

Speech: “All Libyans, regardless of their age, gender, or where they are from, must feel represented and understood by their political leaders.”

Thank you Mr President.

And may I thank both Ghassan and Rina for your briefings here today. And a very warm welcome and thank you also to our briefer from civil society, Ms. Sharief, who set out some very powerful messages and set out very eloquently the importance of an inclusive peace process, including particularly women and youth, and actually it would be very helpful, perhaps as follow up to this conversation to hear anymore from UNSMIL on how they are integrating the gender perspective in their work.

Let me begin, Mr President, by welcoming the Special Representative Salamé's update on the political process and reiterating the United Kingdom's full support for his work. In our statement of the 14 December, we in this Council urged all parties to support the political process in a spirit of compromise for the sake of the Libyan people.

This must include support for Special Representative Salamé's efforts to secure consent to amend the Libyan Political Agreement and commitment to the sequencing of the UN Action Plan.

As Ms. Sharief highlighted, civil society has an essential role to play in ensuring the voices of the people are also heard during discussions on the future of their country.

All Libyans, regardless of their age, gender, or where they are from, must feel represented and understood by their political leaders. This will encourage Libyans to give their political leadership their support and build trust in the political process.

The greatest immediate need is the establishment of a more inclusive political platform. That is essential to create an executive better able to improve the security, human rights and economic conditions in Libya.

A more inclusive political settlement will also help build a context more conducive to preparation for elections. We welcome the Special Representative's emphasis on ensuring the right conditions are in place ahead of elections, including the necessary political, legislative and security preparations to ensure their success.

Mr President,

The security situation in Libya remains of deep concern, as we saw from clashes at Mitiga airport on Monday. As we've said before, there can be no military solution in Libya. All parties must exercise restraint and express their support for national reconciliation. This must include reconciliation of the security forces.

Unified security forces under the command of the civilian government, which are representative of and work for all Libyans, will also enable the threat posed by extremist groups to be tackled in a sustainable way. It will help bring an end to the impunity of armed groups which are inextricably linked to the gravity concerning human rights situation.

Ungoverned spaces in Libya are creating the conditions for abuses and violations of international humanitarian law which take place against civilians, internally-displaced persons and migrants.

We fully support the work of the AU-EU- UN Taskforce in tackling slavery in Libya. We call on all parties that are suspected of committing, ordering, or failing to prevent such human rights abuses and violations to be fully investigated, and if found guilty, to be held to account for their actions. We also stand ready to consider the sanctioning of individuals involved in people trafficking in modern slavery.

We are also concerned by reported restrictions to civil and political freedoms and intimidation of civil society organisations, public servants, religious groups and national minorities, including recent attacks of Sufi Shrines and Amazigh representatives. These groups must be allowed to participate in Libyan society and the political process.

And finally Mr President, on the economic situation. This Council needs to continue to protect the Libyan people from economic hardship, including by supporting the restoration of the economy and the delivery of services across the country. We must act robustly against attempts to illicitly sell oil and establish parallel institutions.

We need to continue to ensure that sanctions measures keep up with the situation on the ground. This includes the work we have done to address fuel oil smuggling. But we should also be ready to rectify inadvertent consequences, such as addressing the depreciation of frozen Libyan Investment Authority funds – which remain frozen at the Libyan government's request until their eventual return for the benefit of the Libyan people.

Mr President,

A stable, unified, inclusive government is the best way to improve the security conditions, the economic fortunes and human rights situation for millions of Libyans. It will also improve global peace and security and our ability to address the challenges of migration. We must continue to stand together in support of Special Representative Salamé's efforts to achieve this. And we, like him, urge Libya's political leaders to put their country first.

Thank you.

Speech: Anne Milton: speech at Sixth Form Colleges Association conference

Thank you Bill for that very kind introduction, and for giving me the opportunity to speak here today. The work that you and your colleagues do to transform the lives of young people is so important for them and for the country. You change lives.

As I have said before, I am determined to see the sixth form sector get the recognition it deserves. Indeed it is well earned – the work you do transforms lives.

It probably should go without saying that I value the key role that Sixth Form Colleges and 16-19 academies have to play in post-16 education and I want to work with you to achieve so you can deliver outstanding outcomes for everyone. But I am saying it anyway! I think it is important to restate.

Our shared vision of a sixth form sector that includes great colleges and academies with excellent teachers, embedded in communities, can only be reached if we work together. I will always be your advocate in Government. That's what Ministers are there for. I know you have brilliant support from your local MPs whatever political party they belong to. If you have that don't underestimate it.

