated States of Micronesia, Georgia, Marshall Islands, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Russia held its fourth informal Arria-formula meeting since December 2020 at the UN today to once again promote a false narrative about Ukraine. We regret Russia's deliberate and repeated misuse of the Arria-formula process to pervert the truth and obfuscate Russia's malign activities. As we saw today, Russia invited speakers sanctioned by UN member states for their violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's false narratives about Ukraine are part of a disinformation campaign designed to destabilize and divert the attention of the international community. We recognize and appreciate the statement by the European Union, further demonstrating the international community's unwavering support for Ukraine.

The 2014 Revolution of Dignity saw Ukrainians exercise their right to peaceful assembly, demand a prosperous, democratic, and peaceful Ukraine, and reject Moscow's influence. Russia's response was to brazenly violate international principles, occupying Crimea and launching the conflict in eastern Ukraine that it perpetuates to this day. Russia is a party to the

conflict, not a mediator. We fully support the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the Ukrainian people, and continue to work with the government of Ukraine to help it fulfill the demands of the Revolution of Dignity in the face of continued Russian aggression. We reaffirm our resolute commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters.

We call on Russia to immediately cease its aggression against Ukraine and end its occupation of Crimea and the egregious human rights abuses it inflicts on the Crimean population. We urge Russia to fulfill its Minsk commitments, including implementing an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawing its military personnel and materiel from the territory of Ukraine.

Calling on Russia to immediately cease its aggression against Ukraine and end its occupation of Crimea

The following is a joint statement by Albania, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Estonia, Federated States of Micronesia, Georgia, Marshall Islands, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Russia held its fourth informal Arria-formula meeting since December 2020 at the UN today to once again promote a false narrative about Ukraine. We regret Russia's deliberate and repeated misuse of the Arria-formula process to pervert the truth and obfuscate Russia's malign activities. As we saw today, Russia invited speakers sanctioned by UN member states for their violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's false narratives about Ukraine are part of a disinformation campaign designed to destabilize and divert the attention of the international community. We recognize and appreciate the statement by the European Union, further demonstrating the international community's unwavering support for Ukraine.

The 2014 Revolution of Dignity saw Ukrainians exercise their right to peaceful assembly, demand a prosperous, democratic, and peaceful Ukraine, and reject Moscow's influence. Russia's response was to brazenly violate international principles, occupying Crimea and launching the conflict in eastern Ukraine that it perpetuates to this day. Russia is a party to the conflict, not a mediator. We fully support the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the Ukrainian people, and continue to work with the government of Ukraine to help it fulfill the demands of the Revolution of Dignity in the face of continued Russian aggression. We reaffirm our resolute commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally

recognized borders and territorial waters.

We call on Russia to immediately cease its aggression against Ukraine and end its occupation of Crimea and the egregious human rights abuses it inflicts on the Crimean population. We urge Russia to fulfill its Minsk commitments, including implementing an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawing its military personnel and materiel from the territory of Ukraine.

Three quarters of UK adults vaccinated with first dose

- Over three quarters of UK adults have been vaccinated with a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine
- Public urged to come forward for second doses to help protect against the threat of new variants

More than three quarters of UK adults have received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, the latest figures published today (2 June) show, as the vaccination programme continues at pace.

Health services across the UK have now administered over 65.6 million vaccines between 8 December and 1 June, including over 39.5 million people with their first dose (75.2%) and over 26 million with both doses (49.5%), ensuring they have the strongest possible protection against COVID-19 from a second dose.

This week, G7 health ministers will gather ahead of the leader's summit where the Health Secretary will praise the fantastic efforts of the NHS, volunteers, and scientists over the last year in developing and rolling out the vaccine programme at pace.

The G7 Health Ministers' summit follows the announcement last week that Janssen's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine has been authorised for use by the UK medicines regulator, the MHRA. This is yet another weapon in the UK's fight against the pandemic. Earlier this year, the Janssen vaccine was shown to be 67% effective overall in preventing COVID-19 infection and 85% effective in preventing severe disease or hospitalisation.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am incredibly pleased that over three quarters of UK adults have had their first dose. This is an incredible step forward in the largest and most successful vaccination programme in our history.

