

# Speech: Recognising ECOWAS and Civil Society's Role in Resolving Crisis in Guinea-Bissau

Thank you Mr President, and thanks to SRSG Toure and the other briefers for sharing their views and insights.

The situation in Guinea Bissau is concerning. It is not the first country in the world to experience a political impasse. But it is a country still emerging from serious instability and violence in its recent past.

This political impasse has prevented progress on reforms that are critical to addressing key conflict risks in Guinea Bissau. The situation is only likely to become more volatile as we move towards elections. We have already seen violent confrontations between demonstrators and police, and witnessed worrying efforts to curb political freedoms. Economic growth is at risk and a serious deterioration in stability would be deeply damaging for development and human rights. The illicit economy and transnational organised crime risk becoming further entrenched – with global implications. More broadly, instability in Guinea Bissau will affect the wider region, which over the last year has been, for the most part, the site of positive political progress.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the leadership shown by the West African region, particularly through ECOWAS. It has shown persistence and patience; this is a crisis that started in 2015. It brokered the Conakry Agreement 15 months ago. It has agreed to countless communiques and published innumerable statements. It has sent numerous high level delegations to Guinea Bissau – three in the last six months alone.

But now those most responsible for Guinea Bissau's crisis responded with stubborn refusal to give ground and find compromise.

Therefore, it is understandable that the region's patience has worn thin. ECOWAS has now forced to sanctions against individuals deemed responsible for impeding implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The African Union PSC has endorsed this move. The United Kingdom supports ECOWAS decision and we urge the Security Council and the whole international community to remain united in support of ECOWAS efforts.

We also believe it is important to recognise the bold efforts of civil society in Guinea Bissau to resolve the crisis. In particular, the mediation efforts led by the Women Facilitator's Group were an encouraging initiative and we welcome the support given to them by the UN.

As set out in resolution 2343, political support from UNIOGBIS for efforts

towards implementation on the Conakry Agreement should be a priority for UNIOGBIS. The key next step remains appointment of a consensus Prime Minister so that preparations can go ahead for legislative elections in 2018, as per the country's constitution.

As we open discussions on its renewal, the UK will focus on ensuring the Mission's mandate responds to the political reality on the ground today and that it is focused on the highest priority needs.

Mr President,

Guinea Bissau's people watched the country emerge from a period of instability but then found their hopes for democracy obstructed by a political knot which their own leaders tied. Support from the region and the international community to prevent the country from backsliding further will not succeed until those who tied the knot untangle it. We hope that good sense, compromise and a commitment to Guinea Bissau's future prevails.

Thank you.

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## **News story: Education Secretary tours the Midlands and North of England**

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has met teachers, children, young people, parents and social workers in the Midlands and North of England.

This was part of a three-day tour to see first-hand how high expectations and the right support can ensure all children and young people get the opportunities they deserve.

With 1.9million more children now in good or outstanding schools across the country, standards are rising. In his first visit to the regions, the Education Secretary visited a range of organisations from across the education system – from childcare through to primary school, further education and support for unemployed adults.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It has been fantastic to get out and meet so many inspiring teachers, young people, children and education leaders who are all working so hard to improve outcomes for children and young people in their area.

We know that there is some really excellent teaching and learning going on up and down the country – and this trip has really highlighted to me how well it can be done and how we must work

together to learn from the best and ensure it is happening across the board.

From high quality childcare to achieving excellent results for disadvantaged pupils and training engineers of the future, I have seen some truly inspiring work.

### **Further details on the Secretary of State's visits:**

On Monday, 12 February, the Education Secretary met teachers and pupils at Sandon Academy in Stoke-on-Trent – an outstanding primary school where progress for children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is well above average. The school, which has been praised for its innovative use of pupil premium funding to raise results for disadvantaged children, is home to a farm, mini village and on-site nursery.

Also in the region, Mr Hinds met the North Staffordshire YMCA which offers skills training to young people to help them improve their employability skills and gain qualifications. The Secretary of State saw the youth campus, which offers accommodation to 16 – 25 year olds, and sports centre, and met some of the young people who have been supported into employment, education or training through the centre's work.

He went on to meet apprentices at local data solutions business, Synectics Solutions, crowned Staffordshire Business of the Year and employer to over 350 staff, including local apprentices.

On Tuesday, 13 February, the Education Secretary headed north to Blackpool to see some of the high quality technical and professional education and training available to young people and adults in the region. On a visit to Blackpool and The Fylde College's nautical campus in Fleetwood, he met apprentices and trainee nautical engineers while being shown round by Principal Bev Robinson and Head of Campus Captain Neil Atkinson. The college, rated outstanding by Ofsted, is the UK hub for the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas and is an Associate College of Lancaster University.

The Secretary of State went on to visit the Build Up project, which uses the college's classroom facilities two days a week to offer vital construction skills training to unemployed adults – helping them get the skills they need to find employment.

While in the region, Mr Hinds also visited Hawes Side Academy to see the half term activities being run in partnership with the Blackpool Football Club Community Trust – designed to offer extra-curricular activities to young people and aim to reduce the number of those not in education, employment or training in the area.

This was followed by a meeting with a number of multi academy trust leaders from across Blackpool and Lancashire to discuss how schools can work together to raise education standards and increase opportunity for young people across the country.