It is not just about great places to study, it's also how you, as educators of sixth formers, respond to the social and economic challenges that we face as a country today: helping to tackle disadvantage, increasing social mobility and training our future leaders.

We have significant challenges and there is a focus on the introduction of T-levels and apprenticeships. But, that shouldn't and doesn't eclipse how crucial the curriculum you deliver to a significant number of our children is. We want all post-16 education to be prestigious and you are the key leaders in providing consistency and continuity up to and beyond the introduction of T-levels, encouraging pupils into the direction that is right for them and allowing them to be achieve their potential.

You know, and I know, how powerful the education and the college environment you provide is for social mobility. Social mobility is dependent on education. A few succeed without it – we all know of exceptions – but for the vast majority of us, social mobility doesn't happen without education. You are there for young people who wish to pursue further education, particularly in academic subjects, and who are ready to study somewhere that is not school.

That is also at the heart of the Department's work: extending opportunity, giving a real choice to young people and unlocking ambition for everyone.

Our recently published Social Mobility Action Plan – Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential – talked about a high quality post-16 education choice for all young people.

We have more people going to university than ever before, including more disadvantaged young people, but we need to expand access further to the best universities. We need rewarding careers and jobs that develop the potential of everyone.

In December, I was very pleased to launch the Government's careers strategy. It sets out a long-term plan to build a world-class careers system that will help young people and adults choose the career that's right for them. This was a long time waiting for an announcement. For me the front cover says it all. Skills is the largest word. The strategy aims for every school and college to have an excellent dedicated Careers Leader and you can play your part working alongside schools, FE colleges, universities and other local organisations.

For me, meeting the challenge of both making sure people are, and feel, they can change the direction of their lives – becoming socially mobile – is at the core of why I do this job. I will be your champion within government, ensuring your contribution and that drive for social mobility is understood.

You have a key role in helping young people from disadvantaged backgrounds do well at university. And, by working together on this shared purpose, we are more likely to succeed. I try very hard never to use the word partnership, as it goes in the category of political clichés. But working together in a meaningful, constructive, dynamic and effective way matters. It can make a difference.

At the Association of Colleges Conference, I spoke about changing the way we work together. I want to continue that discussion with you, both directly and through the Sixth Form College Association about your particular challenges and discuss any upcoming opportunities and how we can work together differently.

There are three key areas that matter.

The first of those is support: from Government, for the sector. Money matters, I know, but there are also other issues that can make a difference.

Wherever we can, we want to harness capacity to improve from within the sector through collaboration, rather than relying on competition to achieve improvement.

That's what we are doing through the new Strategic College Improvement Fund and with the new National Leaders for Further Education programme.

I am pleased that out of the six applications approved for the pilot phase of the Improvement Fund, two are from sixth form colleges. We have recently

recruited the first of our new cohort of National Leaders and I am pleased that this includes Peter McGee from the outstanding St John Rigby Sixth Form College. He will work to help improvement in colleges. And for those of you that are academies, we have recently extended the Strategic Schools Improvement Fund so that it also covers all post-16 institutions. I said we want to harness capacity from within the sector through collaboration, but where that capacity doesn't exist we will invest with these funds in programmes such as the Strategic College Improvement Fund and the National Leaders of Further Education.

I know there is widespread concern about the level of funding for 16-19 year olds and in particular for those young people who will continue to follow academic programmes rather than taking new T-levels.

When we made the commitment in the 2015 Spending Review to protect the base rate of £4,000 per student per year until at least 2020, that did set spending plans for the next few years and we are still operating within that Spending Review plan. You would like more, I know. With more you can do more.

However, we have announced additional money as an incentive to grow participation in level 3 maths, with an extra £600 per year for those above the baseline. Again, there is potential here for sixth form colleges to benefit. Yes, we will always return to the question of funding in the longer term and will want to continue to talk to the sector about how to secure the high quality education all our young people need, but to do this in an sustainable and affordable way. Sixth form colleges undoubtedly have a key role in this.

It would be another cliché for me to say "we also want and need to play an active role in ensuring everyone in society reaches their fullest potential."

But I think you will agree that none of us can develop the best response to many of the biggest challenges we face if any of us work in isolation. Only by working together, will we realise our shared ambition of world class sixth form provision for everybody. Richard Atkins' work as FE Commissioner is an example of this.