Although we've come so far in less than 6 months since the world's

first authorised jab was given in the UK, our vital work is not done. We must redouble our efforts on the second dose to ensure as many people as possible have maximum protection.

We've brought forward appointments from 12 to 8 weeks for a second dose, and all over 30s are now eligible for the jab. I encourage everyone to come forward when the offer comes and play a part in getting us back to normality.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Three quarters of adults have been vaccinated with a first dose of the vaccine, a remarkable milestone.

I want to pay tribute to everyone involved who has helped deliver the vaccine into arms at record speed – the NHS and care staff, volunteers, pharmacists, civil servants and more – this was truly a momentous national effort.

The second dose is crucial to get maximum protection so please come forward for your second jab. It could save your life and protect your loved ones.

The government met its target of offering a vaccine to the most vulnerable by 15 April and remains on track to offer a first dose to all adults by the end of July, as well as vaccinating all adults over 50 with both doses by 21 June. NHS England has extended the offer of a vaccine to everyone over the age of 30, and people are encouraged to come forward and get their jab when called.

To ensure people have the strongest possible protection against COVID-19, appointments for second doses have been brought forward from 12 to 8 weeks for the remaining people in the top 9 priority groups who have yet to receive both doses.

The move follows updated advice from the independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which has considered the latest available evidence and has recommended reducing the dosing interval to counter the threat of new variants of concern. The government and its scientific experts are monitoring the evolving situation and rates of variants closely, and will not hesitate to take additional action as necessary.

A recent study by Public Health England (PHE) shows that 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against the B.1.617.2 variant first identified in India. Vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease from the B.1.617.2 variant is similar after 2 doses compared to the B.1.1.7 (Kent) variant dominant in the UK, and we expect to see even higher levels of effectiveness against hospitalisation and death.

Secretary of State for Scotland Alister Jack said:

This is further great news and shows just how hugely successful the UK government vaccination programme is.

We have procured and paid for millions of doses for people in all parts of the UK. With 4 vaccines now approved, and the rollout going well, we can all feel hopeful for the future.

The fight against COVID isn't over but, working as a team – from our amazing health workers, to the military, to everyone getting their jab when it's offered – the UK can beat this cruel pandemic.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

To have reached the milestone of over three quarters of UK adults having had their first dose of a vaccine is a remarkable achievement.

We have come impressively far in the last 6 months and my thanks go to all the dedicated and tireless individuals that have contributed their vital support to the national vaccine delivery effort.

While we celebrate today, there is still work yet to be done as we increase our efforts to ensure that lives are protected. I encourage you all to come forward when called and help us continue on our journey back to normality.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

This is fantastic news! Thanks to all the healthcare workers, armed forces, civil servants and volunteers who have helped us reach this milestone – a tremendous effort by all.

We have come so far but it is vitally important to attend your second vaccine appointment and receive your second dose – it will give you and those around you the best possible protection.

Vaccinated people are far less likely to get COVID-19 with symptoms. Vaccinated people are even more unlikely to get serious COVID-19, to be admitted to hospital, or to die from it and there is growing evidence that vaccinated people are less likely to pass the virus to others.

Data from PHE's real-world study shows the vaccines are already having a significant impact in the UK, reducing hospitalisations and deaths, saving more than 13,200 lives and preventing at least 39,700 hospitalisations in England.

PHE analysis also shows that individuals who receive a single dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine have approximately 80% lower risk of death against the B.1.1.7 coronavirus variant originating in Kent and a second dose of the vaccine can provide 85 to 90% protection against symptomatic disease. Protection against death from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine rises from approximately 80% after one dose to 97% after 2 doses against the Kent variant.

Data published by YouGov shows the UK continues to top the list of nations where people are willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine or have already been vaccinated. ONS data published on 6 May found that more than 9 in 10 (93%) adults reported positive sentiment towards the vaccine.

Approved vaccines are available from thousands of NHS vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid roll out.

The UK government is committed to supporting equitable access to vaccines worldwide. The UK is one of the largest donors to the COVAX facility, the global mechanism to help developing countries access a coronavirus vaccine, and has committed £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.

How we got here: lessons from the UK vaccine rollout

Over the last 18 months, faced with the greatest threat to public health in a lifetime, and with a pandemic of a scale not seen before in living memory, we've all battled as a society to get and keep COVID-19 under control. And that battle remains today.

