

Press release: UK to stand for re-election to Human Rights Council

Minister of State for the UN, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, has confirmed the UK will be standing for re-election to the UN's Human Rights Council in 2020. The re-election reaffirms UK support for the Council as the best tool the international community has to promote human rights and address impunity in an imperfect world. Successful re-election in 2020 would maintain the UK's record as one of the longest-serving members of the Council.

Speaking in the chamber of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Lord Ahmad also highlighted the alarming downward trend in global media freedom. Last year 80 journalists were killed and almost 400 were detained. The Minister urged Council members to support the UK's media freedom campaign, and the London conference on 10 and 11 July, which aims to shine a global spotlight on media repression and deliver international action on promoting media freedom and strengthening the protection of journalists.

Human Rights Minister, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, said:

Freedom is at the heart of the rules-based system, but the rising tide of impunity across the globe should remind us of its fragility.

Today I am proud to reiterate the UK's commitment to the Human Rights Council, because a strong multilateral system is key to dealing with the great global challenges of our time.

The UK will continue to defend and promote human rights internationally, and in July, the Foreign Secretary and the Canadian Foreign Minister will convene leaders from across the globe to highlight the issue of media repression, because a free press is the lifeblood of democracy.

Lord Ahmad also expressed his grave concerns about freedom of religion or belief across the world. This included the situation of Uyghur Muslims in Xingang province, Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, and Christians from across parts of the Middle East and Asia.

The Minister for Human Rights also called for an end to violence amid the deteriorating situation in the Anglophone South West and North West regions of Cameroon. He urged all sides to come together to initiate a credible, inclusive dialogue to address the root causes of the crisis.

Further information

Speech: Speech by the Minister for Asia and the Pacific on the Rules-Based International System

Good afternoon everyone. RUSI is best-known for bringing together the world's top minds to find answers to the questions we are all asking. This event is a good example.

In today's increasingly fractious and unpredictable world, one of those questions is whether the existing system of global rules and norms, which governs everything from international law and regional security to trade, immigration and health, is fit for purpose.

I look forward to reading about the conclusions reached here today. In the meantime, I should like to offer a British Government perspective.

Many of you will be aware that the International Court of Justice has this afternoon released an Advisory Opinion in relation to the British Indian Ocean Territory. This not a judgment against the UK, but an Advisory Opinion for the UN General Assembly. Of course, we will look at the detail closely. But the defence facilities on the British Indian Ocean Territory help to keep people here in Britain and around the world safe.

That is why we have maintained our sovereignty of the islands. We will continue to seek a bilateral solution to what is a bilateral dispute with Mauritius.

We are in no doubt that the Rules-Based International System, as it is often clumsily referred to, has been a significant force for good, particularly since the tragedy of the twentieth century's two World Wars.

It has increased states' ability to resolve their differences peacefully, and provided a framework for the greatest sustained rise in prosperity which mankind has ever enjoyed.

But we recognise that the system is coming under pressure from a number of quarters.

The first, and perhaps most immediately obvious challenge, comes when states deliberately breach their international obligations.

Russia has committed some of the most egregious recent violations.

Among other things, it has illegally annexed Crimea, used a chemical weapon to lethal effect in Salisbury, and continued to prop up a murderous Syrian regime, which has itself flouted international law by unleashing chemical weapons on its own citizens.

The second challenge is less tangible but equally potent, and it comes from new technologies. These are posing challenges to the system in two quite different ways:

First, new technologies are exposing gaps in the rules, such as on artificial intelligence, or challenging us to be clearer on how they apply, such as in space.

Second, they are enabling states to do things that would be unacceptable with conventional methods. Cyber is a particularly good example.

Malicious cyber activity has no respect for international boundaries and attacks are getting bigger, bolder and more serious all the time.

The objectives seem to vary – from mindless vandalism to concerted attempts to undermine democracies or steal commercial information.

For example, China has used cyber-attacks to acquire commercial secrets, in direct contravention of its bilateral and G20 commitments. We made public our concerns about this with a coalition of over a dozen countries.

The UK continues to advocate for a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace.

Last year, our Attorney General set out for the first time our views on how the world should approach cyberspace. It would be governed by the same international law, agreed norms and principles of responsible State behaviour that apply in the real world.

This was incidentally a view that had already been endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

Unfortunately, China and Russia continue to undermine this ambition, by pressing for greater international regulation in cyberspace, in particular by launching parallel initiatives that seek to bind and constrain people with new, unnecessary rules, as well as exporting their own ideologies and infrastructure which will constrain the freedom of users to enjoy the benefits provided by a free and open internet.

