

# Freight transport in the context of COVID-19: joint statement by the United Kingdom, France and Ireland

Government response

Statement by UK Secretary of State for Transport, French Minister of State for Transport and Irish Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.



The United Kingdom, Ireland and France are linked together by trade which is centuries old, and which has thrived through the most difficult of times. Our collective well-being depends on those who move freight between our nations. These are crucial economic and social links which we must maintain.

The current COVID-19 crisis presents a threat to the movement of goods if we do not act.

We recognize the importance of the partnership between our nations at this difficult time. That is why we make this joint statement to affirm our wish to ensure freight keeps moving, which remains essential during this crisis.

Ireland has already announced an intervention in support of some critical routes on the continental and southern corridors from Ireland. The UK has made an announcement of [support for critical routes into and out of the UK](#). France intends to support these efforts during the COVID-19 crisis and thereby contribute to maintaining links with the European continent as a whole.

We have initiated a dialogue between our three governments during this crisis to strengthen partnership and share best practices. Residents, workers and businesses should be reassured by our shared commitment.

Working together in partnership is important at this difficult time to help keep freight flowing between and through our countries.

Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport, United Kingdom

Jean-Baptiste Djebbari, Minister of State for Transport, attached to the Minister for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition, France

Shane Ross, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Ireland

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## Tourism Minister's speech at the Extraordinary G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting on Covid-19

At the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to the people of Saudi Arabia, and all those observing Ramadan. 'Ramadan Kareem', and 'Kul aam wa antum bikhair'.

Firstly I would like to echo others' comments in thanking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and His Excellency Mr Ahmed Al-Khateeb for organising this virtual meeting.

In the UK as in other countries, our primary focus has been on saving lives and protecting the health of our citizens. But we want to mitigate the impact of the virus on all aspects of society and the economy.

Just like many other countries, Tourism is a great contributor to our economy. In fact, it sustains about 10% of GDP.

Time does not allow me to set out in detail the full range of Government interventions but the economic support most relevant to the tourism and hospitality sector largely falls into two categories.

To support businesses struggling with liquidity, the UK Government has announced:

- Deferral of VAT payments for firms.
- £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans
- A Retail, hospitality and leisure cash grants scheme; and a business rates relief programme and
- Protection for commercial tenants at risk of eviction.

On employment protection we have set up:

- A Job Retention Scheme where employers can apply for a government grant to cover 80% of workers' salaries; and
- A scheme to support Self-Employed workers.
- In addition, we have launched an emergency fund to support local tourism

management organisations through this period.

I am in regular discussions with the tourism industry about what their priorities are for the recovery period. This includes how businesses can operate while there are still social distancing measures in place; what further guidance is needed; and whether there is a need for tapered support as businesses adjust.

With nearly 40 million inbound visitors per year, International visitors play a hugely important part of the UK visitor economy and we look forward to welcoming visitors back when it is safe to do so.

The UK is also a key market for outbound travel. UK citizens take 70 million overseas trips each year and once international travel restrictions start to be lifted, there is likely to be considerable demand for travel. I fully support the content of the G20 declaration that when international travel resumes, it needs to be done safely and we need to rebuild consumer confidence.

And that is where this forum can be incredibly helpful. I look forward to working closely with all of you as we help this major global industry recover, and I hope to meet you all in person as soon as circumstances allow.

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## [UK Government package to protect ferry freight routes](#)

News story

The £17 million scheme includes services in and out of Cairnryan



UK Government package will protect ferry routes

Vital ferry routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland have been safeguarded, thanks to a multi-million-pound UK Government scheme to help

ensure critical freight can continue to move into and across the Union.

The package, worth up to £17m, is being funded by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. It will be made available to operators so that they can continue running freight services on five sea routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic.

UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Essential supplies are continuing to flow well, but operators are facing challenges as fewer people travelling means less capacity to move goods.

Today's action will help ensure we have the freight capacity we need across the UK. This funding will help ferry operators protect our supply chain and maintain the flow of critical goods across the Irish Sea and throughout the Union.

The funding package includes support for the ferry services running between Cairnryan and Larne and Cairnryan and Belfast. Welcoming the announcement, Secretary of State for Scotland Alister Jack, said:

We have been clear that the UK Government will do what is necessary to protect our economy during the current Coronavirus pandemic. That includes safeguarding the essential ferry routes between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

I know just how vital the busy services in and out of Cairnryan are. It is essential we keep them going for the economies of both Northern Ireland and the South West of Scotland.