We've faced the greatest challenges in peacetime, and the trade-offs between the most intrusive invasions of people's personal and economic lives, set against the need to protect life itself.

And with this extraordinary challenge faced by the whole of humanity, science held out one great hope.

And that hope is vaccination.

It's fitting that we're here at the Jenner Institute, here in Oxford, today at the start of this G7 health meeting.

Because it was Edward Jenner who first conceived of vaccination as the science of training the body's immune system and training the body's innate ability to fight disease, so immunity can come without the suffering of that disease.

Vaccination has saved more lives, and prevented more misery, than any other scientific endeavour.

Just stop for a minute.

Imagine a world without vaccines.

Imagine smallpox and measles running rife.

Imagine where we'd be now today without a vaccine against COVID-19.

Today, I want to reflect on this life-saving endeavour and give my perspective on how we've got this far.

The UK vaccination effort has without doubt been the best programme I've ever been involved with – it's been an honour. And I want to set out my thoughts on why, and why in this country we've managed to make the progress that we have.

Of course, this isn't over until it's over everywhere.

And while today I'll concentrate on the UK and the rollout here, for which I'm responsible, we must also play our part in the global vaccination rollout and I'll come onto the role we're playing in that too.

I'm very proud of how we were able to deploy the first ever clinically approved COVID vaccine and delivered 60 million doses of 3 different vaccines into 39 million arms.

As of midnight last night, I can confirm we've now given a first dose to three quarters of the adult population of the United Kingdom.

Lots of people stop me and ask me how we did all this.

So I thought I'd set it out as I see it.

I believe that the UK's vaccine success story is not an accident.

It was a result of the approach we took, decisions we made and decisions that we made before.

And I want to look both at what worked and also what didn't work.

Because one thing I've noticed in government is that when a something goes well, people often think everything went well. And it didn't...

I want to take a step back and reflect on this extraordinary project, the extraordinary team – the vaccine heroes as I call them – and the extraordinary response of the public.

Because ultimately this is a project that everybody's a part of.

Lots of people who have been involved in the programme have set out the thing they thought and they think is important to make the progress we have.

But the truth is it wasn't one thing. We had to get lots of things right.

For me, there are 4 lessons that I think we can take forward and I'd like to take a bit of time to go through them today.

Start early

The first lesson is to start early.

As soon as we started responding to this crisis, we knew that a vaccine would be the best long-term way out.

Even before the first COVID case arrived in the UK we'd started the work on how to develop and buy the vaccines that would ultimately make us safe.

I vividly remember the first meeting that we had about a potential vaccine in January 2020.

It was before COVID was even called COVID.

And it was just after we'd cracked the genomic sequence of the virus.

I was told in that meeting that a vaccine had never been developed against any human coronavirus.

That it would take at least 5 years to develop in normal times and that a vaccine may never work.

But this was too important to fail.

The attitude I had at that point was that the benefit of a vaccine would be so big that all the resources of the land should be at the disposal of the vaccines team. I hope that's how it felt to you.

I specifically remember, a then meek and somewhat timid professor turning to me when I asked how fast this could possibly be done.

And he said that if everything went right, then the very best we could hope for would be 12 to 18 months.

Who would have thought that just 11 months later, we'd be the first country in the world with a clinically authorised vaccine.

And that Professor, Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, would be turning down Strictly.

JVT also is one of the heroes of the vaccine programme, and we'll be meeting a few more later.

The team that made this happen dared to believe, and we set to work to turn that belief into reality.

So, we started early.

We put out a call for research in February.

By March, we were supporting 6 different projects including the Oxford vaccine of course, alongside the vital work on treatments, including the RECOVERY trial which led to the discovery of dexamethasone, the first proven treatment to reduce coronavirus mortality.

And these 2 projects alone, both out of Oxford in a large part, have already saved over a million lives globally.

We asked the early questions.

We had to be creative because nobody had done this before.

I remember asking, 'What will we regret not doing if we don't do it now?'

And the answers came back, legions of answers: we'll need freezers, syringes, glass vials; we'll need the best infrastructure for clinical trials; we'll need a supply chain, manufacturing and a massive deployment operation.

