

Press release: International Development Secretary calls for vital reform of the United Nations.

The International Development Secretary, [Priti Patel](#), has warned that the United Nations system is simply not adapted to the challenges of today, in the face of unprecedented humanitarian challenges, protracted crises and mass displacement.

This frank warning came at the UN General Assembly, at a UK-led event on reforming the development system. At the event, Priti Patel supported the strong reform agenda of the new Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, and urged him to be bold in demanding changes to ensure the organisation better delivers for the worlds' poorest.

The International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

Against the backdrop of unprecedented humanitarian crises, the international system is, frankly, not coping – it's not fit for purpose.

While the objectives and goals of the UN are timeless, the structures and system we have today was cobbled together over years, and it is time for change.

Nothing emphasises these problems like the sickening and atrocious sexual abuses carried out under the UN flag – it will not be tolerated.

The UK is putting our money where our mouth is, and to ensure these critical reforms are not ignored, a third of our spending will be dependent on UN agencies making the changes needed to remain relevant in the 21st century.

The current UN system is hampered by a multiplicity of agencies, organisations, funds and programmes, unable or unwilling to collaborate, share resources or embrace innovation. Worst of all, despicable child rape, sexual exploitation and abuse has been carried out under the UN flag by peacekeepers and in peace operations.

The International Development Secretary announced that from next year almost a third of DFID funding to UN agencies will be dependent on improved results and progress on reform priorities:

- UN agencies will have to demonstrate effective collaboration, greater transparency and accountability.

- For all major emergencies, agencies will have to demonstrate that effective accountability and feedback mechanisms are in place.
- We will demand more effective and efficient delivery of assistance to the vulnerable – including greater use of cash transfers. Cash, rather than flying in food and other supplies, is more efficient, it enables those in need to choose how to support themselves. Crucially, it helps build local markets.
- We are also calling on the UN to collaborate more closely with the private sector, the engine of job creation around the world.

The International Development Secretary also made a stark call to put the stamping out of child sex abuse and child rape at the top of the UN's agenda. This followed confirmation by the UN Secretary General in March that UN peacekeepers and civilian staff faced allegations of over 140 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse this year.

She stated in no uncertain terms that UN agencies must be fully transparent about any and all accusations made against their staff, contractors and implementing partners.

The British government puts the protection of children from rape, sexual abuse and sexual crimes at the top of its priorities. Any agency that receives funds from the UK must have the strongest possible measures in place to protect vulnerable populations, especially children, and to ensure the prevention, detection and prosecution of abusers.

[News story: Parsons Green terrorist attack](#)

You can [apply](#) to the [Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority](#) (CICA), if you were injured as a result of this incident. You can also call the CICA helpline on 0300 003 3601. We will consider your application under the [Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 2012](#).

You do not need a paid representative, such as a solicitor or claims management company, to apply to CICA for compensation. [Our Guide](#) provides information about free independent advice that may be available from local support services or other charitable organisations.

Further information about support was published by the [Home Office](#) on 15 September 2017.

News story: Update on the Culture Secretary's consideration of the proposed merger between 21st Century Fox Inc. and Sky Plc.

Culture Secretary refers proposed merger between Sky Plc and 21st Century Fox to the CMA

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has today referred the proposed merger between Sky Plc and 21st Century Fox to the Competition Markets Authority (CMA) for a Phase 2 investigation on the media plurality and genuine commitment to broadcasting standards media public interest grounds. The CMA have 24 weeks in which to report back (extendable by up to eight weeks in certain circumstances).

The terms of reference of the formal referral and related letters are available [here](#).

Correspondence between Sky and 21st Century Fox and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the proposed merger are also published today.

Speech: PM speech at Commonwealth Leaders reception

Thank you very much to Angelique and to Leon for showing us what fantastic wealth we have in the people in the Commonwealth. And we'll be hearing more of that next year at [CHOGM](#) (Commonwealth Heads of Government). But thank you very much to all of you and I'm very grateful to all our speakers this evening. But can I first of all say that I know that our thoughts are with those affected by the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean, including our colleagues from Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, who for this reason have not been able to join us in New York this week.

And we also keep in our thoughts all those affected by the devastating flooding in South Asia and in Sierra Leone. But this has been a wonderful opportunity this evening, to gather our Commonwealth family together and reflect on some of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. And as we

look forward to that Heads of Government meeting, which will be taking place in London and Windsor next year, we have an ambitious phase of work ahead of us. Because, as you have heard from the other speakers, together we have the chance to build a reformed and revitalised Commonwealth. That will not be the work of a single summit, it can only be built over time and by sustained effort, close partnership and positive collaboration.

