

Press release: Secretary of State for Northern Ireland statement on talks

James Brokenshire provides an update on the political situation in Northern Ireland.

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

“The parties have made further progress during the course of today. They are making certain additional requests of the UK Government which we need to consider.

“In the light of this, I believe it is right to defer the assessment on whether to introduce legislation to Parliament this week to enable an Executive to be formed. The parties will recommence talks in the morning and I will reassess the position tomorrow night.”

Speech: “A successful peace process is at the heart of any strategy to defeat terrorism and traffickers in the Sahel”

Thank you Mr. President for convening today’s debate. Your country deserves great credit for your leadership, and your steadfast support for the countries of the Sahel.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and their excellencies: Foreign Minister Diope, Chairperson Faki Mahamat, and the EU Special Representative to the Sahel, Angel Losada Fernández. We welcome the Secretary-General’s report and today’s briefing on the activities of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

During the recent Security Council visit, all Council members saw the serious challenges facing the countries of the Sahel. Those challenges represent a serious danger to the people of the region, and to partners and allies who are working to support them. I want to begin by offering my condolences to all of those so tragically killed, including most recently three UN peacekeepers from Chad in northern Mali on Thursday.

In the last twelve months we’ve witnessed a continuing stream of deadly

terrorist attacks resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives; an increase in attacks against MINUSMA forces; the ongoing corrosive influence of organised criminals trafficking weapons, drugs and people across the region; and the desperate journey of migrants, so often intercepted by people traffickers seeking to exploit them.

We all have a role to play in addressing these challenges. The United Kingdom has supported projects across the Sahel and wider region, particularly in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin.

The British Army trained 22,000 Nigerian troops in counter terrorism tactics last year alone. We have invested over \$6 million in tackling modern slavery, and \$2.5 million in a Joint Border task force with the Nigerian Army. We also provide training for Nigerian anti trafficking officers.

Across the Sahel the United Kingdom spent over \$225 million on humanitarian and development projects last year, and we are providing human rights training to Malian troops through the EU Training Mission in Mali. Our National Crime Agency recently dismantled two people-smuggling rings in Mali. And we stand ready to do more to support the G5 countries, and their allies, to improve the security situation.

The creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force is a step forward in countering terrorism and illegal migration. We were pleased that this Council offered its political support to the mission earlier this year. For our part the United Kingdom is currently undertaking a scoping mission to see what more we can do in the Sahel, including potential bilateral support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Funding is an important factor in determining a mission's success, which is why we were pleased to support the EU commitment to provide €50 million to the Joint Force. We welcome the work undertaken to establish the G5 Joint Force. I was encouraged by reports from my ambassador following his visit to the region.

We recognise the challenges faced by the force and the value of tackling terrorists and traffickers with a holistic approach right across the region, in particular ensuring there is a clear plan to deliver services alongside security. If security gains are to take root, work must also continue to develop robust frameworks for compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law. We welcome the Secretary-General's report and his proposals for potential UN support. We are studying these in detail and considering the complementary roles that bilateral and multilateral support can play in the Sahel region. We must ensure that MINUSMA is able to deliver its current mandate effectively and efficiently.

Mr President,

Over 140 brave MINUSMA peacekeepers have given their lives for the people of Mali. They and G5 forces operate in one of the most dangerous places in the world and I pay tribute to them. And I call upon the Government of Mali and other parties to the peace process to show the same courage, commitment, and

resolve to bring unity to the country. A successful peace process is at the heart of any strategy to defeat terrorism and traffickers in the Sahel. We in this Council expect a redoubling of efforts for peace and to see the political will to overcome the remaining obstacles.

To conclude, the United Kingdom remains committed to peace and security across the Sahel. To that end, I reiterate our strong support for the G5 Sahel Joint Force which I sincerely believe can make an important contribution towards achieving this goal.

Speech: “The challenge is to talk about women and peace and security when our agenda is Syria, or Somalia, or South Sudan”

Thank you Mr President, thank you to all of our briefers, and to our visiting ministers, for their remarks. I’m particularly grateful that we had the opportunity to hear a civil society voice in this Chamber today. That’s even more vital at a time when so many such voices are being ignored, threatened or silenced around the world. So that’s great and it’s also great that we have so many people attending this debate with us today.

But in the spirit of trying to improve still further how we do things here, let me make a few points frankly. We meet in this format once a year and we repeat what we already know: that we need more women at the negotiating table, that peace deals stand a greater chance of succeeding with women taking part, that we need to turn our words into action.