On Wednesday, 14 February, Mr Hinds' visit focused on how high quality early education and childcare is crucial to a child's future success at primary and secondary school. He travelled to the North East and North Yorkshire where he visited nurseries in Stockton-on-Tees and Bedale. Visiting Fairfield Day Care in Stockton on Tees and Incy Wincy nursery in Bedale, the Education Secretary heard from staff and parents about how the Government's 30 hours free childcare offer is being implemented in their area.

This was followed by a visit to North East Lincolnshire's Children's Services to meet with council leaders, social workers and local organisations such as charities and the police, to understand the strengths and challenges associated with delivering a wide range of children's services.

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## **Press release: Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP statement**

Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

Both parties have conducted discussions seriously and in good faith.

While substantive progress towards an agreement has been made, it appears that this phase of talks has reached a conclusion.

I would urge everyone to reflect on the circumstances which have led to this and their positions, both now and in the future.

The position of the UK Government remains the same: devolved government is in the best interests of everyone in Northern Ireland and is best for the Union. I believe the basis for an accommodation still exists.

As the Prime Minister said during her visit on Monday, we are ready to bring forward legislation to enable an Executive to be formed.

We will continue to work with everyone to make sure we do deliver this. We now need to consider practical steps.

In the continued absence of an Executive, other challenging decisions will have to be taken by the UK Government.

I will update Parliament when the House returns from Recess next week.

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## **Press release: Joint statement by US Secretary of Homeland Security and the Home Secretary**

The Digital Forum, led by a US interagency task force, brings together technology experts and community leaders to improve terrorism prevention activities.

Secretary Nielsen and Home Secretary Rudd released the following joint statement:

Over the past 2 days, we have had the opportunity to meet with tech industry leaders in Silicon Valley to discuss our shared fight against terrorist use of the internet. Terrorists utilize social media to radicalise and recruit individuals around the world. We want to expand understanding of violent radicalisation and terrorist recruitment so more people can identify it—and more importantly—prevent it. At the Digital Forum on terrorism prevention, credible community voices learned directly from startups, researchers, and the technology sector how to deliver messages to disrupt terrorist narratives.

While in California, we had the opportunity to meet with the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism. This group represents the first time major companies have come together to work on research and technology solutions to combat the exploitation of the internet by terrorists. These companies have made notable progress on fighting back against the threat, and we look forward to engaging with them to continue advancing concrete action that will make it harder for terrorists to reach our people.

We believe that, by combining the talents and resources of government, community organizations, researchers, and industry, we can combat terrorist use of the internet, and make our communities more resilient against radicalisation to violence.

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## News story: MOD submits final Typhoon proposal to Belgium

A Typhoon F2 fighter jet pilot from 29 Squadron applies the afterburners as the aircraft takes off from RAF Coningsby. Crown copyright.

The proposal comes with the full support of the governments of the four Eurofighter nations – Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – as partners in Europe's largest collaborative military aircraft programme.

The proposal includes 34 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, underpinned by the offer of a deep strategic, defence and industrial partnership between the Governments of Belgium and the UK.

Speaking in Brussels, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

These proven jets offer Belgium a formidable capability which forms the backbone of European air power, as well as a comprehensive long-term defence and industrial partnership with the UK. A unique partnership with the RAF and integration with our world-leading support service mean Belgium's selection of the Typhoon would be a powerful demonstration of us working together to support security across the continent in the face of intensifying threats.

Speaking at the press conference in-country, Air Vice Marshal Keith Bethell said:

Our world-class Typhoon has led the way in combat air power and this demonstrates the continued confidence in the capability the Typhoon has to offer. With more than 20,000 flying hours on global operations to date, the Typhoon offers unparalleled reliability and proven interoperability with our allies

As well as the jets, the UK are offering Belgium the opportunity to benefit from the RAF's experience of over ten years operating the Typhoon, and to further strengthen over 70 years of co-operation between the two forces. It proposes integration with the RAF's Typhoon support arrangements which is considered the most cost-effective next generation combat aircraft support service. The proposal also includes a comprehensive package including a training partnership which would see personnel from Belgium and the UK jointly train and exercise together.

The UK MOD is leading the proposal on behalf of the Eurofighter Typhoon

partner nations and companies. The invitation from Belgium to submit a final offer demonstrates the strong confidence in the jet. The proposal to Belgium represents the most inclusive international equipment partnership presented to another European partner by the Eurofighter Typhoon programme.

The proposal also offers Belgium the opportunity to establish a National Network Cyber Centre, a Cyber Innovation Centre and a Cyber Research Partnership, all underpinned by a partnership between the UK and Belgian governments.

As 'the true European solution to meet Belgium's Air Combat Capability Program', the selection of the Typhoon would also act as a catalyst for greater aerospace and defence industrial cooperation across Europe. There would be opportunities for Belgian industry to work more closely with the Eurofighter Typhoon industrial partners which include some of Europe's largest defence companies. Through closer industrial cooperation Belgium and Belgian industry would also be positioned for partnership in the development of next generation combat air capabilities.

The Typhoon is a highly capable, combat proven, air defence and ground attack aircraft with full swing-role capabilities. In addition to supporting RAF operations protecting the UK in the skies above Britain and globally, the Typhoon has already been purchased by nine nations around the world. Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson was in Qatar at the end of last year to witness Qatar's purchase of 24 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft which will help sustain thousands of jobs in the UK and across Europe.