The Commonwealth is indeed an organisation with deep roots and profound strengths. Over seven decades, it's helped newly independent countries develop their national institutions, make economic progress and share common experiences. Today it champions the interests of small island states, helps nations to deepen and strengthen their democracies, and enables us to work together in partnership through a common language, shared history and closely related legal systems. But we know that to remain relevant to the aspiration of its citizens in a changing world, the Commonwealth needs to change too. We face new and unprecedented joint challenges: how to make the compelling case for free trade as the best way to promote higher living standards around the world, and so create a more prosperous commonwealth; how to mitigate the effects of climate change, especially as it affects small island states, and so create a more sustainable Commonwealth; how to address new security challenges, like cyber terrorism, and online extremism, and so create a more secure Commonwealth; and how to protect and promote the values we all share and so create a fairer, freer and more tolerant Commonwealth. And we all have a responsibility, working together as partners to ensure that the Commonwealth has the institutional strength to face these challenges effectively.

Now here this week at UNGA, we've heard UN General Secretary Guterres set out the wholesale institutional reform of the United Nations, which he is leading to maintain its relevance and effectiveness for the future. Commonwealth Secretary General, you are also leading a vital reform programme, and you deserve our support in delivering it. We in the Commonwealth need an agile and responsive secretariat, which focuses its efforts where it can best add value. All member states must ensure that the secretariat has a sustainable footing to equip it for the future. But meaningful reform cannot just be a question for government and the secretariat alone.

What makes the Commonwealth unique is not having member states and a secretariat. Human networks, people-to-people links are what define the Commonwealth. We need to recognise and nurture them. And they can reach far beyond the limits of the institution. As Angelique and Leon have reminded us, for the Commonwealth to have a future as vibrant as its proud past, it must remain relevant to its youngest citizens. Speak to the challenges they face and answer their ambitions for a better life. And that is why we will put young people at the heart of our [Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting](#) in London and Windsor next year.

The message of that summit towards a common future encapsulates our ambitions for the event. So I hope that we can come together as a Commonwealth family and seize the opportunity to drive forward the necessary reforms. The prize, if we succeed in this collaborative effort will be a rejuvenated Commonwealth, better able to answer the aspirations of its citizens,

especially its young citizens. Malta started this important process in Valletta. The UK is determined to help carry forward that agenda for the long term. Thank you.

Press release: £22.8 million boost to give power back to communities

Communities across England are set to benefit from a package of support worth £22.8 million to help them develop plans to give them a real say in the development of their area.

Housing Minister Alok Sharma confirmed how the cash boost will support communities, help build more homes and give locals more say over growth in their area.

The funding, which will be around £5.5 million per year until 2022, will provide communities with specialist support to help develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans gives local communities a real say in the development of their area including where homes, shops, green spaces and offices should be built and how they should look.

The announcement comes as more than 400 successful neighbourhood planning referendums have now taken place across England, driving local growth from Cornwall to Northumberland.

Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma said:

Neighbourhood planning gives communities a powerful set of tools to shape their area and drive local growth.

The government is committed to giving communities even more of a say in the development of their area, and that's why we're dedicating around £23 million between 2018 and 2022 to help groups create Neighbourhood Plans.

With over 400 now in place more people than ever are having their say on the location and design of new homes, shops and offices in their community. I congratulate the many thousands of community minded people across England carrying out this valuable work.

Trudi Elliott, Royal Town Planning Institute Chief Executive, said:

Having worked directly with over 274 groups to help them develop neighbourhood plans since their inception, the RTPI knows how much people care about these plans and how important they are in shaping places and building public trust in the planning system.

It's also clear from our experience that people need support to make the plan-making experience easier and worthwhile, so this latest funding is very welcome.

The government's [housing white paper](#) published in February 2017 set out measures to give local people more of a say over development in their area and build the right homes in the right places.

The white paper committed to continue to support neighbourhood planning groups so they can access essential support to allocate sites for housing and to plan for better designs in their area.

Following the housing white paper, a further raft of measures to improve neighbourhood planning will be implemented later this year, as the [Neighbourhood Planning Act](#) comes into effect. This includes new rules to speed up and strengthen the popular neighbourhood planning process by simplifying how plans can be revised as local circumstances change.

Since 2012, over 2,200 groups have started the neighbourhood planning process, covering areas of nearly 12 million people across England. Over 400 successful neighbourhood planning referendums have now taken place, with an average 'yes' vote of 88%.

The [Neighbourhood Planning Act](#) received Royal Assent in April 2017, and contains measures improving the planning system to help deliver the government's aim of making sure the housing market works for everyone.

In July 2017 Neighbourhood Planning Act reforms came into force to ensure the plans local people have worked hard to create are used as the starting point for determining planning applications up to 8 weeks earlier, following a successful referendum. The changes also mean that when local authorities are making planning decisions, they must respect emerging neighbourhood plans which have passed examination but not yet been agreed at a referendum.