And yet, year after year, session after session, SG report after SG report, the actual implementation of this agenda still falls way too short. We’ve had resolution after resolution – eight of them since resolution 1325 – and yet the promise of that first historic text still remains unfulfilled.

So I encourage everyone intervening later today to be specific. Specific about what our country is doing since we last met in this format to make the Women, Peace and Security agenda a reality, and then, ideally, to commit to do even more.

This year, the UK has worked to increase women’s participation in conflict resolution in some of the most fragile countries in the world: in Somalia, in Syria, in Yemen, in Afghanistan. We’ve helped women in parliament, in civil society, in the military and in business, to increase their voice, their influence, their participation, and we will keep doing so next year.

But we also know that women, peace and security is about more than work in individual countries. So many of the dangers that women face in conflict are shared dangers, found in every conflict. Dangers like sexual violence. Like stigma against survivors of these horrific crimes. And since these are shared challenges, we must all share in the response if we are to affect international change.

And that's why the UK has been a champion of preventing sexual violence in conflict. It's why we launched the global principles on stigma at UNGA this year. It's why we're running 23 projects in conflict and post-conflict countries to support survivors, end stigma, and deliver justice. And it's why we've contributed \$2 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, and I urge others to contribute, too.

Turning to the peacekeeping, this year UK troops on large-scale overseas missions – whether for the UN or anyone else – now receive pre-deployment training on preventing sexual violence, and on the Women, Peace and Security agenda more broadly. And we'll be launching, alongside our Bangladeshi and Canadian partners, a new global network of military gender champions at the peacekeeping ministerial conference in Vancouver next month.

We strongly support the Secretary-General's commitment to gender parity and his efforts to increase the number of women in peacekeeping. However, the Women, Peace and Security agenda is far more than numbers, and we're concerned, frankly, that the UN Secretariat are de-prioritising gender advisors in UN missions, and we urge the UN to reinstate accountability through its compacts with UN leaders.

Mr President, in the UK this year, Baroness Hale became the first woman ever to head our supreme court, which makes it the first time in our history that we've had women as our head of state, our head of government, and head of the most senior court in the land. We also this year appointed our first ever Special Envoy for Gender Equality, putting gender equality at the heart of our foreign policy.

But despite these historic steps, we have more to do. So that's why, next year, we'll be launching the UK's fourth National Action Plan, building on progress made, lessons learned, and our discussions with civil society and focus countries.

And my final point, Mr President, is that there is more that we can all do, each of us around this table, both internally in the missions or ministries that we lead, and externally in the Security Council and around the United Nations. Internally, I commend to you the UK Mission's Gender Compact that I launched this year. I encourage you to read it, to steal its good ideas, and apply them in your own missions. And outside our missions, we must practise what we preach in this Security Council every day.

It's easy to talk about women, peace and security when that is the subject on our agenda, like it is today, but the challenge is to talk about women and peace and security when our agenda is Syria, or Somalia, or South Sudan. We could all do better on that, and I encourage everyone to come together to do

so.

Thank you.

Speech: A source of 'inspiration and determination for us all' – PM at Parkinson's reception

I am delighted to welcome you all to Downing Street and to have this opportunity to thank you all for everything you are doing to support this brilliant charity and to lead the way in the fight against Parkinson's.

I think what we have just heard so movingly from Emma and from Steve this evening should be a source of both inspiration and determination for us all.

Inspiration, because we should all be inspired by all that Parkinson's UK has helped to achieve at the forefront as we've heard of pioneering research that has improved our understanding, care and treatment of Parkinson's.

We should be inspired by the immeasurable support that this charity – and so many people in this room – provide to those affected by Parkinson's, as well as to their loved ones and carers.

And I believe we should be inspired too by the achievements of those living with the condition.

People like Emma who, as we have seen tonight, are changing attitudes towards Parkinson's.

And people like the conductor James Morgan – who together with his partner Juliette – have raised more than £270,000 for Parkinson's UK by staging star-studded concerts at the Royal Albert Hall.

These concerts have enabled James to show just how much he can still achieve living with Parkinson's, while at the same time raising vital funds to help others.

And I was delighted earlier to be able to present James and Juliette with a Point of Light award – which recognises outstanding volunteers in our country for their service to others.

But as we draw inspiration from all of these things, so we should also renew our determination to step up the fight against Parkinson's.

