

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 companies 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.

[News story: Defence Secretary recognises UK efforts in the fight against Daesh with service medal](#)

Sir Michael met with personnel from the Mercian Regiment, Engineer Regiment, Intelligence Corps, and Medical Regiments at Erbil and Taji where they have been involved in training Iraqi Security Forces, Kurdish Forces and Ninewah police.

Speaking to the troops, he announced the Op Shader medal, recognising the valuable contributions made by many serving military personnel who have been tirelessly undertaking the UK effort as part of the Coalition fight against Daesh for the last three years.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

It is only right that those who've performed above and beyond in this fight against the evil of our time get the recognition they deserve. This medal will do just that.

Our troops have made huge contributions to the fight against Daesh, helping end its tyranny in large parts of Iraq and Syria.

They have conducted over 1,500 strikes against Daesh terrorist targets and helped train nearly 60,000 Iraqi Security Forces. The campaign is not over but for those that have served we rightly honour the critical role they have played in helping keep us safe.

Taking a leading role in the Counter-Daesh Global Coalition, the UK has provided over 1,400 military personnel from all three Services as part of its three year involvement.

Following the recent uplift of 44 additional Royal Engineers who deployed to

Al Asad Airbase in August, there are around 600 British soldiers on the ground in Iraq. They are primarily involved in training Iraqi security forces in battle winning infantry, engineering and combat medical techniques as well as providing courses on countering IEDs and other critical skills.

Current UK Operational Medals policy requires consideration of risk and rigour to qualify for award of a campaign medal. To date, risk has been defined in terms of requiring an individual to be physically exposed to danger to qualify for medallic recognition and currently there are approximately 3,600 personnel who will receive the medal from May 2018.

The Defence Secretary has directed that this approach be examined to consider how best to recognise the rigour and operational contribution of those outside the immediate theatre of operations.

He said:

The changing character of warfare provides new challenges – not just about how we fight but also how we recognise and support those who serve.

As fighting has evolved we have adapted, ensuring our troops have cutting edge equipment including unmanned systems operated from outside the battle space. Our recognition of service, the risks taken, and the long-term effects must therefore adapt too.

That is why we need to examine how to provide medallic recognition for those making a vital contribution to Op Shader outside the battlespace, from Reaper pilots taking life and death decisions to those who ensure our planes can strike Daesh targets.

On his trip to the Middle East, the Defence Secretary also visited the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, where the UK is working closely with US as the two largest contributors to the Coalition's military campaign. As the command centre for the entire coalition's operations in Iraq and Syria, UK personnel, working alongside allies, are coordinating over 70 nations' activity including over 1500 air strikes and surveillance conducted by the RAF in the UK's three year campaign.

Speech: Priti Patel: UNGA High Level Event on UN Development System Reform

Excellencies and colleagues, I welcome you to this discussion on how we will enable the UN system to meet the needs of the global challenges we face across the international system. I would like to thank my co-hosts for their leadership on this issue and for joining the UK in championing and securing a collaborative approach to reform.

Britain has always been a bold and confident nation, unafraid to stand up for what we believe in. This applies equally to our leadership on development which is a crucial part of Britain's place in the world.

Looking outwards not inwards and utilising our unique history, skills and position as a force for good.

Whether it's tackling global scourges like killer diseases, modern slavery or the oppression of women and girls...

...this is central to our country's place in the world.

And in today's world of new threats and extremist ideologies...we must, and we will, be bold and unapologetic in standing up for our values.

The UK has led the way in responding to urgent need around the world, working as a proud and proactive member of the United Nations.

With these crises the UN and the multilateral system has never been more needed that is why we choose to remain one of the largest core funders to the UN's development and humanitarian agencies

The UN's universal membership is the place where states strengthen alliances, build new relationships and work with 192 other potential partners.

And it is because the UK is a committed supporter of the UN, that we are working so hard to reform and improve it.

Disasters, famines, persecution, terrorism and instability are leaving millions of our fellow citizens without hope or aspiration.

98% of the victims of terrorism are in developing countries, where terrorism is destroying lives, reducing investment, setting back economies and development and causing people to flee their homes to safer countries.

From Yemen to Somalia, an estimated 141 million people in need.

From the current crises across the Middle East, Africa, and Burma, to conflict, droughts, famines and environmental disasters such as Hurricane Irma and now Hurricane Maria – these have shown the world that the international system is, frankly, not coping – it is not fit for purpose.

While the objectives and goals of the UN are timeless, the structures and system we have today are out of date, designed for different eras – and have not adapted to the realities of today: the challenge of fragile states, terrorism, extremism, cross-border conflict, and a changing climate.

These crises have shown the weaknesses in our international system – and one that is recognised by Secretary General Guterres.

Over the last 70 years the UN has ballooned into a multiplicity of agencies, organisations, with billions spent in funds, programmes, costs and overheads, but too little coherence when it comes to collaboration, the sharing of resources and the effectiveness of aid.

The levels of inefficiency are shocking, with competition between agencies and bodies generating institutional turf wars that hinder and harm the very efforts we are meant to assist. Examples such as money wasted, to the inefficient and counter productive use of aid, are just the tip of the iceberg.

Appallingly, we have actually seen child rape, sexual exploitation and abuse carried out under the UN flag – and not just by peacekeepers or in peace operations.

These deplorable crimes have been committed against children and vulnerable people – the very people the UN is mandated to protect.