You will know that I have recently extended his role to include sixth form colleges. As well as supporting sixth form colleges to overcome quality or finance issues, he will now step in to support colleges earlier to prevent quality or finance becoming issues in the first place. Richard has an outstanding record, raising standards and improving outcomes for learners, and his unique viewpoint has been of benefit to many colleges. As principal at Exeter College, Richard ensured the college delivered high quality A Level provision giving him insight into the challenges and benefits that come with that. For those of you that lead 16-19 academies, Regional Schools Commissioners play a similar role.

The area review programme has also helped colleges to think differently. For example, Priestley College in Warrington, Cheshire was a trailblazer, converting to academy status as part of the newly formed The Challenge Academy Trust. Formalising some of the partnerships that emerged as part of

the borough wide work during the area review, the Trust brings together existing academies and maintained schools.

If we are to produce world-class provision, every educator in a region must work together for the good of their learners and local communities. Priestley College, at the centre of their learning community, is a shining example of this.

The third area I want to touch on is the role you have to play within the local communities you serve, going further in looking outwards to your local communities.

We should all strive to do more, to reach out to new ideas, to new relationships. We should not remain parochial, but always be looking for new ways to do things, such as innovative ways to make use of your collective resources for learners in your communities or being flexible and reaching out to other organisations and providers. Stale does not work. I am constantly looking for better ways of doing things. No wholesale change. But have we missed an opportunity? Could we extend the reach of good colleges? What about the children who find academic work a challenge? This is why I wanted to be an Education Minister – your Minister. Being open to new ways of thinking, being flexible around how we provide learning opportunities and having a learner centred focus will only improve what we are doing and what we are providing.

As members of an increasingly diverse organisation, you being here today, continuing long-standing collaboration and beginning new ones with each other, will ensure that high quality post-16 education choice for all young people becomes a reality.

As Ministers we are fortunate to have very helpful officials who draft us our speeches. And like many draft speeches, I read the conclusion ended with the words that “this is a hugely exciting and challenging time”. What does that mean? It is possibly political speak for the fact that the challenge is money.

But I guess it is exciting too. Exciting because with the government focus on social mobility clear, we have a choice to change people’s lives.

Without you – we cannot do this. Your hard work, your commitment and your belief in what you are doing will make that government focus on social mobility become a reality.

Speech: Penny Mordaunt speech at

Launch of National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security.

I want to start by telling you a personal story about a woman I met a couple of years ago.

Her name is Zara and she was the first woman to graduate from the ANAOA, the Afghan army's officer training academy, and she was in the first cohort of women to go through the officer training programme. And on graduation she won the sword of honour.

To do that she would have had to have sought permission from every male member of her family to join the armed forces, she would have had to endure a very arduous training regime in some very challenging circumstances, whilst raising a child. And she would have faced discrimination and immense challenges.

When I first saw the women training some time before I met Zara, they were training behind a brick wall because they were not allowed to integrate with the men.

And I asked her- what had been her motivation? Why had she done so much? Why had she challenged herself so much? And why had she put up with so much?

And she said- because I have a stake, and I have a child. I love my country and I want to shape it and I want to protect those and what I love.

Whether it's voting or having a say, whether it's being able to contribute because all your talents have been enabled to flourish. Whether it is being able to live your life to the full because you have control over it, or security. And whether it is being able to defend yourself and those who you love.

All of those things we must ensure that women, wherever they are, are able to do so.

And there is still so much to do. In particular in conflict situations.

Now I know I am preaching to the choir here. But I just want to illustrate this point. I'm told that at this event today there are 150 people.

And if I ask this room to pretend for a moment that you were the world's female population. And I asked you how many of you had suffered either physical or sexual violence and I asked you to stand up, 50 of you would be standing.

If I got you to imagine that you were the female population of South Sudan and I asked you the same question, 100 of you would be standing.

And If I asked you to imagine you were the female population of Afghanistan,

where Zara comes from, 130 of you would be on your feet.

So there is still much to do. But we are increasingly seeing that women, when they wield power in places of conflict, they are capable of bringing about extraordinary change.

When women have a seat at the negotiating table, security improves. Peace lasts longer. 35% longer. But other development initiatives also become more effective.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda benefits everyone – from the local community to national government and everyone in between.

Peace brings stability. Stability attracts business. And business creates prosperity, which transforms lives and economies.

This agenda isn't just the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do. It is the entire margin of victory. Its benefits ripple out to the wider world. And make no mistake – a safer world means a safer UK.