We knew that every day we took off the critical path to delivery meant thousands of lives, and billions of pounds, saved.

I was often told it was unlikely we'd get a vaccine until well into 2021.

But I knew that if everything went right we needed to be ready for deployment too and ready for early deployment.

People called me an optimist or worse.

And yes I'm an unapologetic optimist, but I'm a rational optimist.

In this project, we had to be interested in the Reasonable Worst Case Scenario, but we had to be interested in the Reasonable Best Case Scenario too because that threw up its own challenges.

Because if a vaccine came through within 12 months, we needed to be ready to deploy it into people's arms.

And I always believed that we could, especially with the power of the NHS.

There's another, often under-acknowledged, piece of work we started early too.

Which is about building trust.

All the procurement and logistics and science would have been for nothing if we couldn't build trust in the vaccine, and get people to come forward and roll up their sleeves.

But Britain's incredibly high levels of confidence around the vaccine aren't an accident, and weren't something we could take for granted.

We had to win trust.

Trust is a crucial component of any major project, and the way to win trust is through openness and honesty.

Being open about what we know and also about what we don't know.

So for instance we were up-front from the start that there would be side effects and that we'd have to manage them.

We levelled with people that vaccine supply is often lumpy, and so volumes would differ week on week.

And we were honest about the uncertainties, for instance that it'd take time to discover what impact new variants might have on any vaccine.

It's not easy to stand at a podium and say that there are questions we cannot yet answer.

Communicating uncertainty is hard, and no-one had ever faced anything like this.

Because this was a novel disease, about which we knew little and were – are – learning all the time.

The public get this.

So in my view the greatest respect you can give people is to give them the full picture, warts and all, right from the first moment.

I think this has paid off.

Vaccine confidence and, crucially, uptake rates in the UK are among the highest in the world, and I'm very proud of that fact.

We started early too on how we could make access to the vaccine fair.

Now I know there were a few eyebrows raised when I said that the film 'Contagion' shaped my thinking about our vaccine programme.

I should reassure Sir John Bell that it wasn't my primary source of advice, but when I watched the film a penny did drop for me.

Not just that a vaccine would be our way out the pandemic, but that the power of the vaccine would be so great, we would have to think very hard about who to protect and in what order.

I knew that some of the most difficult moments of the pandemic would not be before the vaccine was approved, but afterwards, when the scramble for vaccines had begun.

Now we Brits love queueing. And there's nothing more upsetting than someone jumping the queue.

So, again, we started planning early to make sure this was fair. And spent time preparing for how to organise the rollout in as fair a way as possible.

The clinically advised prioritisation for getting vaccines in arms has been critical to, I believe, securing trust in the programme overall.

Because it has helped demonstrate that the system is fair.

So we acted early to reassure people that in the finest tradition of the values of the NHS, vaccines would be given according to need, not ability to pay.

Whether you're the Prime Minister or a Premier League footballer, or the future King of England, you'd have to wait your turn, just like everyone else.

Some people thought that it was strange that I didn't get the vaccine right at the start of the programme – and in fact, I was criticised for this on the grounds that would help to boost confidence, and, yes, we did have to boost confidence, but we also had to build confidence the vaccine programme was fair.

So I waited my turn with everyone else.

Together with the JCVI, who under the leadership of Professor Wei Shen Lim, did so much to promote confidence in our vaccination programme, we announced back in August how we'd prioritise our rollout, months before we even knew if a vaccine would work.

And making clear that we'd prioritise the most vulnerable, like frontline health and care colleagues and residents in our care homes, and proceeding on an age basis because that is how the disease strikes.

We made sure everyone understood where in the queue they'd be, and crucially why we were put in that order, so we could protect the people most in need of protection.

And therefore save as many lives as possible. So the first lesson for me is to start early.

Draw on your strengths

The second lesson is that at a time of crisis you must draw on your strengths.

In some areas of our pandemic response, we didn't have great strengths to start with.

And in vaccines, we had some significant gaps too, like the capacity to manufacture on-shore or enough people to deploy the vaccine at such scale.

But we had, and have, some serious strengths too, and we've relied on them as much as we possibly could and we've put weight on these great strengths that we have as a country.

