

Speech: The importance of the sanctions regime in Sudan

Thank you Mr President. And may I, like others, start by thanking the Chair of the 1591 Committee Ambassador Wronka for her briefing and our continued efforts as chair, based of course on her considerable personal experience.

It's disappointing that due to a lack of consensus among the committee, she was unable to give a more comprehensive briefing on our activities.

Mr President, the subsidiary bodies of this Council, including its sanctions committees, constitute a vital part of our collective work to maintain international peace and security. We rely on – and we require – the wider UN membership to implement the sanctions regimes that are agreed by this Council and we have a responsibility to demonstrate transparency in the conduct of the work of the sanctions committees.

Mr President, the United Kingdom continues to support fully the 1591 sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts. I'd like to thank the Panel for their ongoing efforts to provide the committee with comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the sanctions regime and wider political and security dynamics in Sudan and the region.

Mr President, I take issue with the Russian delegation's depiction of the position of the United Kingdom and of Western countries on sanctions in general and on Sudan in particular. It has no relation to the facts. Sanctions regimes and the criteria that underpin them are agreed by this Council, as set out under the United Nations Charter. That is proper. It is right. The United Kingdom will continue to act objectively on this and all sanctions regimes and we encourage all colleagues to do likewise.

In relation to the Panel of Experts' activities, the United Kingdom welcomes the increased cooperation of the government of Sudan. However, we note concerns raised regarding the regular presence of government officials at some of the Panel's meetings. We therefore encourage the government of Sudan to extend its cooperation to the Panel with full respect of its independent and investigative mandate.

As noted by the Chair, the Panel recently transmitted its final report to the committee. In this report, they singled out the clashes between the Sudan Liberation Army – Abdel Wahid and government of Sudan forces in the Jebel Marra region of Darfur as the main development during the reporting period. We have heard during briefings on UNAMID that these clashes have resulted in a significant number of civilian casualties, new displacement and human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by all sides. Reports of indiscriminate shootings, looting and burning of villages and conflict related sexual violence are particularly alarming.

There have been welcome improvements in the security situation in some parts

of Darfur and we saw some progress in the peace process with the signing of a pre-negotiation agreement by the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi and the Justice and Equality Movement with the government of Sudan in Berlin in December. However, the clashes in Jebel Marra are a stark reminder that the situation in Darfur is not yet normalised and remains fragile. It is therefore incumbent upon this Council, Mr President, to ensure a responsible drawdown of UNAMID and to hold the government to account for progress towards the achievement of the exit benchmarks and indicators as we agreed in the past we adopted in December.

Additionally, the arms embargo continues to be violated by all armed groups and the government of Sudan. The Panel's report details the destabilising flow of weapons into and out of Darfur. We call upon all parties to adhere to the arms embargo and remind the government of Sudan of the requirement to request approval from the 1591 Committee for transfers of military material to Darfur.

Mr President, the Chair also noted in her remarks that the committee was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten. During her briefing, the SRSR reminded the committee that conflict-related sexual violence remains widespread in Darfur and that survivor and firsthand witnesses regularly identify members of the security forces as perpetrators. She also highlighted that sexual violence continues to be chronically under-reported due to fear of reprisals, acute stigma, lack of protection for victims and the inaction of law enforcement.

The United Kingdom welcomes the government's engagement on a framework of cooperation to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. Agreement and complete implementation of this framework is necessary. If the Sudanese Armed Forces and rapid support forces are to be delisted from the report to the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

I would like to highlight, Mr President, to draw attention to the important recommendations made to the committee by SRSR Patten. They were namely;

1. That sexual violence be elevated as a standalone designation criteria.
2. That the Panel of Experts be granted adequate resource and expertise to investigate sexual violence. The committee explicitly requests the Panel to investigate and document alleged incidents of sexual violence and for good;
3. Any future benchmarking process for the possible lifting of targeted sanctions include provisions related to sexual violence in Resolution 2429 and the prevention and accountability measures required under Resolutions 1960 and 2106.

The United Kingdom expresses its support for these recommendations and for the continued efforts of SRSR Patten and her office to address the worrying prevalence of sexual violence in Sudan.

Mr President, while it was not discussed by the committee, let me also take this opportunity to say a couple of words on the current situation in Sudan regarding the ongoing protests. The United Kingdom is concerned by the current situation. Security forces' use of lethal force and arbitrary detentions in response to peaceful process protests is unacceptable and it should stop. We are appalled at reports that security forces have used tear gas and violence within hospitals against those being treated and against doctors providing medical assistance. We repeat our calls for restraint in policing the protests for the release of detainees and for accountability for those killed. The government of Sudan's response to this process will shape the United Kingdom's approach to engagement in the coming months and years.

Mr President, in concluding, let me again thank our Chair for her ongoing commitment, reiterate the importance of the sanctions regime in Sudan and express our hope that all members of the committee will be constructive as we approach the renewal of the 1591 regime next month.

Thank you Mr President.

News story: UK signs new Israel tax agreement to boost investment

Financial Secretary to the Treasury Mel Stride today (17 January) signed a Protocol to update our double taxation convention (DTC) with Israel.

