

Global food crisis and climate change compound the humanitarian situation in the Sahel

Thank you Mr President. Like others, we would like to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency this month and congratulate Albania for their excellent stewardship of the Council in June.

We welcome the Special Representative back to the chamber and thank him for his very helpful update. We also welcome the presence of the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and thank Ms Magagi for her briefing.

Mr President, as we have heard there have been some positive developments since we last met. The peaceful elections in the Gambia and Senegal are a welcome example of progress in West African democracy.

We remain very concerned by the political situation in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Although the recent progress made on election timelines in Mali and Burkina Faso is encouraging. Sustained progress towards the organisation of credible elections and a return to constitutional order is vital.

The UK encourages UNOWAS to continue to focus on democratic election processes across the region, in close coordination with ECOWAS and the AU. We also welcome the focus we heard today on boosting women's participation in these processes.

Mr President, it is also clear from today's briefing that the security situation in the region remains fragile. Progress in the Gulf of Guinea is welcome but the UK remains concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Nigeria, the central Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, and by ongoing conflict, including involving extremist groups. The presence in the region of mercenary groups including Wagner is a dangerous, destabilising factor.

We encourage UNOWAS to focus on the practical steps the UN can take, in a coordinated fashion, to address the root causes of conflict, including through the implementation of the UN integrated strategy for the Sahel, as the Special Representative said.

The UK, for our part, is committed to working with Nigeria to respond through our Security and Defence partnership, and to supporting long-term stability in Mali and the wider Sahel including through our contribution to MINUSMA. Like others, I'd like to take this opportunity to offer our deep condolences for the deadly attack on Egyptian peacekeepers last week.

Mr President I also want to focus today on the humanitarian situation, given the worrying developments we've heard.

We are particularly concerned about the food security situation, especially

where humanitarian access is restricted, and where the effects of the global food crisis and climate change compound the situation.

The UK is committed to improving the humanitarian situation including through providing over \$200 million of development assistance across the Sahel between 2019 and 2021.

The UK calls on all actors to continue cooperation with UNOWAS at the national and regional levels to facilitate humanitarian access. We hope the SRSB can use his good offices role to work with all parties to conflict, and the wider UN system, to ensure safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors.

Finally, Mr President, we are concerned by the challenging human rights situation outlined in the latest report from the Secretary-General. We urge UNOWAS to continue to work with states to ensure accountability and improved compliance with international human rights standards.

Thank you.

Tougher protections for journalism added to online safety laws

- Further boost to journalism protections in world-leading internet safety laws
- Requirement to keep news articles up even if under review by moderators
- Platforms must notify news publishers and offer a right of appeal before taking any action

People's access to trusted, high-quality journalism online is to get a further boost as the government adds stronger press protections to its pioneering Online Safety Bill.

An amendment to the Bill tabled by ministers last night is designed to guard against the arbitrary removal of articles from journalists at recognised news outlets when shared on social media platforms.

[According to Ofcom](#), half of UK adults use social media for news, with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram the most popular platforms for this purpose. The internet is the most-used platform for news consumption among 16-24 year-olds and people from minority ethnic groups. □

But news content has been removed or made less visible by social media moderators or algorithms for unclear reasons, often at the height of news cycles. For example, last year Youtube suddenly removed TalkRadio's channel then reinstated it 12 hours later, admitting the move had been a mistake.

The measures will help address this situation and are an extra layer of protection to the safeguards already written into the Bill for online journalism.

The Bill currently would not stop platforms from removing news publishers' content or making it less visible if they decided to review it for potential breaches of their terms and conditions, even if they eventually found no fault with it.

Under the new amendment, Category 1 companies – including the largest and most popular social media platforms – will now be required to ensure recognised news publishers' articles remain viewable and accessible on their sites even if they are under review by moderators.

They will be required to notify news publishers and offer them a right of appeal before removing or moderating their content or taking any action against their accounts.

This will reduce the risk of platforms taking arbitrary or accidental moderation decisions against news publisher content which plays an invaluable role in UK society and democracy. News publishers will benefit from greater awareness and advance warning about possible action being taken against their content, and more transparency about the decision-making behind it.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

“ Our democracy depends on people's access to high quality journalism and our world-leading internet safety law brings in tough new safeguards for freedom of speech and the press online.

“ Yet we've seen tech firms arbitrarily remove legitimate journalism with a complete lack of transparency and this could seriously impact public discourse. These extra protections will stop that from happening.”