First, we have a universal healthcare system with a trusted brand in the NHS.

The NHS, under the steadfast leadership of Sir Simon Stevens who has done a remarkable role in this pandemic, has performed with distinction, and it has deserved every plaudit that has come its way.

Without this common, trusted health system across the UK, and its universal nature embedded in every community in the land, and its experience of running the flu vaccine programme every year, which delivers typically 15 million doses, we couldn't have delivered such a rapid and efficient rollout.

And of course in Oxford we couldn't have delivered such a rapid and a powerful response without our scientific strength.

And this scientific strength we must remember has been built up over centuries, and the reason why the UK has this great scientific capability is not because of recent decisions but consistent decisions over years and years and years.

This strength is built over generations, and we must always invest in it.

In 2015, for instance, we set up the UK Vaccines Network, chaired by Professor Chris Whitty, in response to the ebola pandemic in West Africa, to invest in developing vaccines against unknown future threats.

Thanks to this work, we invested in a candidate for MERS, which was adapted to become the underlying technology for the Oxford vaccine.

The lesson from this is you need a broad range of research, because you never know which bit of science is going to save you next time.

We had the infrastructure on which to build some of the most successful clinical trials for COVID-19.

Not only because we're home to some of the best universities, and the best researchers, but because we did everything in our power to support clinical trials in the funding of the NIHR, another team of vaccine heroes, and of course the NHS, and we chose not to pre-judge their outcomes no matter how tempting that was at the time.

Backing clinical trials isn't empty rhetoric, I know this for myself. The pressures to end trials early before they properly readout is intense in the heat of a crisis.

But we didn't – we backed the science.

We built on what we'd learnt from the RECOVERY trial; in July, we created the Vaccine Research Registry, a register of people who were ready and willing to take part in the large scale clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines.

Over 500,000 people have signed up on the NHS website, which I think frankly is amazing.

This is half a million people remember who are willing to take an unknown vaccine in order to save other people's lives.

Many vaccine manufacturers have told us that they found this registry invaluable in allowing rapid recruitment for clinical trials, and so overall we tried to promote a supportive environment that means that the majority of vaccine candidates including Oxford, Valneva and Novavax have been trialled here in the UK.

This shows the prize when you get the research right and you double-down on those strengths.

And I'd like to pay tribute here to another vaccine hero, Professor Chris Whitty, because he has been involved in this drive since before the start and he has driven the research programme that has saved lives right across the world.

Another team who are vaccine heroes are our first-rate regulators. Throughout this crisis, the MHRA, under the brilliant stewardship of Dr June Raine, has excelled, and been a global model for how to regulate. And in fact Andrew Pollard was taking me around the Oxford science labs earlier today and explaining, each time he mentioned the regulator, our regulator is dynamic and flexible and helps science to proceed.

They're everything a Health Secretary could want.

They're rigorously independent, they don't waver when it comes to upholding strong standards, and they're out there in public, as a trusted voice to respond to concerns.

They're also agile and responsive, and from the get-go they committed to me that they'd do everything in their power to remove barriers on the critical path.

I remember June Raine saying to me at the start of this pandemic that 'we'll go as fast as we safely can, Matt'.

And that's exactly what they've done, with an emphasis on fast and safe.

In short, the MHRA regulates for safety, not bureaucracy.

For example, they invented a process so they could look at clinical trial data through a rolling review as the trials went on, rather than waiting for a final submission of a package of data at the end which takes months off the critical path for regulatory approval without compromising on scrutiny.

The lesson I take away from this is that the quality of our regulators gives the UK a real competitive advantage, and saves lives.

The MHRA has shown how innovation and regulation are not mutually exclusive.

And I know that regulators all around the world are looking to learn from the MHRA, and the pivotal part they played in our response.

One other of our greatest strengths I want to touch on is the strength of our Union.

Just as we're adopting a UK-wide approach to expanding testing capacity and procuring PPE for every corner of the UK, this vaccination programme is for the whole UK.

We negotiated and bought vaccines for the whole country.

We allocated them according to need.

We worked with the NHS, with devolved administrations, with local councils everywhere.

And we called upon the logistical heft of the British Armed Forces to get them in arms.

Again, this did not happen by accident.

The devolved administrations are, of course, run by different political parties.