The UK Government's Department for Transport has also announced that thousands of volunteers, vehicles, aircraft and ships from the transport sector have been placed on standby in a new "Transport Support Unit" to assist frontline responders during the crisis across the whole of the UK.

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## **G20 Labor and Employment Ministers' Statement on COVID-19**

The outbreak and spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) is an unprecedented global

challenge that requires a coordinated global response. At the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit held on 26th March 2020, in the spirit of solidarity, our Leaders committed to do whatever it takes to overcome this pandemic and determined to spare no effort, both individually and collectively, to tackle the intertwined health, social and economic impact and to safeguard people's jobs and income. In accordance with our Leaders' commitment and determination we, the G20 Labor and Employment Ministers, will continue to work together and in coordination with other G20 ministers to develop and implement comprehensive, effective measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on domestic and global labor markets and societies. Fighting and overcoming the pandemic is our highest and over-riding priority.

As part of the responses to the coronavirus outbreak, workers and their families across the globe are confronted with the need for hospitalization, quarantine, physical distancing measures, restrictions on travel, and mobility. In addition, due to both the imperative health measures taken and repercussions of the pandemic on economic activity, workers are facing elevated risks of job losses, reduced working hours, suspended employment relations and income loss. We will make every effort to protect our workers, particularly those who are considered vulnerable and not covered by adequate social protection. We will make every effort to avoid leaving them even further behind. As such, we cannot allow COVID-19 to widen inequalities, including gender inequalities, in the labor market and erode progress made thus far.

We will continue, in full global co-operation, to take a human-centered approach to promote employment, bolster social protection, stabilize labor relations, and promote the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work amid the pandemic prevention and control measures, with actions being taken in accordance with our national circumstances. Employment should be given priority in developing macroeconomic policy packages, and coordination between employment and other policy responses is important. In addition to protecting jobs and income, we will ensure that our social protection systems are sufficiently robust and adaptable to provide adequate support for all workers in need, regardless of their employment status, age, or gender. We will also continue to ensure the provision of adequate measures to protect workers, particularly for healthcare workers and those in other essential services who are most exposed to risks brought by COVID-19 through occupational safety and health measures and we will continue to promote decent work, including in global supply chains.

Our countries will continue to explore ways to support businesses and employers, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), to be able to maintain employment and support affected workers through this challenging period. Measures will be developed in accordance with national circumstances and may include cash transfers, tax credits, grants, loans, and wage subsidies. We are already seeing these measures introduced in many G20 members and across the world. In addition, we will provide guidance and support to employers to enable them to take effective steps to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on their operations, resources, supply chains, and especially their workforces.

We will work with key stakeholders in order to maximize the impact of our efforts. We will work with other G20 tracks to ensure that actions at the national and international level stimulate the economy and boost employment creation and retention. We recognize the importance of social dialogue and working in cooperation with the social partners on appropriate responses to the pandemic. Experience shows us that in times of crisis, social dialogue with workers' and employers' organizations results in responsive and durable solutions. Already, G20 Members are finding innovative ways of engaging in dialogue despite the social isolation we must endure.

We recognize and appreciate the contribution of International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank Group (WBG) and will continue to seek their advice, as appropriate, to resolve short-term crises and to plan for medium and long-term recovery. In line with the G20 Leaders' Statement and the G20 Action Plan, we ask the ILO and the OECD to monitor and report on the impact of COVID-19 on employment and the effectiveness of the measures being taken across the world to mitigate its impact.

We will work relentlessly to share, devise and implement effective measures to reduce and negate the impact of COVID-19 on our labor markets, societies and wider economies, always remembering that our primary responsibility is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our workers and their families.

We stand ready to meet again as needed to monitor progress and consider additional actions and commitments to aid the recovery of our labor markets and sustain progress against our common G20 goals.

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## **UK leads way as nations endorse landmark pledge to make coronavirus vaccines and treatments available to all**

- UK is one of 20 countries and global organisations, like the WHO, to pledge to give the world access to new vaccines and treatments
- Pledge follows calls from the PM and UK Ministers for greater global co-operation in fight against coronavirus
- UK will also virtually co-host new Coronavirus Global Response Summit on 4 May 2020

Countries from around the world today (Friday, 24 April) joined the UK in pledging to give everyone equal access to new coronavirus vaccines and

treatments around the world. The move is aimed at boosting global supply of the vaccine, once one is approved for use, to help prevent a second wave of the pandemic.

