

Press release: Government launches plan to increase participation in democracy

The government has launched the first ever [Democratic Engagement Plan](#) today (19 December 2017) to tackle democratic exclusion and outline how it will increase participation among under registered groups.

The Minister for the Constitution Chris Skidmore launched the Plan today at the first meeting of the National Democracy Week Council, made up of organisations from across the civil society sector, working in partnership with government.

The Council has been established to plan activities for a week of unified national action that will take place between 2 to 6 July next year in celebration of two significant anniversaries – 100 years since women won the right to vote and 90 years since women won equal voting rights to men.

The Democratic Engagement Plan, launched today, follows the ‘Every Voice Matters’ tour, which over the last year has visited every region and nation in Great Britain. The Minister met over 100 organisations that represent people who are underrepresented on the electoral register, gathering insight on the barriers these groups face engaging with the democratic process.

The Plan sets out our approach to creating an inclusive democracy by:

- building on record levels of voter registration and identifying where there is more to do
- further encouraging participation to make our democracy more inclusive than ever
- launching National Democracy Week to promote democratic engagement
- identifying the barriers faced by specific groups that are currently under-represented on the electoral register

Also, today is the next stage of the government’s plans to make changes to anonymous registration, making it more accessible for those who need it most. The draft legislation will be laid in Parliament, if it is approved we anticipate the changes will come into force in time for the May local elections in England.

Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore said:

I am pleased to publish the first Democratic Engagement Plan which sets out our longer-term approach to encouraging democratic participation.

We now have a better understanding of how participation differs between different groups and areas and this plan sets out how best

we can engage with those who are under-registered so ours is a democracy that works for everyone.

We want to ensure that everyone eligible who wishes to register to vote and participate in our democracy is given the opportunity to do so. There are still millions of people who are not enrolled on the electoral register or choose not to vote. But as this Plan shows, in our democracy, every voice matters.

News story: Home Secretary's open letter to EU citizens in the UK

I'm proud that so many EU citizens like yourself have built your lives in the UK and made it your home. We value your contribution which is why the government put safeguarding your rights as the first priority in the Brexit negotiations.

I am absolutely delighted that we have now reached an agreement with the EU that does this. I know that at times you've had an anxious wait while the fine details were ironed out, but we wanted to get it right and we have always had you at the forefront of our thoughts.

We have always said that we will continue to recognise the value you bring to our society, and that we will remain an open and diverse country. Hopefully this deal provides reassurance that we will do just that.

The agreement we have reached ensures the rights you and your family currently have remain broadly the same with access to healthcare, benefits and pensions protected. And your existing close family members living outside the UK retain the right to join you in future. These rights will be cemented in UK law meaning you can live your life as you do now with the security of knowing they won't change. Irish citizens also have their existing rights, associated with the Common Travel Area arrangements, protected.

Away from the negotiations, my team at the Home Office has been working hard to build the digital system that you'll use to get your new status. It's being designed from scratch to be quick and simple to use. There won't be bureaucratic hurdles – those processing applications will work in your favour.

What's more, it will cost no more than the fee a British person pays for a passport and if you already have valid permanent residence documentation it will be free. There will be support for the vulnerable and those without access to a computer, and we're working with EU citizens' representatives and embassies to ensure the system works for everyone.

You do not need to do anything just yet. You will see more detail about the settled status scheme from us in the new year and we expect applications will open during the second half of 2018. In the meantime, please do share this message with your friends and family so that they too can stay up to date through [our mailing list](#).

I hope that the agreement we have reached provides certainty to you and your family ahead of Christmas. EU citizens, like yourself, who have made the UK their home are our family, our neighbours and our colleagues and we want you to stay.

[Further guidance for EU citizens in the UK is available on GOV.UK.](#)

Press release: Justice Secretary pledges commitment to tackling racial inequality in the Criminal Justice System

The Lammy review, published in October, found evidence that people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds have a worse experience of the CJS. David Lammy's findings included striking statistics which show starkly the work that will be required to address this deep-rooted problem – this includes the fact that BAME men and women represent 25% of prisoners, despite making up just 14% of the population.

David Lammy made a range of recommendations, including that data should be published and analysed regularly on ethnicity and the CJS, and that deferred prosecution models should be explored further.

The Justice Secretary today pledged to take forward work around each of the 35 recommendations – making clear that action had been taken on several already – and went even further by challenging all parts of the criminal justice system to seek out further opportunities to challenge race bias.

