

Press release: UK stands by Caribbean and Overseas Territories

On her first overseas visit International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has reaffirmed that the UK stands by those Overseas Territories and independent Commonwealth Caribbean countries devastated by the recent hurricanes and seen how British aid is helping to rebuild people's lives.

The International Development Secretary accompanied His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales during a visit to the British Virgin Islands and Dominica, where she thanked British humanitarian heroes and the military for working tirelessly on the relief efforts on the worst-hit islands. She also visited Antigua and Barbuda.

The Secretary of State set out a new £15 million package for Dominica (£12m) and Antigua and Barbuda (£3m) to help recovery and long-term reconstruction on the islands. This is in addition to a further £15m recently allocated to the affected Overseas Territories.

Speaking during the visit, Ms Mordaunt, said:

We can be proud that in their time of crisis the UK stepped up to provide the vital immediate relief that was fundamental in getting these islands back on their feet.

The UK aid mission was huge, covering small islands stretching more than 1,000 miles apart, where buildings, airports and infrastructure had been razed to the ground. I want to pay tribute to the governments of the Overseas Territories, our humanitarian staff and to the military effort, which has been absolutely essential in delivering relief.

Now as we move on from the immediate response phase, on to the long-term future of the islands, Britain will continue to stand by people whose lives were devastated. We are also talking to the international private sector who can support the reconstruction efforts to make sure the islands can build back, and better.

The support package, which brings the total UK contribution to £92m, will include £10m to help Dominica to rebuild critical infrastructure damaged during the hurricanes. In Dominica 97% of the water system was destroyed. This is one example of where UK funding could help rebuild so Dominica is better able to withstand future natural disasters.

The UK contribution to Dominica also includes an additional £2m for early recovery, building on the £5m committed in September, which will support:

- Repairs to homes and roofs, through the International Organization for

- Migration, to provide hundreds of households with urgent shelter;
- Debris clearance through the UN Development Programme and the National Employment Programme to help establish healthy and safe living conditions in communities, to enable agricultural land to be put to use once again, and to support restoration of economic activity and livelihoods;
- Cash assistance through the World Food Programme, helping those worst affected to meet their needs flexibly and to revitalise the local economy.

For Antigua and Barbuda, the UK stands ready to assist with a £3m fund which will be deployed once the priorities for reconstruction on Barbuda are agreed with the local government.

For the Overseas Territories of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos, the £15m being announced today is delivering accelerated power reconnection and support to prisons, repairs to air and sea ports and support for policing. This is short-term funding to aid the territories' early steps to recovery.

The UK Government continues to work with the governments of the Overseas Territories as they develop their longer-term recovery plans.

At the World Bank meetings last month the UK announced a private sector task force will mobilise business to play a prominent role in the reconstruction in the Overseas Territories. The task force will identify and drive forward practical ways of increasing flows of private sector financial support to reconstruction in the region.

Notes to editors:

- The International Development Secretary will arrive into Antigua on Friday 17 November where she will visit the shelters where people evacuated from Barbuda are staying. The next day she will travel to the British Virgin Islands where she will meet volunteers for the Red Cross who played a huge role in rescues and aid distribution. That evening she will attend a reception where she will thank the military who have helped restore critical infrastructure on the islands, including power and water plants. On Sunday she will travel to Dominica to see the impact of the UK's response. She will meet farmers to discuss efforts to rebuild the island's agriculture and will travel to Pointe Michel, to meet residents and see the destruction Hurricane Maria caused. She will also have a chance to thank the humanitarian staff who have been coordinating the UK's response.
- Hurricane Irma (category 5) hit the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Antigua and Barbuda at the beginning of September. It was closely followed by Hurricane Maria which affected Dominica, leaving 98% of buildings damaged and thousands without power. It was the first category five hurricane to hit the island in living memory, affecting almost the entire 70,000 population.
- The support announced is on top of £62m the government has committed so far to the hurricane response. The UK is also matching public donations

to the British Red Cross Appeal up to £3m.