So it is clear that challenges to the international system are arising both from states and from new technologies.

In many states, including in the west, a third form of challenge to the international system has arisen through the election of governments that do not instinctively support it.

As a result, we see greater suspicion of the multilateral system, or at the very least a questioning approach. Tackling this doubt, and making the case for effective multilateralism, is the responsibility of all those who believe in the opportunities that co-operation brings.

The final source of pressure on the system that I want to highlight today is the shifting balance of global power. When the current system was established, largely in the wake of WW2, the world was a very different place. Since then there has been a steady eastwards shift of economic power.

In the last forty years alone, China's share of the global economy has grown from just 2% to 15%. By 2030, China is set to overtake the United States as the world's biggest economy.

By 2050, the economies of China and India could exceed those of the entire G7 – the so-called leading industrialised economies.

Understandably, China and other rising powers wish to adapt the system so that it better suits their interests.

So it is clear that, for a variety of reasons, the rules based system is at the very least being called into question, and at worst is under direct threat.

At the same time, the scale and significance of the global challenges we face is greater than ever. Many of these challenges – from conflict to organised crime and from cyber-attacks to illegal migration – are not contained by borders and will not be solved unless the international community can work together.

Nowhere is this cross-border challenge more important or obvious than climate change.

Even within the next 30 years, rising seas could make some coastal areas uninhabitable. Many of our Commonwealth partners are already feeling the effects.

We should be glad that no other country has followed the US in withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. But we still need urgently to raise our global ambition if we are to honour the spirit of our commitments and match the risk we all face.

I think we should be in no doubt: now, more than ever, we need a global system of rules and cooperation that we can all buy in to.

How should the UK respond?

First, we need to defend the principle of multilateralism; the idea that international agreements, norms, and institutions are essential to tackling critical global problems.

Our commitment to doing so is why – to give but one example – ships from the Royal Navy join those of many other nations to uphold the rules that allow

maritime trade to flourish, most notably the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, whether through counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, or by reinforcing freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

However, I should not for a moment suggest that the international system in its current form is perfect. So, second, we need to reform some of the most important global institutions – the UN, WTO, NATO and global human rights and justice mechanisms – so that they remain relevant and retain global trust. If they are not delivering for ordinary people then they are fundamentally failing.

In the UN Security Council, we shall continue to challenge our colleagues on the Council, and ourselves, to ensure that this vital body shows the leadership the world needs.

In response to the shift in global power, we are listening carefully and have said clearly we are open to change. In that vein, we have already been outspoken in our support for India, Japan, Brazil and Germany taking a permanent seat on the Security Council, alongside permanent African membership.

We have actively supported reform of the Bretton Woods institutions – WB, IMF – to reflect growth of the Chinese and Indian economies.

In Geneva we remain committed to supporting the Human Rights Council, as the best tool the international community has to promote human rights and address impunity. We welcome the Council's action on Burma, and Syria. But it could do more: collectively we must use the Council better to respond more firmly and more rapidly to serious and deteriorating situations, especially when there is risk of future conflict.

In The Hague, the record of the International Criminal Court remains poor. We are working closely with our partners to find paths to reform.

The United States, among other nations, has made clear that the WTO is not working. We believe that China, as the world's largest goods trader, has an important role to play in the necessary debate on WTO reform, and we played an important role in increasing China's voting weight in the World Bank last year.

We share some American concerns over Chinese trade practice, but we believe any action to remedy this must be WTO compliant. We want the WTO to defend free trade and a level playing field as a route to economic growth for all.

To conclude – the challenges to the international system are diverse, but the global threats we face are significant.

The Rules-Based International System is still the best means we have to respond to these threats, but it needs to reform and adapt if it is to remain effective and relevant.

We are determined to help shape this change and to stand up for shared interests and values.

This means fighting to strengthen and defend the values that matter to us most: human rights, peaceful resolution of disputes and the rule of law.

It means using all our influence as a permanent member of the Security Council, the G7 and the G20, a leading member of NATO and the Commonwealth, a major development and humanitarian donor, and a champion of human rights.

It means working with like-minded international partners to ensure that the Rules-Based International System remains a force for good in the 21st Century and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is what we are committed to do.

Press release: All pupils will be taught about mental and physical wellbeing

All children in England will be taught how to look after their mental wellbeing and recognise when classmates may be struggling, as the Government unveils new guidance for the introduction of compulsory health education.

Bold new plans set out today (Monday 25 February) by the Education Secretary Damian Hinds confirm that, from September 2020, pupils of all ages will be taught the new subject – with a focus on promoting the positive link between physical and mental health.

