

Press release: Foreign Secretary stresses importance of democratic values

Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt is returning from Washington following meetings with Senior US Administration figures focused on the UK and US's shared efforts to tackle the increasing challenges to democracy throughout the world.

During his visit Jeremy Hunt met Vice-President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, National Security Agency Director General Nakasone, acting Presidential Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and Senior Advisor to the President Jared Kushner.

The Foreign Secretary discussed the developing situation in Venezuela and condemned the announcement by Nicolas Maduro that Venezuela would end diplomatic ties with the United States. He also thanked the US Administration for their support for the two recent UK-drafted resolutions on Yemen in the UN Security Council. The Foreign Secretary and Secretary Pompeo agreed to host a meeting of the 'quad' group on Yemen in the margins of the upcoming Ministerial meeting on the Middle East in Warsaw in February.

The Foreign Secretary's visit came as the UK and US jointly announced their intention to impose travel restrictions and other sanctions on any individual found to be illegally interfering in the upcoming Nigerian elections including by using or encouraging violence in an attempt to influence the elections.

Speaking following his visit, the Foreign Secretary said:

The enduring relationship between the UK and US is not a product of coincidence or historic accident, it is the result of our shared values. These values are at the heart the foreign policy of both of our countries. And none of these values is more important than respect for democracy – the invisible chain that has bound our countries together throughout history.

Given the threats to democracy we are seeing throughout the world – from the rigged election last year in Venezuela to appalling violations of human rights in Syria to the Houthi coup in Yemen four years ago that gave rise to a devastating civil war – the relationship between the UK and US is more important than ever before. I was pleased to have the chance to discuss that relationship, and the challenges to democracy around the world that we are working together to overcome, in Washington today.

With Secretary Pompeo we agreed today that we would host a meeting

in February with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to bolster our support for the Stockholm process and agree next steps for further progress on a political settlement.

Background:

- The UK and US statements on Nigerian elections is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-election-violence-sanction-statement>
- The Foreign Secretary's remarks to media on developments in Venezuela are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-situation-in-venezuela>

Further information

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on situation in Venezuela, January 2019](#)

Speaking ahead of his meeting with US Vice President Mike Pence and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

We are extremely concerned about the situation in Venezuela, but it is clear that Nicolás Maduro is not the legitimate leader of Venezuela.

The election on 20th May was deeply flawed; ballot boxes were stuffed, there were counting irregularities and the opposition was banned. This regime has done untold damage to the people of Venezuela, 10% of the population have left Venezuela such is the misery they are suffering.

So the United Kingdom believes Juan Guaido is the right person to take Venezuela forward. We are supporting the US, Canada, Brazil and Argentina to make that happen. I will be meeting Vice President Pence and Secretary of State Pompeo later this afternoon to discuss this further. But for anyone in the UK who thinks that Venezuela is an example, who thinks that we should be adopting the policies supported by the discredited Maduro regime, they need to look at their TV screens and think again. This regime has caused untold suffering to its people.

News story: UK and France sign action plan to tackle small boat crossings

Sajid Javid and French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner held productive talks in Westminster and vowed to increase joint co-operation following a rise in the number of migrants attempting to cross the dangerous shipping lane in small boats.

As part of the [action plan](#), which will see over £6 million invested in new security equipment, there will be a mutual commitment to conduct return operations as quickly as possible under the Dublin Regulation. A small number of migrants, who made the illegal journey at the end of last year, were returned to France this morning.

In addition, the Home Secretary and Interior Minister agreed that migrants encountered in the Channel will be taken to the nearest safe port, in accordance with international maritime law. This will build on the success of the French authorities in preventing attempted departures in French ports and beaches which has seen 44 successful disruptions covering 267 individuals since January 2018.

The UK will continue to work closely with France and other countries to return more migrants who have entered the UK by small boat in order to provide a strong deterrent against the dangerous crossings.

Home Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

It is vital we continue to work closely with our French partners to stop vulnerable migrants making these treacherous crossings and tackle the people smugglers who are putting their lives in danger.

Today's joint action plan strengthens our already strong relationship and increases joint action around keeping both our borders secure and discouraging these dangerous journeys.

French Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner said:

This agreement once again shows the UK's commitment to managing our shared border along with us. By combating illegal Channel crossings by migrants, we're saving lives and deterring new migrants from coming to Hauts-de-France.

The UK agreed to allocate over £6 million (€7 million) to support the French's comprehensive regional action plan which has been in place since early January and has seen additional surveillance and security on French beaches and ports as well as greater co-ordination between the French

authorities on land and at sea.