The amendment follows concerns raised by the news industry and the Joint Committee that the Bill could indirectly incentivise platforms to be overzealous in removing or moderating news publishers' content due to fear of sanctions by the regulator Ofcom. This could damage the commercial sustainability of news publishers, many of which rely on the advertising revenue they receive through people accessing their content on social media channels.

The government has listened to these concerns and strengthened the protections to prevent this happening. The new requirement means that, unless it is illegal under the Bill or platforms would have a criminal or civil liability for hosting it, content from recognised news publishers will remain online even while a review by moderators and any subsequent appeal takes place.

Platforms can still take immediate action on content posted by normal users, who can appeal the removal of their content after it has been taken down under the Bill's existing complaints procedures.

Instead of being informed after their content has been taken down for review, news publishers will be told in advance while it remains up on users' news feeds, giving them time to lodge an appeal.

The government has acted to stop the spread of RT and Sputnik's disinformation about Russia's invasion of the Ukraine in the UK and sanctioned news outlets will not benefit from these protections. Ministers intend to amend the criteria for determining which organisations qualify as recognised news publishers to explicitly exclude organisations that are subject to sanctions.

ENDS

FURTHER INFORMATION

Existing protections for journalism in the Online Safety Bill

The Online Safety Bill is groundbreaking legislation to make tech companies accountable to the independent regulator Ofcom for keeping their users safe.

The exemption for news publisher content in the Bill includes news articles on publishers' own websites as well as the comment sections underneath them, and the articles when they are shared on social media platforms.

The news publisher exemption only applies to organisations that meet the robust criteria set out in clause 50 of the Bill.

It means there is no requirement at all on in-scope companies to consider whether news publishers' content could be harmful to their users or act on it

In addition, Category 1 companies will have a duty to put in place safeguards for all journalistic content shared on their platforms.

These safeguards will ensure that platforms consider the importance of journalism when moderating, setting out clearly in their terms of service how they have considered the importance of journalism and enforcing this consistently. This will ensure that platforms can be held to account for the decisions they make, including decisions made by automated moderation tools.

Platforms will also need to put in place fast-tracked appeals processes for producers of journalistic content.

Further amendments to the Bill to protect journalism

As well as the temporary must carry amendment, three further amendments have been made to the Bill by the government to further strengthen protections for journalism online.

The government will strengthen the exemption for 'below-the-line' comment sections on news publishers' websites by making sure a future Secretary of State cannot use so-called 'Henry VIII powers' to remove the exemption. Henry VIII powers are clauses in primary legislation which enable ministers to amend or repeal provisions using secondary legislation.

An amendment tabled yesterday will remove the Henry VIII powers in relation to below the line comments. It will mean the exemption can only be repealed via an Act of Parliament, requiring full debate and scrutiny from both Houses of Parliament. It will reassure press industry stakeholders that the exemption cannot easily be rescinded.

A further amendment adds a requirement on Category 1 companies to carry out and publish an assessment of the impact that fulfilling their safety duties under the Bill has on journalistic content, including news publishers' content. They will be required to publish this impact assessment once the Bill is in force and keep it up to date to reflect the impact of changes to their policies and practices.

Similarly, Ofcom will be given a new duty to undertake a review and publish a report on the impact of online safety regulation on news publisher content and the effectiveness of the protections for journalistic content. Ofcom will be required to undertake the review within two years after the relevant provisions of the Bill are in force.

[The Prime Minister has appointed four trustees to the Science Museum Group](#)

Anya Hurlbert

Appointed as a STEM Trustee

Anya Hurlbert is Professor of Visual Neuroscience and Dean of Advancement at Newcastle University. She co-founded Newcastle's Institute of Neuroscience in 2003, serving as its co-Director until 2014, and now steers its Centre for Transformative Neuroscience. She was a Marshall Scholar and holds degrees in physics, physiology, brain and cognitive science, and medicine from Princeton, Cambridge, MIT and Harvard, respectively.

Anya's research interests are focussed on the understanding of human vision, especially colour perception and its role in cognition and behaviour; her work includes applications in imaging, lighting, visual art, and human health. She received the Newton Medal (the Colour Group GB; 2022) and has delivered many named and keynote lectures, including the Edridge-Green Lecture (the Royal College of Ophthalmologists) and the Richard Gregory Memorial Lecture (Bristol Vision Institute).