Press release: Foreign Secretary in Ireland for high-level talks

The Foreign Secretary met his Irish counterpart for talks today during an official visit to Ireland.

Boris Johnson and Simon Coveney discussed the strong, unique and enduring relationship between the UK and Ireland, as well as key foreign policy issues such as Africa and the Middle East, and the protection of human rights.

The Ministers also discussed the UK's exit from the European Union, and our aims for the future relationship.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

There are no closer friends than the UK and Ireland. Our two nations share a special, unique and enduring bond, which will not change when the UK leaves the European Union.

I am proud to have visited Dublin today to play my part, as the British Foreign Secretary, in that bond, celebrating the contribution British and Irish people make to each other's nations.

The Foreign Secretary also met Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin TD, and visited the National Gallery of Ireland where he saw the Sir William Orpen exhibition of First World War paintings.

The final stop on the visit was to Dublin's Trinity College, where the Foreign Secretary attended an event at the Science Gallery showcasing Science Week. He met members of the Irish science and innovation community and young scientists. The Foreign Secretary heard about the deep ties and collaboration between Irish and British academics and scientific institutions.

Further information

News story: New Defence Secretary recognises Scots defence role

Gavin Williamson heard how Scots personnel and units support UK and allied operations in Iraq, South Sudan, Cyprus and the Gulf, contribute to the UK counter terrorism effort, and stand by to assist the Scottish Government and local authorities during civil emergencies, such as flooding.

Williamson met with Scotland's three most senior military officers – the Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland Rear Admiral John Weale; General Officer Scotland, Major General Bob Bruce; Air Officer Scotland, Air Vice-Marshal Ross Paterson – during a visit to Dreghorn Barracks, Edinburgh.

The Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

Scotland's military personnel and industrial base play a crucial role in keeping all of the people of the United Kingdom safe.

By 2020 Scotland will be home to the entire Submarine Service, an Army Infantry Brigade, the RAF's Quick Reaction Alert interceptors and submarine hunting Maritime Patrol Aircraft. Scotland is also the ideal base for crucial Defence operations and UK and Allied training requirements.

The MOD has around 10,000 sailors, soldiers and air personnel living permanently in Scotland, supported by 8,000 reservists and civilians.

Scottish industry benefits from Defence spending £1.5bn with it each year, supporting 9,750 private sector jobs in Scotland.

The Defence Board confirmed in February 2017, that £1.7 billion would be invested to upgrade Scottish military bases over the next decade.

News story: 'Space Emergency Service' gains international award

The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters received the 2017 William T. Pecora Award for providing satellite earth observations to help save lives worldwide.

The award, sponsored by the US Geological Survey and NASA, was presented yesterday (15 November) in South Dakota, United States.

The Charter is made up of 16 agencies, including the UK Space Agency, which led on the agreement between April and October this year, with Airbus responsible for coordination.

It provides images and other satellite information free of charge to emergency response agencies around the world, whenever major disasters strike.

Since the Charter was founded in 2000, response efforts include the tsunami in Indonesia and Thailand in 2004, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 and the earthquake in Nepal in 2015.

The project launched into action more recently, in September this year, as Hurricane Irma advanced across the Caribbean.

Speaking in the latest edition of Space UK, Remote Sensing Analyst Amalia Castro, who works at the Airbus offices in Guildford, explained:

"I was on call 24/7 for the whole week. I need to think which satellites will be best, what's their resolution and prepare to task those satellites."

"We had the potential for storms, floods, flash floods and landslides. I asked for data from 15 different satellites, from several different companies and agencies."

Chris Lee, who leads the UK's membership of the Charter for the UK Space Agency, added:

"I think that's the great thing about the Charter. It's the collection of all the available satellites from all around the world."