For two centuries on from Dr James Parkinson's Essay on the Shaking Palsy, we have simply not done enough or come anywhere near far enough.

We still do not have the capability as Steve has just said to slow or stop the condition in its tracks.

And as Emma and Steve have said so powerfully, the time to act is now.

For our part, this government is investing over £1 billion a year through the National Institute for Health Research – which has doubled its spending on neurological conditions since 2010.

Already Parkinson's UK and the UK research community have achieved a great deal together.

We have many of the world's top scientists and researchers – and while several great discoveries have been made across the world – it is in the UK that we are joining them up.

We have been steadily building towards a tipping point in Parkinson's research and we must do everything possible to bring that moment to pass.

So I would urge everyone across the country to do all they can to support this effort – and to support the vital work of charities like Parkinson's UK.

So that together we can reach that breakthrough moment and bring forward the day when no-one need fear Parkinson's again.

So on behalf of the whole country, thank you again for all that you are doing in the fight against Parkinson's; thank you for the leadership you are showing in changing attitudes towards Parkinson's, and thank you for all the support that you give to thousands of people across our country.

Speech: Rona Fairhead promotes UK as a leading Western hub for Islamic finance

Thank you for inviting me here to speak today; I have to say, after 3 weeks of getting lost in the winding corridors of Parliament and Whitehall it's somewhat of a relief to be somewhere I know like the City.

I'm delighted to be standing here today, today is an opportunity, as I see it to speak about 3 things: the extraordinary growth we are witnessing in Islamic Finance the strength of London as a world class financial centre, and how we as government can support you as a business to prosper within the UK and overseas.

I have to say, this historic building could not be more perfect a setting.

A monument to entrepreneurialism Lloyds of London was built on the back of Edward Lloyd selling marine insurance out of a coffee shop in the late 17th Century.

Since then, and for over 300 years London has been the home of international risk.

It is here where investors, with confidence, have taken advantage of a peerless mix of expertise, talent and innovation.

The first marine insurance market in the world, it truly reflects London's status as the epicentre of global free trade.

Islamic Finance, or Takaful, has its own impressive history. Having been practised for around 1,400 years, but has only recently experienced the surge in growth which has forced us in government and you in industry to stand up and really take notice.

And this progress is now shows no sign of slowing.

Islamic finance markets projected to post double-digit growth in the coming years, presenting clear and significant opportunities for investment and further expansion.

Currently worth \$2 trillion in total assets. Sharia compliant assets currently, even at \$2 trillion, make up only 1% of global financial assets. Yet, 25% of the global population is Muslim and it does not take a genius to conclude that this sector has extreme latent potential.

Indeed, the sector is forecast to grow by almost 20% next year.

So turning to London, in my view there is pre-eminent location to build expertise in Islamic financial services and be a foundation for growth for the global Takaful market.

That is why the launch of the Islamic Insurance Association of London in 2015, and the ongoing terrific work that Max [Taylor] and his team are doing, is so important and timely.

Having just had a few minutes with Max, it's very clear what they are focusing on is doing the practical things right to help make it happen.

Their work illustrates that this city is leading rather than following: reinforcing the UK is the Western hub of Islamic finance through innovation and industry.

So my message today is simple. Whilst London leads the way in Europe in the provision of Islamic financial services, we now have an opportunity to be at the vanguard of insurance provision too.

I would urge you to take advantage of the global opportunities in that market, knowing that government we are here wanting to working hand in hand with you in industry, ready to support you.

But I don't want rhetoric to govern your impressions of London as a centre for trade; I want to let the facts to do some of the talking.

I want to point to 3 clear reasons why the UK is perfectly placed to lead the growth in this sector.

Firstly, we are already home to strong bedrock of Islamic financial services expertise. We have over 20 international banks offering specific Islamic finance.

Just to put that in perspective, that is nearly double the number located in the US and we are far ahead of other Western countries.

These institutions themselves are supported by the largest legal services market in Europe, with over 20 law firms, with offices in the UK, supplying legal services tailored to Islamic finance for global and domestic markets.

In 2013, we hosted the World Islamic Economic Forum, the first non-Islamic city to do so.

Soon after, we became the first western nation to issue a sovereign sukuk; and now the London Stock Exchange is the global hub of these bonds, with 65 issues to date totalling in excess of over \$48 billion dollars.

And in the realm of consumer products, there are now over 100,000 Islamic finance customers in the UK, benefiting from Sharia-compliant current accounts, home finance and savings.