And although health is devolved, the virus doesn't respect administrative boundaries.

So I was determined to overcome political differences so we could deliver for citizens, wherever they lived, across the country.

Like everyone, I've come to love Zoom.

But it wasn't easy getting this UK-wide approach.

Right at the start of last March, before we entered lockdown, I decided I had to go and see each of the devolved health ministers face-to-face.

It was so important that we all got on the same page about the importance of this project.

So, although life was pretty hectic last March, I took 24 hours to fly to Edinburgh, to Belfast, to Cardiff to sit down with each health minister.

That 24 hours has proved to be invaluable in strengthening those relationships, and it's been one of the most useful 24 hours in the pandemic.

I have led a call every week since with the 4 of us.

And, frankly, it's sometimes been a bit like group therapy.

The importance of the Union has never been clearer than in the UK vaccination effort.

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland drew on our collective scale, and our collective strengths, to deliver one collective vaccination programme.

It's only because we worked collectively like this together as one United Kingdom that we were able to pull this off for everyone from Scilly to Shetland.

The Union has saved lives, and we're safer across the whole country as a result.

Take and manage risks

And this takes me onto the third lesson, which is about risk. Risk taking doesn't always come naturally to the public sector. In my view, the biggest risk would have been the failure to find a vaccine at all.

So we explicitly embraced risk early on.

So while I believed this project would succeed, I knew no-one could do it on their own.

And we needed to build a culture that embraced and managed risk rather than shying away from it. A culture that sought forgiveness, not permission. And empowered people to take the call rather than back off making a decision.

I think this is a lesson for any organisation – public or private, large or small.

This doesn't mean being rash. It means being brave, using judgement, and the best possible data to drive decision making.

This wasn't like buying any other commodity product.

We couldn't just pick up the phone and place an order.

So we had to back lots of horses and invested at risk.

But as Vince Lombardi, one of the greatest ever American football coaches, said: 'You miss 100 per cent of the shots that you don't take.'

And so we took plenty of shots, with the unwavering backing of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. We put hundreds of millions of pounds at risk.

And not all of them came off. Some are still in early trials and are far away from deployment.

But the important thing is that some of the risks did come off.

We didn't just take the risks. We then managed them.

And instead of sitting back and waiting to see which vaccines succeeded, we were tenacious in helping them to get over the line, drawing on the abundant

industry experience in our team.

We offered funding for the early manufacture of the vaccines, before we knew whether they would work.

We backed manufacturing plants as well to try and put right the problem of not having enough on-shore manufacturing in the UK. Like funding the Valneva facility in Livingston and sending a team to help the Halix plant in the Netherlands to scale up.

And we helped to bring together Oxford University and AstraZeneca and bring them to the table, in a partnership which has been a lifeline, not just here, but also right across the developing world.

As we're here in Oxford today, I just wanted to say a few words about the global impact of the work taking place here.

The Oxford vaccine, developed by brilliant science here in Oxford, linked with AstraZeneca's industrial might, backed by the support of the UK Government, all coming together to invest in this vaccine and together make it available at cost, this is in my view the greatest gift that this nation could have given the world during this pandemic.

A vaccine that's available at cost, with no charge for intellectual property.

And that because it can be stored simply, offers hope for the developing world.

So, as well as the money that we've donated – like giving over half a billion pounds to COVAX, which has now shipped 80 million doses to 125 countries and territories – we've also given the world the vaccine which makes up 96 per cent of the COVAX programme so far.

And as of today, I can confirm over half a billion doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine have now been released for supply globally, the majority of them in lower and middle income countries.

So thank you to Oxford University, the team here, Louise, Sir John, Andrew Pollard, Sarah Gilbert, and everyone here at Oxford and everyone at AstraZeneca, Pascal and his whole team, should be incredibly proud of the sheer scale of that achievement, delivering half a billion doses across the world.

But it ain't over yet.

This project was never just about investing in a vaccine for the UK. It is about a vaccine for the whole world.

As the global debate, including here at the G7, increasingly turns to how to vaccinate the whole world, I passionately believe that the single biggest contribution we can make is this vaccine, safe and effective, and at cost. I'm delighted too that Pfizer said they will deliver at cost to low income countries and pay tribute to Albert Bourla for that decision.