This comes alongside the introduction of compulsory relationships education for primary-age pupils and relationships and sex education (RSE) for secondary-age pupils, to ensure children have all the knowledge they need to grow up healthy, happy and safe.

It follows an extensive call for evidence and three-month consultation on the draft regulations and guidance. This received more than 11,000 responses including from leading charities, teaching unions and subject associations – many of whom have welcomed today's proposals.

Making health education universal – and updating sex education guidance for the first time since 2000 – will ensure pupils are prepared for the opportunities and challenges of an “ever more complex” world, both on- and offline.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Growing up and adolescence are hard enough, but the internet and social media add new pressures that just weren't there even one

generation ago. So many things about the way people interact have changed, and this new world, seamless between online and offline, can be difficult to navigate. Almost twenty years on from the last time guidance on sex education was updated, there is a lot to catch up on.

Although sex education is only mandatory to teach at secondary, it must be grounded in a firm understanding and valuing of positive relationships, and respect for others, from primary age. In turn positive relationships are connected with good mental health, which itself is linked with physical wellbeing. So it is appropriate to make health education universal alongside relationships and sex education.

I'm very grateful to the many people who have fed into developing these new programmes, to equip youngsters better to deal with the world of today. It starts as it always did with the importance of friendship, kindness, taking turns; as well as learning about the pitfalls and dangers, including on the internet. It will help children learn how to look after themselves, physically and mentally, and the importance of getting away from the screen and the headphones. And it can help young people be resilient as they chart a course through an ever more complex world.

At primary school, pupils will learn that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life and why simple self-care – like getting enough sleep and spending time outdoors and with friends – is important.

This will go hand-in-hand with content on nutrition, the importance of staying active, and recognising the early signs of physical illness – ensuring pupils understand how mental and physical health are linked.

Primary school children will also be taught age-appropriate online safety – including what to do if they come across things they are uncomfortable with, the importance of respect for others even when posting anonymously, and the risks of talking to people on the internet that they don't know in real life.

In addition, they will learn how important it is that spending time online doesn't get in the way of exercising, getting enough sleep, or being an active part of their community.

Today's announcement will follow the mental health support being made available by the NHS to a population of more than 470,000 children and young people across England in schools and colleges from September 2019.

The Department for Education is also funding training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges to ensure a 'whole school' approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The new secondary content will build on everything learned at primary school, ensuring pupils can spot the signs of common mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression in themselves or others. Young people will learn how to

discuss their emotions accurately and sensitively, about the impact of alcohol and drugs on physical and mental health, and how to access professional help.

Secondary pupils will also be taught online safety topics, including the serious risks of sharing private photos, the impact of viewing explicit or harmful content – including how to report it and get support – as well as how the internet can sometimes promote an unhealthy view of sex and relationships.

In addition, schools will be able to access supporting information on how to teach about all aspects of internet safety – not just those relating to relationships, sex and health – to help teachers deliver this in a co-ordinated and coherent way. The new content will complement the existing computing curriculum, which gives pupils a grounding in how to use technology safely, responsibly, respectfully and securely.

It will be left up to schools to decide exactly how they teach the new content, giving them the flexibility to promote health, wellbeing and respectful relationships – as many already do through PSHE – both across the curriculum and outside formal lessons.

To ensure teachers are well-prepared ahead of the subjects becoming mandatory in 2020, there will be a £6m budget in 2019/20 for a school support package to cover training and resources. The Department for Education will also provide support to early-adopter schools who will start teaching the new content from September 2019.

The lessons learned from early-adopters will be shared with other schools, to enable them to design high-quality programmes of study and prepare their teachers. The department will also offer training – either online or face-to-face – for teachers who might need it.

Government support will build on a range of free resources from charities and other organisations that are already available for schools to use.

Jonathan Baggaley, chief executive of the PHSE Association, said:

We strongly welcome this government commitment to compulsory education on health, RSE and relationships. Parents, teachers and young people have been crying out for more focus on PSHE education, so will be delighted that this core content will be guaranteed on the school curriculum. The PSHE Association looks forward to supporting all schools to make the most of this huge opportunity.

Anna Feuchtwang, chief executive of the National Children's Bureau, said:

The guidance published today is a welcome step forward in preparing children for adulthood, improving their wellbeing and keeping them safe and healthy. By providing compulsory health education with a

strong focus on mental wellbeing, and guaranteeing relationships education in primary schools and relationships and sex education in secondary schools, the Government has responded to the needs and concerns of children, young people and parents.

