

# [News story: Change of UK Special Envoy to Syria](#)

Dr Martin Longden has been appointed as the UK's Special Envoy to Syria.

[Dr Martin Longden](#) has been appointed as the UK's Special Envoy to Syria in succession to Mr Gareth Bayley who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment.

Dr Longden will take up his appointment at the end of October 2017 and combine the new role with his current role as Head of Near East Department. Prior to his current role, he was Deputy Ambassador, British Embassy Kabul.

Speaking on the appointment, Dr Longden said:

I look forward to representing the UK to drive forward a holistic approach to Syria and the region, while maintaining strong links with the Syrian opposition.

The only lasting solution is a political transition that can protect the rights of all Syrians, unite the country and end the conflict. The UK will continue to play a key role in the international efforts to bring peace to all Syrians.

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt said:

The UK is working tirelessly to bring a peaceful solution to the Syria conflict. There can be no military solution to this tragedy, and neither Syria nor the region can be properly stabilised until we see a genuine transition to a new government in Damascus.

Martin's extensive diplomatic experience will ensure he is well prepared to continue our efforts towards a political solution in Syria.

## **Further information**

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# [News story: HMRC to recruit a Second](#)

## Permanent Secretary

Decision made following the announcement of Edward Troup's retirement at the end of 2017

The appointment has Cabinet Office and Treasury approval and will be advertised across the Civil Service shortly.

HMRC Chief Executive, Jon Thompson, said:

Over the course of the department's history, there has always been a partnership at HMRC's helm, with a specific focus on tax as well as on the organisation itself. I propose continuing this tradition with the appointment of a Second Permanent Secretary to lead our work on tax, fiscal events and to be the Tax Assurance Commissioner. They will also lead on Brexit, which will continue to grow in importance over the next few years.

Due to the level of tax policy expertise and knowledge of the UK tax system required, we will be limiting our search to existing civil servants only, and hope to announce the new appointment before the end of this year.

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## Press release: UK leads international support for Rohingya crisis at landmark conference

The UK has increased its own support for innocent families who have been forced to flee relentless violence in Burma and make the treacherous journey to Bangladesh to find refuge. This is an increase from £35 million to £47 million (US \$63 million) committed since the end of August, including £5 million to match the generous donations of the UK public to the Disaster Emergency Committee appeal.

Ahead of the landmark international pledging conference, which took place in Geneva today (Monday 23 October 2017), the UK had given more than a third of the overall money donated by the international community and the International Development Secretary Priti Patel called on other countries to follow the UK's lead and step up their support.

At the conference today countries including Sweden, Australia, Denmark and the UAE, have in total pledged over \$300 million. This reaches over half of

the total funding required to meet urgent humanitarian needs as set out in the UN appeal. Countries are continuing to pledge.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The international community has followed the UK's lead and stepped up support which is absolutely vital to save the lives of victims of the world's fastest growing humanitarian crisis.

UK aid is helping hundreds of thousands of people who have lost everything and our further support announced today will relieve the suffering of thousands more.

Ethnic cleansing, sexual violence, starvation and the murder of children have no place in our world. Today's pledges are only just the start, and the world cannot afford to wait as innocent men, women and children continue to lose their lives.

Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Mark Field said:

During my recent visits to Burma and Bangladesh, I saw for myself some of the communities which have been so badly damaged by what is happening in Burma.

I am delighted to be in Geneva to announce the UK's latest contribution of £12 million to the Burma crisis response. Alongside the £30 million we provided to meet the urgent humanitarian need, and the £5 million of public donations that the UK matched pound for pound for the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal, the total contribution of the UK government is now £47 million.

I hope that the international community will continue to unite with the UK in its efforts, and help bring an end to this terrible humanitarian crisis.

Today's announcement of extra support builds on existing UK aid which is already helping to provide:

- Emergency food to 174,000 people;
- Lifesaving nutritional support to more than 60,000 children under-five and over 21,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women;
- Safe drinking water, emergency latrines and hygiene kits for more than 138,000 people;
- Essential items including soap, cooking utensils and water cans for over 131,000 people;
- Emergency shelter for over 130,000 people and support to make shelters more resilient to rain and heavy winds for 450,000 people as the cyclone season approaches;
- Access to female bathing cubicles and sanitary items for more than

35,000 girls and women;

- Counselling and psychological support for over 10,000 women suffering from the trauma of war and over 2,000 survivors of sexual violence;
- Medical help for over 50,000 pregnant women to give birth safely.

With UK aid support in Bangladesh, malnourished children on the brink of death are now able to eat, families who have been forced to live out in the open after their villages were burned are getting shelter and clean drinking water is helping stop the spread of disease.

Our existing work in the region meant that we were already in position to provide life-saving support when the crisis flared – without this, aid would have taken much longer to arrive.

The UK is also leading the charge to reform the humanitarian system, to ensure the international community responds efficiently and effectively to crises, pooling resources together rather than competing and working in isolation.