Anya speaks and writes widely on colour vision and art, contributes to television and radio programmes, and has devised several science-based art exhibitions, including an interactive installation at the National Gallery, London. In addition to several international advisory boards, Anya serves on

the Scientific Consultative Group of the National Gallery, where she was recently Scientific Trustee, and on the editorial boards of the Journal of Vision and Current Biology, the Board of Directors of the Vision Sciences Society, and the Rank Prize Funds Optoelectronics Committee.

Baroness Nicky Morgan

Appointed as a Senior Level Leadership Trustee

The Rt Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes (Nicky Morgan) is a former Conservative Minister having served in the Cabinets of David Cameron and Boris Johnson as, respectively, Minister for Women & Equalities, Education Secretary and Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary. She also chaired the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee for 2 years. She was the Member of Parliament for Loughborough between 2010 and 2019.

She has also served as Financial Secretary, Economic Secretary, a Government Whip and PPS to the Universities Minister. Before being elected she worked as a solicitor specialising in M&A.

Nicky is a founding trustee of a mental health charity in Leicestershire. She is now a member of the House of Lords and has a portfolio career with roles across the private and public sectors, including as a Non-Executive Director at Santander UK, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, the Association of British Insurers, the Great Central Railway plc and the Careers & Enterprise Company. Nicky also chairs the Advisory Board of the Reform think tank.

Gregory Radick

Appointed as a STEM Trustee

Gregory Radick is Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Leeds. Educated at Rutgers University in New Jersey (where he was born and raised) and then at Cambridge University, he has published widely in the history of the life and human sciences since 1800. His book *The Simian Tongue: The Long Debate about Animal Language* (Chicago, 2007) was awarded the 2010 Suzanne J. Levinson Prize of the History of Science Society for best book in the history of the life sciences and natural history. His other books include *Disputed Inheritance: The Battle over Mendel and the Future of Biology* (Chicago, 2023) and, as co-editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin* (Cambridge, 2003; 2nd edition, 2009). He has held fellowships from the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust, and served as President of the British Society for the History of Science (2014-16) and the International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology (2019-21). He writes and lectures frequently for general audiences, and has appeared on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* and in the PBS/National Geographic television series *Genius* with Stephen Hawking.

Sarah Sands

Appointed as a Senior Level Leadership Trustee

Sarah Sands has had a prominent career in journalism; she has edited two newspapers, the Sunday Telegraph and The Evening Standard, and she went on to be editor of Radio 4's Today programme. She currently serves on the board of Channel 4 and of the Berkeley Group and is a partner at Hawthorn Advisors. She is a trustee of Index on Censorship, an honorary fellow of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge and of Goldsmiths College, London, and is chair of Bright Blue think tank. She founded the Braemar Science Summit now in its second year. She was appointed chair of G7 gender equality advisory council in 2021 and is a member of the council under German presidency this year. She has published a book on monastic lessons, The Interior Silence.

Science Museum Group Trustees are not remunerated. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election.

Baroness Nicky Morgan declared having been a parliamentary candidate and elected MP for the Conservative Party.

Anya Hurlbert, Gregory Radick and Sarah Sands have declared no activity.

School children take part in tree planting to help improve the environment

The Egremont flood scheme not only reduces flood risk to the local community it also improves the town by providing more green spaces for local use. Children from Orgill School have taken part in planting roughly 200 trees to increase biodiversity and improve local access to green spaces. Single tree and shrub habitats provide the biggest hit by way of species and threatened species. Re-connecting woodland habitats and planting appropriately is one simple way to increase the diversity and function of our countryside.

Planting of trees also helps to combat CO2 emissions thus making the air cleaner for humans and wildlife. The trees planted include plum, apple, damson and cherry trees, all of which will be able to be picked by the children in the future. The Environment Agency worked with the school to help

them combat anti-social behaviour. The planting of trees and shrubs inside the perimeter of the gates of the school has reduced the anti-social behaviour around the school and the school would like more planting to continue to help reduce this behaviour even more.

The Environment Agency plan to continue working with Orgill School soon by creating mini allotments which will consist of vegetables and plants in a bid to make pupils more active and have a better knowledge of where their food comes from. As well as this, a local angling club are working with the pupils of Orgill school to offer them the chance to take part in fishing activities.