While some of the changes will take longer to achieve than others, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has already made progress on several recommendations. For example, prison governors have been asked to immediately implement the recommendation to establish a diverse forum in prisons to review the use of force. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice has met several recommendations by publishing data that has never been compiled or released before on race bias in the CJS. This includes a breakdown by ethnicity of parole board hearing outcomes and the educational background of offenders, linking with data held by the Department for Education – and the MoJ will take every opportunity to keep adding new data.

Today's response builds on the work already announced by the Prime Minister earlier this year when she published the Race Disparity Audit. The Prime Minister challenged society to "explain or change" the disparities which were uncovered.

Academics, campaigners and think-tanks will have an open invitation to scrutinise data on race bias. Where the MoJ cannot explain discrepancies in the way different groups are treated – it will make reforms to address them.

Where a recommendation in the Lammy review cannot be implemented in full or exactly as recommended, further work will be carried out and an alternative approach will be found that achieves the same aim.

The Ministry of Justice also committed to doing everything possible to encourage and support other organisations to take action to meet their specific recommendations.

Justice Secretary David Lidington said:

This Government is committed to exposing injustice wherever it exists. Where we cannot explain differences in outcomes for different groups, we will reform.

Effective justice simply cannot be delivered unless everyone has full confidence in our Criminal Justice System.

This is the very first step in a change of attitude towards race disparity that will touch on every part of the criminal justice system for years to come.

Ministers have also started discussions with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime about piloting a deferred prosecution scheme in the capital.

Work will be driven forward by a new Race and Ethnicity Board, made up of the key partners in the CJS responsible for implementing the Lammy recommendations. The Board will work with external stakeholders to inform and encourage challenge on its progress. Extensive publication of data will ensure the Ministry of Justice and partners across the CJS are held to account for reducing race bias.

Notes to Editors:

- The Government's response to David Lammy will be published on the Ministry of Justice web page on Gov.UK at 9.30am on Tuesday 19 December.
- The Government's 'Ethnicity Facts and Figures' website can be found at <http://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk>

Speech: “If we embrace action. If we quell the conflicts. If we realise the peaceful societies envisaged in SDG 16...we could save 1.2 million lives”

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you to our briefer, High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu.

Last year, 560,000 people died at the hands of small arms and light weapons.

That's more than one death every minute, of every day, for an entire year. That is the tragic reality that the Secretary-General's report brings to life.

Illicit small arms are tools of daily destruction. There's never a shortage. They're easy to acquire. And they have an unparalleled impact on lives and communities.

Saferworld estimate that the majority of direct conflict deaths in the developing world are the result of the use of small arms.

Mr. President, the hundreds of thousands of deaths are just the tip of the iceberg. Illicit small arms add fuel to the fire of armed conflicts around the world. They facilitate the most heinous human rights violations and abuses. They are the preferred instruments of war for those who carry out mass killings and rape. They equip terrorists and violent extremists. And where you find transnational criminals dealing in human lives, illicit drugs or illegal wildlife products, there is little doubt you will also find small arms.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in South Sudan. It is no longer just soldiers who carry weapons. Small arms have become the norm. When they become violent, local level disputes are not resolved with homemade traditional weapons, but with guns. Even children herding cattle must carry arms to protect themselves and their livelihood. In this culture of weapons, local disputes now escalate faster and increasingly result in large-scale casualties. For a country torn apart by a national level conflict, this is a price that South Sudanese communities cannot afford to pay. Armed fighting widens rifts between groups and entrenches issues, and community conflict resolution is also far less effective when councils are faced with heavily armed groups.

And the problem doesn't stop at the border of conflict zones. Transfers of weapons and trained fighters spread the threat to neighbouring countries. We

have seen this in Somalia, and elsewhere. If we are to make any progress in tackling this challenge, we need to work collectively to strengthen arms controls, destroy excessive stockpiles and tackle the drivers of instability and conflict, which fuel the demand for illicit weapons.

It is for these reasons that we were proud to adopt Resolution 2220 in 2015 and continue the Council's focus on this important issue.

Mr. President, outside of the Council, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is one of our most powerful tools in the ongoing fight to stop irresponsible arms transfers. The Treaty's vision of a globally well-regulated, legal trade in arms is one that the United Kingdom fully supports. Universalisation, especially getting the right states around the table, must remain a priority. Greater participation will increase the Treaty's influence, strength and reputation. We encourage all States which have not yet done so to make ratification or accession a national priority.