This is an important milestone but there is further work ahead to ensure the new requirements fulfil their potential for helping children grow up healthier and happier.

Speech: Crime Minister addresses government work to tackle modern slavery

Welcome everybody, I am absolutely delighted to be here and thank you so much to the Ambassador to the British Embassy for hosting today's event and it is a very fitting time in terms of the UK and its battle against modern slavery and human trafficking to hold an event this month because this month marks a milestone in the UK's fight against human trafficking.

This month marks the 15th anniversary of the Morecambe Bay disaster.

In one night, more than 20 people drowned when they were cut off by the tide, while picking cockles off the Lancashire coast in the North West of England.

The workers were Chinese nationals, trafficked into the UK in shipping containers.

By the time they realised that the sea water was rising, it was pitch black, and extremely cold. They could not speak English, and were unfamiliar with the area, or the tidal patterns on the treacherous mud flats.

For each pound of cockles that they picked, they received less than 9 pence.

The disaster was a wake up call to many that forced labour, human trafficking, and slavery are not evils of the past.

They are with us today, and their victims are hidden in plain sight.

In England, Morecambe Bay is known as a nature reserve and holiday resort.

The fact 20 people could be trafficked there from the other side of the world and forced to work – with no one noticing until it was too late – brought home to us all the awful reality of slavery and human trafficking in the 21st Century.

Globally an estimated 40.3 million people are victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, including some 16 million in forced labour in the private sector.

Overall, labour generates \$150 billion in illicit profits annually.

No sector is immune. Workers in labour intensive industries like manufacturing, agriculture, construction and manufacturing are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

And as we gather in Paris ahead of fashion week, we must remember that the textiles sector, with its complex global supply chains, is also a susceptible trade.

The industry faces significant risks, but also with clear opportunities for innovation to improve the lives of workers.

Since the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh in 2013, which killed over 1,000 workers, much of this work has accelerated, but there remains a lot to do.

We know that women – who make up 75% of the workforce in fashion supply chains – are particularly at risk.

That is why the UK is investing in programmes to improve protections for female textile workers.

The Department for International Development's Work in Freedom initiative has now reached half a million female textile workers in India and Jordan.

Through our gender equality at the Workplace project we are partnering with brands including Marks & Spencer, SuperDry and Levis to promote worker's rights and tackle forced labour and sexual violence in the Indian garment sector.

This project has now benefitted more than 14,000 women.

We should take a moment to recognise the good work fashion companies are doing as well.

Many are already changing their purchasing practices to reduce pressures on their supply chain that can lead to exploitation.

Companies like H&M have developed a Fair Wage strategy and commissioned the Ethical Trade Initiative to review their work and publish the findings.

We're also seeing new innovations that are helping to accelerate progress and I'm delighted that we have the Open Apparel Registry here today.

Tools like their transparency map are crucial in enabling collaboration between different brands to identify risks in the supply chain.

As Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, I am proud that the UK

is a world-leader in tackling modern slavery and human trafficking.

In 2015, we introduced the Modern Slavery Act to tackle slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking.

The act gives law enforcement agencies the tools to deal with offenders and provides enhanced protection for victims.

And, of particular relevance to this conference, the UK is the first country to require businesses to report on how they are preventing forced labour in their global supply chains.

Under the landmark 'transparency in supply chains' provision in the Modern Slavery Act we have seen thousands of transparency statements published.

And I am pleased to announce that today we have appointed Sara Thornton as the UK's new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, to lead our work and help the UK eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking.

Ms Thornton is one of the most senior police officers in the country and brings her wealth of expertise, experience and independence in seeking justice for victims of crime.

Effectively tackling forced labour requires leadership not just at home, but internationally as well.

At the UN General assembly in September last year, the UK launched the 'Principles to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains', with the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

These principles commit governments to implementing a range of measures that help address modern slavery and human trafficking in global supply chains.

And, as we meet in Paris, I am proud that the French government stands alongside us in their determination to eliminate human trafficking and labour exploitation.

Here, there is a legal requirement for companies to publish their mechanisms to identify, assess and mitigate exploitation risks.

And, since legislation was introduced on both sides of the Channel, we have seen businesses:

- ensure transparency their supply chains
- start to map suppliers beyond tier one
- identify high-risk areas and introduce tailored steps to support the most vulnerable workers

This is a significant achievement, and today's panels will seek to build on this progress.

Because, we want to see businesses make year-on-year progress. Whether they are already industry-leading in their approach, or mapping their supply

chains for the first time.