This spirit of participation – this principle of women as agents of change – lies at the heart of the new National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

From Somalia to Syria, from Burma to Afghanistan, women have been instrumental in the development of the plan. And I am proud to help launch it today.

The National Action Plan will place women at the very centre of DFID's peace, security and humanitarian programmes.

This means taking proper account of women's needs in conflict zones.

But it also means recognising the valuable role women play as decision-makers and leaders.

And crucially, it means ensuring women are involved in planning at every stage.

And that is why I insist that organisations we fund ensure that women's needs are met and their participation is in every aspect of our humanitarian response.

When it comes to women in conflict zones, the message of DFID and our partners is simple:

We will listen. And we will act.

Because only by unlocking women's potential will we build a safer, more peaceful and more prosperous world for us all. We owe that to Zara and we owe that to every woman on Earth.

Thank you.

News story: Practical support for businesses affected by Carillion liquidation

The government understands that many businesses that were contracted to Carillion will be concerned about their ability to pay their tax. As part of its ongoing commitment to delivering support for businesses, HMRC will provide practical advice and guidance to those affected through its Business Payment Support Service (BPSS).

The BPSS connects businesses with HMRC staff who can offer practical help and advice on a wide range of tax problems, providing a fast and sympathetic route to agreeing the best way forward and addressing immediate concerns with practical solutions.

The BPSS can:

- agree instalment arrangements if you're unable to pay your tax on time following the Carillion collapse
- suspend any debt collection proceedings
- review penalties for missing statutory deadlines
- reduce any payments on account
- agree to defer payments due to short-term cash flow difficulties

HMRC can also provide workers and their families with cash support through the tax credits system – details are on our website. Most importantly, if you're worried about paying your tax, please talk to us because we're here to help.

Further Information

1. Our dedicated BPSS is available to any business struggling to make their tax payments as a result of economic conditions.
 2. The service is open 7 days a week between 8am and 8pm on weekdays, closing at 4pm on Saturday and Sunday: 0300 200 3835.
 3. For more information on the support available, please see the [BPSS webpages](#).
 4. Follow HMRC's press office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](#).
 5. See [HMRC's Flickr channel](#).
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Press release: Ploughshare announces two new board members

The Ploughshare board is pleased to welcome two new members, Professor Penny Endersby and Dr Cerys Rees OBE.

Piers White, Chairman of Ploughshare Innovations, said:

We have worked hard to ensure we have the right balance of skills, experience and backgrounds to match the ambitions of the company. Penny and Cerys bring considerable energy and experience and I am sure their contributions will help us refine and deliver our strategy.

Professor Endersby is currently the Division Head of Cyber and Information Systems Division at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), where she has significantly developed the Intellectual Property (IP) portfolio. Penny has a well-established career in the defence industry, starting in the field of armour and explosives before broadening to run Dstl's Physical Sciences Department. She has a degree in physics from Cambridge University, holds a visiting professorship in Electronics and Computer Science at Southampton University, and is a fellow and former council member of the Institute of Physics. She is also the Honorary Treasurer of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

Professor Endersby commented:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve as a Non-executive Director for Ploughshare. Having followed the fortunes of the company from its inception and worked for many years to encourage the generation of the IP, it will be fascinating to see the details of how it is taken forward. I look forward to a productive relationship and hearing about many more fascinating technological innovations.

Dr Rees is the Dstl Fellow for Chemical and Biological (CB) Analysis and Attribution with responsibility for the delivery of Dstl's research and operational capability in this area to meet the requirements of defence and security stakeholders in the UK. She first worked at Porton Down as a university placement student in the early 1990s, and returned to Dstl in 1999 having completed a PhD to undertake research in microbial hazard assessment and the development of novel medical countermeasures before moving on to develop the CB analysis capability. Cerys is a Dstl Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Senior Scientific Adviser, trained to provide CB tactical and strategic level advice to UK police and military in support of operations; to date, she has supported prosecutions with expert witness testimony under both

the Chemical and Biological Weapons Acts in the UK.

Dr Rees commented:

It is a privilege to have been selected to join the Ploughshare board as a Non-executive Director. Having worked in both fundamental research and in the exploitation of new technologies for many years, I'm excited at the prospect of being able to contribute to the full exploitation of the ground-breaking research which is conducted in government.

Professor Endersby and Dr Rees fill the vacancies left by Jenni Henderson and Dame Wendy Hall.