The Protocol to the UK/Israel DTC will facilitate investment in Israel by UK companies in a number of ways, including a reduction in the rates of Israeli tax payable on dividends paid from Israeli companies to the UK. Israeli investors into the UK will benefit from the same reductions on UK tax.

It also introduces modern anti-avoidance provisions that ensure only those companies engaged in genuine business activity can benefit from the treaty, and allows for the exchange of information between the UK and Israel.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury Mel Stride said:

This agreement will facilitate UK investment into Israel by removing tax barriers to cross-border trade. It will also provide important protections against those who seek to use the treaty for tax avoidance purposes.

I'm delighted to sign this deal with such a close ally, and pleased we now have a treaty that reflects the latest international standards. It is a sign of the continued excellent cooperation

between our two countries.

Total trade in goods and services between the two countries increased by 2% last year, reaching £3.9bn in the year to July 2018.

The UK's leading exports to Israel are machinery and electrical equipment, while pharmaceuticals account for more than 70 per cent of Israeli exports to the UK. Israeli companies are major suppliers to the NHS.

With Israel's strong GDP growth, low inflation and falling unemployment rate, it continues to be a growing market for UK companies. Israel has an excellent reputation for innovation and invention and is a world centre for R&D.

The new Protocol provides UK companies with reduced rates of Israeli tax on dividends, interest and no Israeli tax on royalties, while UK Pension Schemes will suffer no Israeli tax on payments of dividends and interest. It also implements standards agreed as per the OECD/G20 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project.

The signature of this agreement follows the signing of a separate Protocol to the UK's DTC with Cyprus. Former government staff, including ex-servicemen and women, drawing a pension in Cyprus were due to pay higher rates of tax from this year, under an agreement signed last March.

Treasury ministers agreed in December to a five-year delay to the tax changes after listening to the concerns of those affected.

Mr Stride said of the Cyprus Protocol:

This agreement is great news for many of our highly valued ex-servicemen and women in Cyprus, who would otherwise have faced a big tax rise this year. I was determined to do the right thing by them.

This Protocol addressed concerns about how the DTC would apply to some individuals and so allows individuals to choose which basis of taxation they want to apply to their government service pensions.

[Press release: Minister for Africa's statement on the situation in Zimbabwe, January 2019](#)

I have been following the events in Zimbabwe over the last week with growing

concern. I summoned the Zimbabwean Ambassador to the United Kingdom to attend the Foreign Office on 17 January to discuss the situation.

Since the weekend there has been widespread unrest and a heavy security force response, with several people killed and many injured.

While we condemn the violent behaviour of some protestors, and unlawful acts such as arson and looting, we are deeply concerned that Zimbabwe's security forces have acted disproportionately in response. In particular, there are disturbing reports of use of live ammunition, intimidation and excessive force.

In addition, the Government of Zimbabwe shut off access to the internet on 15 and 16 January and continues to block a number of social media sites.

We call on the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure its security forces act professionally, proportionately and at all times with respect for human life and constitutional rights. We further call on the Government of Zimbabwe to investigate all allegations of human rights abuses. We also urge the reinstatement of full internet access, consistent with citizens' constitutional right to freedom of expression.

[News story: Trade Remedies Authority on track to protect UK industry](#)

The UK's new independent trade remedies system will protect UK businesses from injury caused by unfair trading practices, such as dumping and subsidies, and unforeseen surges in imports, when we leave the European Union.

Claire Bassett, Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) Chief Executive Designate, updated the International Trade Committee today on the progress that has been made to ensure the TRA will be ready for 29 March 2019.

DIT has already recruited 70% of the future TRA's staff, with 90 staff now appointed.

Over one-third of those in post have now completed the comprehensive technical training programme and are armed with the relevant accounting, legal and economic skills required to conduct trade remedies investigations.

The UK system will be compliant with World Trade Organisation rules, including for the conduct of investigations and provisions on the calculations of dumping and injury. There will be a statutory appeals system for trade remedies decisions.

The TRA will launch a new website, which will allow people to submit applications and evidence as part of the review and investigations process. The new platform has undergone several rounds of user and development testing and will be ready to be launched by the time the UK leaves the EU.

TRA Chief Executive, Claire Bassett said:

We are committed to ensuring that UK industry continues to have the protection it needs against injury caused by unfair trading practices, or unforeseen surges in imports, once we have left the EU. That is why the Department have developed an independent trade remedies framework and I am looking forward to leading the TRA, to deliver this.

The TRA will form a key part of the UK's new independent trade policy, as we prepare to take control of our own trade agenda for the first time in more than 40 years.

The new authority will be based in Reading and will be responsible for investigating cases of unfair trading practices and unforeseen surges in imports that injure UK businesses. It will be able to recommend new measures for the protection of domestic industries.

[News story: Trade marks: delays to notification emails](#)

It is currently taking longer than normal for confirmation emails to be sent out after a trade mark application is submitted on our website.

The following forms are affected:

We are working to fix this issue as soon as possible. This delay does not mean that there is an issue with specific applications. The delay is only affecting how quickly you receive the initial notification email.