Notes to Editors:

1. Prior to the conference the UN appeal for the Rohingya crisis was just 24% funded, with over a third of the \$106 million pledged coming from the UK. A total of \$434 million is needed overall.
2. The UK is appalled by the inhumane violence that has taken place in Rakhine State, which has forced nearly 600,000 people to leave everything behind in Burma and make the perilous journey to Bangladesh.
3. The events in Rakhine look like ethnic cleansing. The Burmese authorities need to stop the violence and ensure immediate access into northern Rakhine so that UK aid can provide a lifeline to those still suffering in Rakhine State. Unacceptable intimidation and restrictions on the movement of humanitarian workers must be ended. Burma must work with international partners to put in place the conditions that will allow people to return to their homes safely, with dignity and hope for the future.
4. Recognising the unprecedented scale of the crisis in Bangladesh and Burma, the UK has been a leader in responding – in speed and size – providing an additional £47 million since August to help meet the urgent humanitarian needs of innocent men, women and children who have been forced to flee the relentless violence and atrocities in Burma, and make the treacherous journey to Bangladesh to seek refuge. We are working with international partners including UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and World Food Programme to deliver this on the ground. The UK is also providing £1m to the Red Cross in Burma, the only organisation that currently has access to Northern Rakhine.

5. Alongside this, the UK Government is matching pound for pound £5 million raised by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Appeal for people fleeing the violence and destruction in Burma, doubling the impact of the public's own donations and ensuring that charities working on the ground can reach even more people in need.

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## [News story: Defence Secretary announces exceptional gift to Canada](#)

The journey to locate these vessels has taken 172 years. Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin set sail from England in 1845 on an expedition to chart the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic with HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. The ships and all crew were lost after the ships became stuck in ice off King William Island and the crew abandoned them to trek overland to the South. None of the crew survived.

Many attempts were made over the years but only artefacts were found. In 1992, the wrecks were designated as a national historic site, despite neither shipwreck having been found at that time. In 1997, UK and Canadian Governments signed an agreement giving custody and control of the wrecks and their contents to the Canadian Government, whilst still remaining the property of the UK.

With a combination of traditional Inuit knowledge and state-of-the-art technology, the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror were finally located under relatively shallow Arctic Waters to the south of King William Island in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Acknowledging the importance of this momentous discovery, the UK Government is proposing to update the 1997 agreement, transferring ownership of the wrecks to Parks Canada, whilst retaining a small sample of artefacts. Items from the wreckages will be displayed for future generations in both Canadian and UK museums.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

“During her recent visit to Canada, the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of recognising our shared past with Canada as we seek to reinvigorate our already strong bilateral relationship.

“This exceptional arrangement will recognise the historical significance of the Franklin expedition to the people of Canada, and will ensure that these wrecks and artefacts are conserved for future generations.”

The transfer of ownership is expected to be undertaken over the coming weeks.

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## [News story: MOD Veterans UK welcomes Prince Harry to Blackpool in a visit marking 25 years of helpline support](#)

During the visit, Prince Harry was accompanied by Jon Parkin, Head of Veterans UK, as he was shown the extent of work undertaken in support of all UK veterans. Veterans UK provides vital welfare help for ex-service personnel and their families, working in partnership with a number of charities and support networks. They also administer pension and compensation schemes for those injured or bereaved through service in the armed forces.

His Royal Highness Prince Harry talks to Veterans UK staff about the work they do, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Jon Parkin, Head of Veterans UK said:

I was delighted to welcome Prince Harry to Veterans UK. I am hugely inspired by his work with veterans, so I was very proud to be able to demonstrate the breadth of services we provide here and the commitment our staff show in support of veterans.

Christine Bulpitt explains the support provided by the Veterans UK Helpline team to Prince Harry, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Representatives from the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) described to the Prince how they provide assistance in enhancing the quality of life for veterans.

Russ Egan, Regional Welfare Manager said:

It was an immense pleasure to meet Prince Harry this morning. He clearly has a keen interest in the support and assistance we provide to our ex-service veterans and recognises the importance in helping those approaching discharge to ensure we make that transition pathway as seamless as possible.

Prince Harry also met the Veterans UK Helpline team and gained an insight into the invaluable service they provide. Helpline advisor, Lyndsay Ethell facilitated a call with the Prince watching on.

Prince Harry listens in to a Helpline call with Lyndsay Ethell, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Lyndsay said:

It was a great honour meeting Prince Harry, a once in a lifetime opportunity that I feel extremely privileged to be part of. The whole of Helpline deserve this recognition for all the hard work we do and to say we all enjoyed the day is an understatement!

The Prince then took time to talk to members of the local community who have received help from Veterans UK over the years. They included a retired squadron leader who receives a war disablement pension, a family member who has recently received welfare help and a member of the local Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee.

Prince Harry is presented with a Passchendaele 100 brass poppy badge by Phoebe Taylor, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Prior to leaving, local children of Veterans UK staff presented the Prince with a brass Passchendaele 100 poppy made from shell fuses found on World War 1 battlefields.

Prince Harry unveils a plaque to commemorate 25 years of the Veterans UK Helpline, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Outside the building the Prince unveiled a plaque marking 25 years of service by the Veterans UK Helpline to great rapture by the watching staff.