Right here at the Jenner, the holy trinity of academia, industry and government came together to invest in the research, and to develop and deliver a vaccine.

And we should all be so proud that this vaccine has now been delivered in 168 different countries across the world.

This was a true partnership, and where we worked together as partners we succeed because we asked people what we they could do to support them in our shared mission.

But there's still more to do, our work isn't over yet.

We're still procuring all the time, and planning what we need to keep our country safe for the long-term, including new vaccines specifically targeted at variants of concern.

I can tell you all today that we've started commercial negotiations with AstraZeneca to secure a variant vaccine: future supplies of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine that have been adapted to tackle the B.1.351 variant first identified in South Africa.

Once again, we're leading the way and backing projects with potential, so we can keep our vaccination programme one step ahead of the virus, and protect the progress we've all made.

Back the team

The fourth lesson I want to touch on is that we worked together as a big, diverse, yet cohesive team.

Frankly it's the finest team that I've ever been involved in.

On the 2nd December, when the MHRA authorised the Pfizer vaccine, and all eyes turned to our rollout, I knew deep down that everything would be OK.

And I knew that because I knew I could rely on the team.

Thanks to the forensic preparations we'd made, we were ready to put vaccines in arms.

And just 6 days later start a rollout that had been months in the planning.

It was an incredibly emotional moment, seeing the first vaccine in the world being given.

And I know so many people feel the same about their jab.

This isn't just an important project and a scientific project, it's an emotional project as well.

Whenever I visit vaccination centres I see what this vaccine means to people.

I've seen the cakes and cards that the staff give and the smiles on people's faces.

I've felt the pride of the volunteers, who do so much and a year ago could never have dreamed they'd be putting jabs in arms, and are now fully trained up as an essential part of our team.

And I've witnessed the joy, the joy and the gratitude of the people who've been shielding for months on end, and now know they now have the chance to live the life they used to live it, as they want to live it.

The success of this programme can't just be measured in terms of charts and spreadsheets.

Our vaccination programme has given people hope for the future, and confidence that we can eventually put this pandemic behind us.

And I'm so proud of everybody involved.

The local authorities, the GPs, NHS colleagues, the armed forces, all the volunteers including St John Ambulance, and many, many others who stepped up in the delivery, as well as the scientists and industrialists who have made it happen.

A major reason for our success was because we'd brought in the right people, but crucially with the right mindset, and we weren't ideological about where they came from.

We were prepared to work with anyone, as long as they shared our mission.

And we opened our doors to everyone who could help.

I just want to draw out one particular insight I got from this. The old argument that's sometimes been made, that only the public sector can act in the public good, and so there's no place for the private sector in public health.

That argument has been shown to be completely false.

Even though we were embarking on a big and complex project, we knew we needed the soul of a start-up, albeit one with 66 million customers in the first instance.

We had to move fast, embrace change and learn quickly from our mistakes.

And take some of the risks that I've been talking about.

We had to bring the best people to the table, focussing not on where they come from, but on what they could offer.

And of course our Vaccines Taskforce symbolised this, and I want to say a word about Vaccines Taskforce.

Last April, with Sir Patrick Vallance, whose scientific and industry

expertise was invaluable to our response, with Sir Patrick we worked to pull together a team with all the different disciplines that were needed, in one place, with one mission.

The idea was that the Vaccines Taskforce combined academic excellence and rigour with private sector entrepreneurial drive and civil service grip – meaning we could draw on all the skills, and contacts, we needed to make it happen.

It was a true centre of excellence, and we couldn't have done it without them, and the brilliant people that were there and many who are still there driving our effort today.

Like the supply chain and logistical know-how of Ruth Todd; the commercial acumen of Maddy McTernan; the project management of Nick Elliot, and his ability to make the complex things seem simple; the unrivalled problem solving ability of Ian Mcubbin; the scientific expertise of Clive Dix.

And of course the inspirational leadership of Kate Bingham.

I clearly remember calling Kate to ask her to take the job of Chair. And I said, 'Kate, there is nothing more important in the country right now than getting this right.'

And I was confident that she had what it took to drive this forward, and meld the best possible team.