The award comes as the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology highlights the use of satellite data for disaster risk reduction in its latest POST note: [Environmental Earth Observation](#)

You can find out more about the UK's role in the Charter's response to Hurricane Irma by reading the latest issue of [Space UK](#).

You can also sign up for updates when new issues are published, [subscribe now](#).

Speech: "Make no mistake, the JIM has succeeded; it is Russia that has failed"

Thank you Mr President.

Today we have reached the end of the road for the Joint Investigative Mechanism. It was a road that all members of this Council set out on together two years ago. We did so in the hope that those using chemical weapons in Syria would be identified and held to account. Thanks to today's veto, that hope has suffered a serious blow.

The staff of the JIM, under the current and previous leadership panels, worked patiently, diligently to uncover the truth. I pay tribute to them today. Thanks to their efforts, the world now knows what happened in Talamenas, in Sarmin, in Marea, in Qaminas, in Khan Sheikhoun and in Um Housh.

Make no mistake, the JIM has succeeded; it is Russia that has failed.

They have failed in their duties as a permanent member of this Security Council, they have failed as a state party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, they have failed as a supposed supporter of peace in Syria.

We've been here before. This isn't the first time this year that we have attempted to renew the JIM's mandate. Less than a month ago, we all sat in this very chamber and watched as Russia vetoed a simple technical rollover of the mandate; a rollover that didn't judge any party, that didn't add any conditions.

We have worked tirelessly, through extensive consultations between Council members, to try to understand Russia's concerns and find a renewal on which we could all agree. The US draft, which we were proud to vote for, was balanced and reasonable.

Russia, on the other hand, has refused to engage constructively. Last month they quoted fantasy and fiction in this Chamber to justify their veto. But in negotiations their experts made abundantly clear why they wouldn't support the JIM's renewal. Put simply, they cannot, or rather, they will not accept any investigation that attributes blame to their Syrian allies, no matter how robust the investigation, no matter how clear and solid the evidence.

Russia will say that they engaged, that they put forward an alternative text. Yet their text only sought to undermine and discredit what has already been painstakingly demonstrated – that the Syrian regime is responsible for the blatant, repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people.

The 7th report of the JIM, as we heard last week from the head of the Leadership Panel, details the thorough methodology of the investigation, its consideration of alternative hypotheses, the careful corroboration of sources, and use of independent, internationally-recognised forensic experts for analysis of data.

Faced with this clear, careful consideration and conclusion, Russia made a string of entirely destructive demands in its text and attempted to weaken significantly the remit of the JIM. They demanded that the JIM take samples from a Syrian airbase when the JIM has been crystal clear as to why doing so would not advance the investigation. They demanded that the JIM visit Khan

Sheikhoun, where they will face unacceptable risks of attack.

They maligned the impartiality, experience, and expertise of the JIM's staff, ignoring the thorough, professional report they have produced and Russia's own original support for the group. Russia demands the JIM listen only to Syrian-approved witnesses, and Syrian accounts of events.

Why should evidence from a party to the conflict, accused of war crimes, carry more weight than the corroborated testimony of victims and observers, and cold laboratory analysis of physical evidence?

Thanks to Russia's veto today, Daesh fighters will be joining Assad in celebration. The OPCW is currently investigating other cases. This vote means the JIM will not investigate who was responsible for these atrocious crimes.

Russia's transparent use of its Security Council status to block this investigation again shows that, as a party to the conflict, it cannot credibly play a leading role in the political process, such as convening the Syrian parties in Sochi.

Mr President, most of us here are totally committed to upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons. We will not be stopped by what has happened today. We will keep working to identify and bring to account those who have used these vile weapons, and to deter those who might think of doing so in future.

Russia once played a responsible role in securing the destruction of much of Syria's chemical arsenal and in creating the JIM. Regrettably, today the world can see that Russian policy now is to protect the Syrian state, whatever the cost to Russia's reputation.

Thank you.