We also want to see more businesses supporting their suppliers to introduce key protections for workers, from the implementation of the Employer Pays Principle to tackle exploitative recruitment fees, to the global brands we have seen sign up to IndustriALL's ACT initiative.

Legislation, alongside growing consumer awareness, has transformed business culture.

Across all industries, senior business leaders are engaging with the fight against forced labour for the first time.

But we cannot be complacent.

Businesses need to be more vigilant than ever to understand their risks, undertake targeted interventions and measure progress.

They are not alone. The scale of the challenge means that it can only be tackled by government, business and civil society working together.

In November, the Prime Minister announced a joint agreement with the fashion sector in the UK to work together to eradicate forced labour in their supply chains.

And crucially, at last year's G20 summit, she committed to publishing a statement on the steps the UK government is taking to eliminate exploitation in our own supply chains.

Fundamentally, though, the reach of government extends only so far.

It is up to individual businesses to take steps to eliminate forced labour in their own supply chain.

There is a moral – and commercial – imperative to ensure that products are made by people living in freedom, working with dignity, and earning a fair wage

Consumers care about how their products are made, and more so in the fashion industry than many others.

There is a growing number of responsible investors who want to make sure the right protections are in place.

By being here today you have shown that, like us, you want to improve your approach.

I ask you all to take what you learn today and share it with your suppliers, your clients and your competitors.

The British government will do everything in our power to eliminate the scourge of modern slavery and human trafficking.

We remain resolute in our commitment to strengthen our response to this

threat and improve protections for the most vulnerable workers across the globe.

I welcome the determination and work of our friends and allies in Europe and across the world

With our European friends, we are acting in defence of the values that we as nations hold dear.

Nothing will change that.

We will remain as committed to the eradication of modern slavery and human trafficking as we are today.

Together, we can build a future where forced labour and exploitation are, truly, a thing of the past.

Merci Beaucoup.

News story: Defence Secretary Announces £235 Million Submarine Nuclear Propulsion Deal

The multi-million-pound deal with Rolls-Royce Submarines Limited will provide the support, advice and material required to ensure the continued safety and availability of the systems on board the current fleet of Trafalgar, Vanguard and Astute class submarines until 2022. The contract will sustain around 500 UK jobs.

During the visit to Rolls-Royce's site in Raynesway, Derbyshire, the Defence Secretary also announced that HMS Warspite will be the name of third Dreadnought submarine.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This year we mark half-a-century since British nuclear-armed submarines began their continuous patrol of waters around the world. This significant milestone for the Royal Navy would not be possible without the skills and ingenuity of our industry partners who supply and maintain equipment.

Rolls-Royce plays a critical role in supporting our submarines and I'm pleased this contract will sustain 500 highly-skilled jobs that

help protect our country.

Defence Secretary visits Roll Royce. Crown copyright.

The name Warspite goes back to 1595 and was the last 'great ship' to be built during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Warspite has been carried by eight Royal Navy vessels. The last being the UK's third nuclear submarine, which operated for over 20 years at the height of the Cold War.

In December 2018, the Defence Secretary announced a £400m funding boost for the Dreadnought programme alongside a £25m BAE Systems academy that will upskill employees working on Royal Navy submarines. The continued progress of the £31bn Dreadnought programme ensures the protection and defence provided by the UK's nuclear deterrent for decades to come. The Dreadnought Class submarines will enter service in the 2030s.

Submarine Delivery Agency CEO, Ian Booth said:

This contract is vital to enable the continued safety and readiness of the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines, and its signing demonstrates the ongoing successful partnership between the Submarine Delivery Agency and industry.

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the Continuous at Sea Deterrent and we look forward to continuing to work with our suppliers to support this national endeavour.

Vanguard Class submarine. Crown copyright

The new Nuclear Propulsion Lifetime Management contract will provide vital support to the delivery of the Continuous at Sea Deterrent, which reaches the 50th anniversary milestone this year. The jobs sustained by this contract will be predominantly at Rolls-Royce in Derby and satellite offices at HMNB Clyde and HMNB Devonport.

The contract forms part of a wider suite of contracts with Rolls-Royce to provide naval reactor plant design, support, advice and components to the submarine build programme and provide enabling services such as infrastructure and IT.

Rolls-Royce Submarines President, Steve Dearden said:

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Continuous At Sea Deterrence and the 60th year of Rolls-Royce involvement in the naval nuclear propulsion programme. The NPLM contract will enable the continuation of our close work with the SDA to deliver Submarine operations for the Royal Navy.

This new contract includes exciting innovative technology employing Rolls-Royce's digital capability which will enhance the service we provide and we look forward to continuing our support for the next 50 years.