And it's this diverse team, diverse in background and perspectives, and it helped create one of the most diverse vaccine portfolios in the world.

Because we didn't put all our eggs in one basket.

We backed many different technologies according to how good we thought they'd be.

And we didn't just back British, but we bought vaccines from all around the world.

It is impossible to give a speech like this without saying a huge thank you to everybody at the Vaccines Taskforce.

The final point I want to make is this.

Another crucial factor in melding the team was it was mission driven.

A common mission galvanises teamwork, co-operation and action to deliver results.

Four years ago, a professor of management from Wharton Business School published an academic study looking at the success of Kennedy's space programme and why – and I quote – why 'many employees said during that period they were involved in more meaningful work than they had ever experienced before and would ever experience again'.

He found that in a 400,000-strong team, 'even people who were quite far removed from the famous goal of landing a man on the moon reported feeling an incredible connection to this ultimate goal'.

He noticed that because everyone had a concrete goal to work towards and, crucially, understood the part they played in helping, in this case NASA, achieve it.

They saw their work not as a task or short-term thing they had to do, but pursuit of a long-term goal.

This insight is especially important when fighting a pandemic.

When you're facing something no-one's ever faced before, when social distancing means physical separation, and when much of our response was being co-ordinated from kitchens and living rooms and bedrooms across the land, the risk of people feeling isolated or disconnected was greater than ever so you had to meld the team.

So, we cast aside lofty and imprecise objectives and mission statements and just gave ourselves a series of big hairy audacious goals.

Just as Kennedy narrowed NASA's open-ended goals to concentrate on one objective, 'landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth', we set the goal to have a vaccine deployed by Christmas.

We would secure vaccines for the UK.

We would help secure vaccines for the whole world.

And we would make the UK better prepared for future pandemics.

We started with that outcome, that mission we needed to achieve, and worked from there.

And we were able to block out the noise, and focus on what needed to be done.

And everybody knew their role and crucially everybody mattered.

This was not a project where you could artfully pass the baton from one stage to the next.

As JVT put it in his own inimitable way, 'We had lots of witches stirring the pot at the same time.'

So we needed clear accountability for who was doing what – clearly defined roles and responsibilities – so everyone understood their roles, and so people didn't get in each other's way.

And it worked.

The NIHR trialled, the VTF procured, the NHS deployed, and of course ministers had overarching accountability for decision making.

And critically – and critically for government, this is a really important lesson – we gave people the space and the authority to deliver.

Authority was delegated to the lowest possible level, and we empowered people with the confidence to make decisions themselves.

Take for instance the brilliant operational leadership from Emily Lawson, and appointing Nadhim Zahawi as Minister for Deployment, bringing to bear his commercial experience, making sure a single person at ministerial level was there 24/7 to take decisions and unblock things.

And within our wider team, we were blessed to have people with experience of running massive vaccination plans every year.

Some of the best scientific brains and people with experience of working on major commercial contracts.

I saw my role as allowing people to make the best use of their expertise, protecting them from interference and creating the right conditions for them to do their job.

Encouraging them to make the best choices, not sending down rigid edicts from on high.

The team who worked on our vaccination programme was the single greatest asset that we had.

We had the right people in the right roles at the right time, giving us the expertise and the energy we needed to make this programme a success and all tied to one mission.

And I'm so grateful to every single one of them involved.

Taking this forward

These are the lessons I draw from the success of the vaccine programme.

Start early.

Draw on your strengths.

Take and manage risks.

Back the team.

And if you ask me the one thing that draws this all together, it's positivity.

We were positive in our planning, setting big goals that we knew would stretch us.

We created a positive team, with can-do culture and an attitude that when things went wrong the question wasn't who to blame but how can we fix it.

And we promoted positivity about getting the vaccine to protect yourself, your loved ones and local community.

I'm sure there are many, many more lessons, and I hope everyone involved should tell their story too.

There was no one single reason why this programme has been so far such a success.

No single solution.

Success has been the result of so many people, from so many walks of life, stepping up at a time of adversity to thwart this virus, save lives, and get us on the road to recovery.

Conclusion

Now, we must need to draw on what we've achieved together, and the way we've forged a path for others all around the world, and take forward the lessons we've learnt, to finish our fight against this virus, and face with confidence the challenges ahead.