Julie Irving, Headteacher at Orgill School said:

Our children, in Nursery, had a wonderful time planting fruit trees with 'Safari' Mike and his team. The children are incredibly excited to watch the trees grow and can't wait to start harvesting the fruit!

We are busy preparing for our next project and are delighted that Mike will be able to support again. Our allotment garden has been in the pipeline for a few years and was halted due to the pandemic. We are eager to get our children more involved in growing their own produce and have a space to enjoy throughout the year.

A huge thank you to everyone involved in supporting our projects, this year.

Since planning approval of this important flood scheme in October 2019, the Environment Agency have completed culvert works at Croadalla Avenue and property resistance measures have been delivered to 43 properties across the town. As well as this, construction on flood storage areas, consisting of flood walls and flood embankments, at West Lakes Academy, Falcon Club and How Bank Farm have been completed.

The channel of Black Beck have also been completed as part of this scheme. The completed project have created meanders and bends, to allow the natural channel of the beck to be found again. The meanders and in stream features such as natural bed material have provided essential habitat for fish and insects to thrive. Other features found in natural rivers and on floodplains have also been introduced at Black Beck to slow the flow. They help to store more water during times of flood. This will help to reduce downstream flood risk by storing more flood water further upstream.

Paul Robertshaw, from the Environment Agency said:

We would like to thank the children of Orgill school for helping us plant trees, in bid to boost biodiversity, as part the flood scheme in Egremont. We look forward to seeing the benefits this will bring to wildlife and the local community. We also hope to continue this work by growing an allotment garden where children can grow their

own produce.

The Skirting and Whangs Beck Flood Risk Management Scheme will not only better protect people and property from flooding but will create a better place for the community by providing an enhanced environment for wildlife to thrive. We are delighted to see the progress on this scheme and look forward to the benefits its completion will bring.

You can find out more about the scheme by visiting www.thefloodhub.co.uk and checking 'Your local area' to see a summary of what the scheme is proposing and for general information on how to prepare and respond to all sources of flooding.

Middle East Minister visits Gulf to deepen economic ties

Minister for Asia and the Middle East Amanda Milling has completed her second trip to the Gulf this week, visiting Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

The visit came as ties between the UK and the Gulf Co-operation Council are strengthening quickly. Last month the UK announced that GCC countries will be exempt from visa requirements, joining the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme and also launched Free Trade Agreement discussions.

During a one-day visit to Bahrain, Minister Milling met Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Dr Abdullatif Al Zayani, where they further reflected on the strong bilateral relationship. Ms Milling congratulated the Minister for Bahrain's continued progress in human rights and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to support Bahrain's work in this area.

She also had productive meetings with the Minister of Justice and Minister of Finance and National Economy. Ms Milling heard from influential young Bahrainis about their hopes and aspirations, met senior business figures, and visited the UK Naval Support Facility for a briefing on UK security contributions in the region, alongside the US and other defence partners.

In Qatar, the Minister met with her counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister and HE Sultan Saad Al Muraikhi to discuss strengthening the bilateral partnership, building on the recent visit to the UK by His Highness the Amir, including areas of regional and international security.

The Minister also met with Nasser Al Khater, CEO Qatar 2022 ahead of the World Cup to discuss what England and Wales fans can expect during the

tournament, the Minister of Labour Dr. Ali bin Samikh Al-Marri to discuss labour rights and the Minister of Public Health, Dr Hannan Al Kuwari to discuss cooperation on global health matters.

In the UAE, Minister Milling met with key Emirati officials such as Dr Anwar Gargesh and HE Sheikh Shakbout bin Nahyan to discuss how to drive forward the 'Partnership for the Future' (P4F) agreement signed by the PM and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan during a Guest of Government visit to the UK in September 2021.

Minister of State for Asia and the Middle East, Amanda Milling MP said:

Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE are close friends of the UK. We are making it easier for UK companies to trade with companies in the Gulf through a Free Trade Agreement and for citizens of the Gulf to travel to the UK through our Electronic Visa Authorisation scheme.

In Bahrain, I reiterated that the UK is a reliable partner and we'll continue to work closely together on many areas, including regional security, human rights and trade and investment.

In Qatar I had the opportunity to discuss on-going preparations for the World Cup, and our support for a safe and enjoyable experience for British fans.

In the UAE, my counterparts and I discussed the full range of shared priorities outlined in the Partnership for the Future, from boosting bilateral trade to regional stability and development.