And universalisation must go hand in hand with implementation. That means doing all we can to stop diversion, tackle corruption, dismantle trafficking networks and strengthen information sharing.

Mr. President, since the UN Programme of Action was adopted in 2001, we have seen more and more States take action to improve stockpile management. This is a recognition of the impact on their communities, of weapons diverted from national stockpiles to criminal activity or the devastating consequences of explosions of ammunition depots.

As we look ahead to the Third Review Conference on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument next year, it is important that we continue to encourage states to prioritise resources for stockpile security and surplus destruction.

The UK is proud to have provided technical and financial support both bilaterally and through regional and multilateral organisations such as the African Union, the OSCE and the Commonwealth. Through this, we are helping countries to strengthen arms control frameworks, implement better stockpile management procedures and tackle the drivers of terrorism, crime, poverty and exclusion, which fuel the demand for illicit weapons.

Mr. President, I'd like to conclude with a forward look to 2030. A report recently published by Small Arms Survey shows us what the world could look like if we all implement violence reduction initiatives.

If we embrace action. If we quell the conflicts. If we realise the peaceful societies envisaged in SDG 16. If we do all of this, we could save 1.2 million lives. That Mr. President is an outcome which would be fitting of the body charged with upholding international peace and security.

Thank you.

Speech: “I once again reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible”

Thank you Mr President,

The United Kingdom voted in favour of the draft resolution before us today because it is in line with previous UN Security Council resolutions – including 242, 476, 478 and 2334 – and with our established position on the status of Jerusalem.

That position is clear and long-standing: the status of Jerusalem should be determined through a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. In line with those same resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

As we have previously said, we disagree with the US decision unilaterally to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel before a final status agreement and to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. As recent events in the region have shown, these decisions are unhelpful to the prospects for peace in the region, an aim that all of us in this Council remain committed to. The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

Importantly, the resolution that has just been voted on stressed that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be resolved through negotiations; affirmed that decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect; demanded that all states comply with Security Council resolutions regarding Jerusalem; and called for the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East without delay.

Our position since the Security Council met on the 8 December has not changed. We recognise that Jerusalem holds huge significance and holiness for Jews, Muslims and Christians. We reiterate the fundamental necessity of maintaining the status quo at the Holy Sites, in particular the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif. We continue to value Jordan’s important role as custodian of the Holy Sites, and remain fully supportive of their efforts to maintain calm.

Mr President, we must now all look forward. We share President Trump’s desire to bring an end to this conflict and welcome his commitment to a two-state

solution negotiated between the parties. This includes his clear acknowledgement that the final status of Jerusalem, including the sovereign boundaries within the city, must be subject to negotiations between the parties.

Our commitment to, and position on, an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement has also not changed. It should be based on the lines as they stood on June 4, 1967 with equal land swaps to reflect the national, security, and religious interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Jerusalem should be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, and its status must be determined through a final status agreement. A just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees is needed that is demographically compatible with the principle of two states for two peoples. This position is consistent with the resolution before us. We now strongly encourage the US Administration to bring forward detailed proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

We call on all parties to act with restraint, reject violence, and work together to ensure calm and stability. This will give the peace process the best chance of success. We remain fully supportive of progress towards a lasting peace and will do everything we can to achieve it.

Mr President, any peace effort needs to take account of the people, not just the land and the Holy Sites. For too long Israelis have lived in fear of rockets and terror; this wreaks havoc in people's daily lives and renders peace hard to achieve. As do attempts by some to deny the ancient and legitimate connection of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to Jerusalem.

For Palestinians living outside East Jerusalem including the Old City, many are effectively cut off from it. Those that can enter have to wait in long lines to pass through checkpoints. Within East Jerusalem there live more than 320,000 Palestinians. The vast majority are permanent residents, but their permits can be revoked at any point. If they apply for Israeli citizenship, and most do not, a high proportion of applications are rejected.

The lives of Jews and Palestinians – and both groups for whom Jerusalem is uniquely holy – must not be forgotten in any peace effort.

I once again reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible.

These should be supported by the international community and realise the vision of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 whose seventieth anniversary we marked last month: a safe and secure Israel, the homeland for the Jewish People, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, the homeland for the Palestinian people.

Thank you.