At the World Health Organization virtual launch event today, First Secretary of State Dominic Raab joined the UN Secretary General, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General and the leaders from the 20 countries, including France, South Africa and Malaysia to pledge the UK's support for the new "COV-access agreement".

This is an unprecedented global agreement between international health organisations and countries. It follows calls from the UK for the countries to work together, including at last month's G20 meeting.

The UK is one of the biggest supporters of the global effort to find a coronavirus vaccine, providing £250 million to international research on the disease to the Centre for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. It is also one of the biggest supporters of the WHO and Gavi, the Global Vaccine Alliance, which distributes vaccines in the poorest countries.

UK scientists at Oxford and Imperial College London Universities are also leading efforts to develop a working vaccine. Human trials started this week in Oxford, and the government has given £42.5 million in funding to support clinical trials at both institutions.

The UK confirmed today that it will co-host a Coronavirus Global Response Summit on 4 May, aiming to raise £7 billion to develop vaccines, treatments and tests to help end the coronavirus pandemic.

It was also announced that the UK will host the major the Global Vaccines Summit virtually on the 4th June, to ensure Gavi is fully funded and at the heart of our efforts to ensure equitable access for any vaccine.

Speaking to other leaders in a video message alongside the UN Secretary General and WHO Director General this afternoon First Secretary of State Dominic Raab said:

The UK is already one of the biggest donors to the international COVID-19 response, and today we are proud to support the WHO's Call to Action to bring global health partners together to accelerate progress toward a vaccine.

[Video message from UN Secretary General, WHO Director General and First Secretary of State Dominic Raab](#)

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

British expertise and funding is already leading efforts to find a coronavirus vaccine and treatments, which will save lives in the UK and around the world.

Following calls from the Prime Minister it is great to see other nations working collectively in the fight against coronavirus.

Making sure vaccines, treatments, technologies are available in the most vulnerable countries is vital to ending the pandemic – keeping us, and the rest of the world safe from future infections.

## **“COV-access agreement”**

The new commitment in the agreement follow continued international lobbying from the UK for more global co-operation on the pandemic, including at last week’s G20 finance and World Bank meetings, and includes pledges to:

1. Provide access to new treatments, technologies and vaccines across the world
2. Commit to an unprecedented level of international partnership on research and coordinate efforts to tackle the pandemic and reduce infections
3. Reach collective decisions on responding to the pandemic, recognising that the virus’ spread in one country can affect all countries
4. Learn from experience and adapt the global response
5. Be accountable, to the most vulnerable communities and the whole world.

As part of this agreement the WHO also announced the appointment of two new Special Envoys to lead global co-operation on vaccine research and help ensure equal access to any successful vaccines. Sir Andrew Witty, the British former head of global drugs giant GSK was appointed alongside Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Board Chair of Gavi.

A new “COV-access Hub” was also announced by the WHO to support co-operation on the research, development and production of new vaccines, treatments and technologies to fight coronavirus.

## **Notes to Editors**

The countries supporting the WHO-led global pledge today include the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Malaysia and South South Africa.

To date the UK has contributed £744 million to the international fight against coronavirus. This includes support for UK and international research into treatments and technologies and £250 million to the Centre for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations which funding international research to find a vaccine.

The [Prime Minister announced the CEPI funding](#) on the 26 March virtual G20 leaders meeting, calling on other leaders to collaborate on international research into a vaccine and ensure it could be made available to all.

The UK is also the largest supporter of Gavi, the Global Vaccine Alliance, which has immunized 760 million children in the world’s poorest countries, saving 13 million lives.



Earlier this week (21 April) Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced £20 million of Government support for clinical human trials into a vaccine run from Oxford University.

Earlier this month the UK government launched a new Vaccine Taskforce, led by Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance and Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor Jonathan van Tam, which will drive forward and co-ordinate efforts to research and produce a coronavirus vaccine, and make sure one is made available to the public as quickly as possible.

As well as supporting vaccine research in the UK, the Taskforce will build on the UK's research and development expertise to support international efforts to find a coronavirus vaccine.