And this is just the beginning.

The FCA recently authorised the first Sharia compliant fin-tech company – property investment firm Yielders. And more are set to follow.

London's sky-line is awash with projects that could only have been made possible with Islamic finance.

The iconic Shard, the Olympic Village and the £400 million Malaysian investment into Battersea Power Station are just some of the examples of London's gravitational power when it comes to Islamic investment.

We're already building a reciprocal foothold in the Takaful market, assuming a role as a leading provider of Islamic insurance.

There are plenty of success stories to note here too.

Willis, for example, in conjunction with Cobalt Underwriting, launched the UK's first Sharia compliant commercial real estate insurance solution.

Cobalt Underwriting, in partnership with AIG, have also underwritten the first merger and acquisition insurance in the Middle East region.

And Lloyd's of London's first fully Sharia compliant syndicate is in the process of being launched, thanks to Cobalt Insurance and Capita Managing

Agency.

The globalisation of the Takaful industry has only emerged over the past 25 years. But even with its infancy comes opportunity.

The market has already recorded double-digit growth in recent years, with premiums averaging 14% per year growth between 2012 and 2014.

My message here today is that we in government are here to assist.

So far, Whitehall has organised 4 global Islamic Finance and Investment Group meetings, the second of which was co-hosted by Bank Negara Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

These meetings work to identify the key global opportunities but also the barriers facing Islamic finance, and aiming to harness the expertise of the attending foreign ministers, CEOs and central bank governors, to help build an Islamic financial market that supports growth and prosperity.

We are also levelling the regulatory playing field.

London is one of the few jurisdictions in the world where Sharia-compliant financial firms and products are covered by a single, secular regulatory framework.

This development is crucial, because it means everyone in the market is held to one consistent standard, giving all customers the same protections and the same safeguards.

And as a minister at the Department for International Trade, I will use the full force of my department, and indeed government, to ensure the UK remains one of the most open jurisdictions for Sharia-compliant investments in the world.

Global investment continues to flow to the UK because of our strong economic fundamentals, our openness, our expertise, our innovation and our hard work.

We offer low tax, and our low regulation is business friendly. We offer political stability combined with a strong impartial rule of law which inspires commercial trust. We have world class universities and institutions; 22 of our universities have specialist modules focusing on Islamic finance and that's helping us to continue to feed our workforce to keep our economy dynamic and innovative.

For the first time in decades, we now have a dedicated department for international trade to ensure our key sectors, such as financial services, are given the support they need to thrive on the world stage.

I can assure you that DIT and government are here to support you and will place British firms at the heart of our growth.

In financial services this has the potential to create significant economic value for the City.

As you will all know, the UK had the second largest trade surplus in financial services and we will look to see that grow as we strengthen relations with other countries.

I know there will be divisions among you on the effects of Brexit. Some will see it as a new beginning and others will worry about uncertainty and division.

However, I would urge you to take confidence in from the talent that we have here, we are awash with people and institutions of extraordinary capacity and capability.

We will not be turning our backs on Europe. We want to continue to have the closest possible barrier and tariff free access to the European market, whilst offering the same access to the UK market for firms across the EU 27.

We have been clear that a strict time limited implementation period on current terms is crucial to give businesses as much certainty and time to adapt to the new global landscape.

It is in no-one's interests to create disruption to trade, with barriers erected where none now exist, therefore our ability to collaborate will be key.

We are starting from a unique position of regulatory alignment and our future relationship with the EU, I hope will reflect this.

This means we are in a strong place to achieve an agreement with Europe: igniting new relationship at a point when we have shared the same rules for so long and had huge economic integration.

And so it is important that both the UK and the EU together think creatively about how our future relationship will work and look forward with hope.

Of course with ever challenge and with every change there is opportunity. 90% of future global growth is projected to occur beyond the borders of Europe, we need to continue to look overseas beyond the EU too.

This is why I am confident that London will remain the premier financial centre of the world, with the financial services sector continuing to drive forward our economy.

There is no better place outside of the Muslim world, to access Islamic finance and insurance. The level of our support government and industry support for this burgeoning sector exceeds the comparisons elsewhere. We have in place an incredibly strong foundation, boasting expertise, experience and innovation in Islamic Finance.

London is the most dynamic financial city in the world and for those in this room who are ready to take hold of this exciting growing market, I believe the rewards will be significant.

Thank you.