Just over half of the investment will come from £44.5 million (€50 million) already allocated under the Sandhurst Treaty, an agreement on UK-France co-operation signed by the Prime Minister and President Macron in January 2018. An additional £3.2 million (€3.6 million) of new funding will be used for equipment and measures to tackle illegal migration by small boats, such as CCTV, night goggles and number plate recognition capability, helping to support the UK and French border and maritime teams to detect and crack down on illegal activity.

Additional security cameras will be strategically placed at French ports and in areas where migrants may attempt to embark boats, and will feed live CCTV footage into the UK-France Coordination and Information Centre in Calais which is staffed by both British and French agencies.

There will be increased surveillance of the Channel by air and boat patrols, with shared intelligence between UK and French authorities. Foot patrols across beaches and coastal areas by the French police will be ramped up, and attempted crossings will be disrupted. Both governments have made clear that all criminals will be prosecuted.

The new plan will come into force immediately.

[Press release: Plans to boost protections for pregnant women and new parents returning to work](#)

- Pregnant women and new parents returning to work are set to receive greater protection from redundancy, under new government plans
- The legal protections currently enjoyed by parents including women on maternity leave could be extended to other parents, such as those returning from adoption or shared parental leave
- This boost in protection builds on the biggest package of workplace reforms in 20 years to create an economy that works for all as part of the modern Industrial Strategy

The consultation, launching tomorrow (25 January 2019), proposes that the legal protection against redundancy for pregnant women and new mothers on maternity leave is extended so that it continues for up to 6 months after they return to work. It will also seek views on affording the same protection to parents returning from adoption leave or shared parental leave.

Research commissioned by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial

Strategy (BEIS), found 1 in 9 women said they had been fired or made redundant when they returned to work after having a child, or were treated so badly they felt forced out of their job. The same research estimates 54,000 women a year may lose their jobs due to pregnancy or maternity.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

People in this country already benefit from some of the most rigorous workplace standards in the world, including parental leave and pay entitlements, but we are determined to do even more as we leave the EU.

It's unacceptable that too many parents still encounter difficulties when returning to work. Today's proposals are set to provide greater protection for new parents in the workplace, and put their minds at ease at this important time.

This move goes further than current EU requirements on maternity entitlements and parental leave, showing that the UK is going even further in its commitment to workers' rights and meeting the challenges of the changing world of work. This follows the biggest package of workplace reforms for over 20 years that was set out by the Business Secretary in December 2018.

On parental leave and pay alone:

- we already offer maternity entitlements of up to 52 weeks of maternity leave – 39 weeks of which are paid
- we have given fathers and partners a statutory right to paternity leave and pay, and we have allowed eligible parents to share leave and pay where the mother does not intend to use all of her maternity entitlements
- and we have given all employees with 26 weeks' qualifying service a right to request flexible working, not only those returning from parental leave

Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

Pregnancy and maternity discrimination is illegal. But some new mothers still find unacceptable attitudes on their return to work which effectively forces them out of their jobs.

Through the modern Industrial Strategy and the largest upgrade in workers' rights in a generation, the government is building an economy that ensures everyone can progress at work. That's why we are looking at ways to further protect new parents by giving them time to re-establish themselves in the workplace and show the value they bring to their employers.

Justine Roberts, Mumsnet founder, said:

Mumsnet users talk a lot about pregnancy and maternity discrimination, and in a 2018 survey 96% of women we surveyed said having children affected mothers' careers for the worse.

It's a multifaceted problem requiring a change in attitude and culture as well as legislation, but stronger legal protection is a very welcome first step.

Jane van Zyl, CEO of work-life balance charity Working Families, said:

We hear from women struggling with pregnancy and maternity discrimination every single day on our helpline. But pregnancy and maternity discrimination isn't just bad news for families; it's also bad news for the economy.

Whilst many of the companies we work with already understand the business benefits of family-friendly workplaces, some employers still don't. Proposals to extend protection from redundancy to new mothers and parents returning to work should go a long way toward protecting their jobs – and to reducing the shocking number of women who lose their jobs due to pregnancy and maternity discrimination.

Because more and more parents are sharing care equally, we welcome plans to ensure equal treatment for parents returning from Shared Parental Leave or adoption – bringing their rights in line with those enjoyed by women on maternity leave.

The consultation will be available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), and will run for 10 weeks ending on 5 April 2019.

[Research](#) commissioned in collaboration with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2016 found that 11% of women reported they were either dismissed; made compulsorily redundant, where others in their workplace were not; or treated so poorly they felt they had to leave their job. 20% of mothers reported other financial loss which included failing to gain a promotion, salary reduction, a lower pay rise or bonus, not receiving non-salary benefits and/or demotion.

The consultation on pregnancy and maternity discrimination will:

- set out the current legal protections for pregnant women and new mothers under the Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Rights Act 1996
- ask how an extension of redundancy protection currently afforded under the Employment Rights Act for those on maternity leave and other types of family related leave and pay might work best, and how long this protection should last
- ask whether a similar protection should be afforded to other groups (such as those returning from other forms of long term childcare leave – principally adoption leave and shared parental leave)

- set out the steps that the government is taking to increase employees awareness of their rights and employers' awareness of their obligations, and invites comments on how they might be improved, to tackle pregnancy and maternity discrimination more effectively
- consider the existing approach to the enforcement of employment and equalities legislation in the context of recommendations from the Women and Equalities Select Committee and the Taylor Review
- discuss the 3-month time limit within which a claim of discrimination can ordinarily be brought to an Employment Tribunal

These measures form part of the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#), published last year, which sets out how the whole of the UK can build on its strengths, extend them into the future, and capitalise on new opportunities.

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[News story: Investment Minister champions the UK education sector at BETT](#)

- Investment Minister celebrates the UK's pioneering education sector at Bett
- Memorandum of Understanding signed to develop innovation in education in Lebanon and facilitate digital transformation development
- New figures show education exports generate almost £20bn for the UK economy

Investment Minister Graham Stuart celebrates the UK's pioneering education sector as the British Education Suppliers Association (BESA) partners with its Lebanese counterpart to help improve the educational outcomes of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon.

Signed at Bett, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) shared with the Professional Computer Association of Lebanon (PCA) will develop innovation in education in Lebanon and facilitate digital transformation development.

Taking place at London's ExCel, Bett is the world's biggest education trade show, bringing together over 850 companies and over 34,700 attendees.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) will lead its biggest-ever presence, hosting 20 UK companies on its stand to showcase the best of British innovation in the education sector.

Bett coincides with news that Britain's education sector remains one of its most lucrative international assets, with new figures released today showing

that international education exports generates almost £20bn annually for the UK economy.

The figures, which include income from international students and English language training overseas, are growing year-on-year to an estimated £19.9bn in 2016 – an increase of 26% since 2010 – generating significant revenue for the UK.

Graham Stuart, Minister for Investment, said:

I'm delighted to see so many UK companies represented at Bett, showcasing our pioneering EdTech and educational supplies sector. The agreement signed today between BESA and PCA is a fantastic example of how UK expertise can benefit educational outcomes in countries across the world.

Bett will undoubtedly provide many more excellent opportunities for UK companies to take forward existing relationships and find new global partners, and the Department for International Trade is here to help any business looking to deepen its international links.

Caroline Wright, Director General, BESA, said:

We are honoured to be entering into an MoU with our counterparts, the Professional Computer Association of Lebanon. It is clear from our recent trade mission to Beirut, and subsequent follow-up visits, that there are exciting opportunities for the PCA and BESA to combine forces and develop educational initiatives that can both benefit Lebanese pupils, alongside pupils across the region.

This partnership would not have been possible were it not for the combined efforts of the UK's Department for International Trade and Department for International Development. It is a paradigm example of how joined-up government can help benefit British commercial interests, as well as helping to drive up the quality of education of pupils, which in this instance includes large numbers of refugees in the region that Lebanon has so generously taken in.

Sincere thanks must also go to the Lebanese Ministry of Education for being so welcoming to our member companies and being so open to engagement with British educational suppliers.

UK companies exhibiting at Bett include Pobble, a London-based EdTech company that helps improve children's writing by allowing teachers to plan exciting

lessons, allowing pupils to connect with classes around the world, and makes moderation of writing easier.

The company has secured significant international investment from across the globe and is seeing considerable success in markets ranging from the UAE to Singapore.

DIT will also bring delegations of buyers from key markets including China, Indonesia and Brazil, to meet with UK businesses. There will also be an Export Theatre, where market experts from DIT will provide guidance on global markets and international expansion.

- BESA is the trade association for the UK education suppliers' sector that operate on a not-for-profit basis and are accountable to an executive Council elected by member companies.
- PCA is the Professional Computer Association of Lebanon, is the trade association for Lebanon ICT suppliers' sector that operate on none-for-profit basis and are accountable to elected board members represent the professional ICT companies in Lebanon.