As a world leader in development, the United Kingdom will be at the forefront of assisting the UN to wipe out this scourge. Inaction is not an option. Obfuscation and denial of the problem will only exacerbate the shame, eventually leading to loss of faith and trust in the organisation.

A NEW UN SYSTEM

As a country that believes in global leadership and using British values to shape a better world, the United Kingdom will be at the forefront driving this fundamental reform.

The UN Secretary-General's first report on system reform creates a strong foundation for building a UN for the 21st Century. One that the UK believes must be transparent, efficient and able to justify to the taxpayers of the world what it does and what outcomes it achieves on their behalf. He has our support in driving this change.

Several key themes come out of this report:

Efficiency – the UN must embrace efficiency. This isn't about doing less it's about doing more, reaching more people with the resources we already have by collaborating, pooling resources including best practice and tackling waste.

Accountability – the UN needs to be more accountable. The United Kingdom wants to see greater transparency on where funding comes from, how it is spent and the results it achieves.

The UK wants to see staff throughout this complicated system being held to account both for their performance and their conduct.

And, crucially, we support the Secretary-General's recommendations of focus on improved performance on the ground.

All aspects of these development reforms are solely about strengthening development impact.

If the UN is to remain relevant there must be improved delivery across all of the UN's activity and particularly on the ground, where suffering and need is the critical priority.

UK ACTION & FUNDING

For our part the UK is fully committed to working with you all to build a better UN for the 21st Century.

And Britain will lead the charge – from next year almost a third (30%) of our core funding to UN development and humanitarian agencies will be dependent on improved results and progress on reform priorities.

For all major emergencies, agencies will have to demonstrate that effective accountability and feedback mechanisms are in place if they want full funding from British taxpayers.

And we are demanding 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, local markets that create jobs and economic growth rather than perpetuating the aid dependency across these communities.

PRIVATE SECTOR

No country can defeat poverty and leave aid dependency behind without sustainable economic growth and jobs.

We know that trade, investment, free markets and economic growth are the route out of poverty.

UK Aid seeks to raise horizons, transform people's lives and secure better futures. If we can liberate the energies and talent of people around the world, to work hard and exchange the fruits of their labour in open markets, then people will work their way out of poverty.

So I am also calling on the UN to collaborate more closely with the private sector, the engine of job creation around the world, the vehicle to end poverty and we will link Britain's development spending to long term private sector investment, in order to lift people out of poverty and end aid dependency.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

One example of where the international system has failed is on the issue of the scourge of child sex abuse, and child rape, in development and peacekeeping.

The United Kingdom's position could not be clearer;

We call upon the UN to have the best in class systems for training, prevention and detection in order to protect the world's vulnerable children from abusers and abuse;

To do much more to support Member States to enhance their investigation and prosecution capability;

Legal immunity, of whatever form, must neither exist nor be claimed for child sex crimes. We, must declare that child sex crimes do not fall within the scope of protection envisaged by the Convention on UN Privileges and Immunities.

In practical terms we must fight to see;

- The Confirmation that Agencies heads are accountable for action, and failure of action, on sexual abuse and exploitation, reporting annually to Boards and in keeping with the new MoUs that I have issued on behalf of the British Government;
- An Assurance that the Special Task Force on SEA will not be closed after one year;
- Agreement that the UN's Sexual exploitation and abuse database is updated to include HQ as well as field based staff, officials, experts, contractors and others for all UK funded agencies;
- And assurances that the UN will toughen its investigation and prosecution response.
- A commitment to a real inter-agency response to help bring perpetrators to justice in countries where concerns and caseloads are greatest.

The UK government recognises the progress made with the Voluntary Compact, but will nevertheless not be shy however in calling out agencies and organisations that do not take all necessary steps in training, prevention, detection to as fast as possible eliminate this scourge.

Britain will have agreements in place whereby all agencies we support endorse a 'zero tolerance' policy when it comes to child sex abuse, which will apply to its staff, officials, experts, contractors, implementing partners and any

other organisation or individual that benefits from Agency support or direct or indirect funding.

And we are absolutely clear that all UN agencies must be fully transparent about any and all accusations made against their staff, contractors and implementing partners.

Any agency that receives funds from us must have the strongest possible measures in place to protect vulnerable populations, especially children, and to deter, detect and catch paedophiles and sex offenders.

Under these agreements agencies must also have robust and credible whistleblowing mechanisms and the UK will host an international conference to plan on how we, together, set up, fund and support such a mechanism.

This is a defining moral issue for the UN and for Member States and there can be no more excuses.

AN URGENT AGENDA

No one in this room can doubt the urgency of reform.

On behalf of British taxpayers, the UK Government will put our money where our mouth is on our reform priorities and I call upon others to do the same.

The UN's goals and objectives are timeless.

But a UN that embraces reform can realise its enormous potential to build it up and make it relevant to the 21st Century.

We can't allow our international institutions to slide into irrelevance at a time when disasters, conflict, instability and poverty are desperately in need of global co-operation and global leadership.

A global Britain will lead this challenge and work together to create a more engaged and outward looking international system. Our work is to serve, and serve those whose futures are dependent upon the actions we undertake today.

Thank you.

[News story: Foreign Secretary's message for Rosh Hashanah](#)

The Foreign Secretary said:

Every New Year is a time for reflection.

As we enter the Jewish Year 5778, I reflect on the Jewish community we have here in the UK: A community which contributes so much to our society, in every field.

I also reflect on what a good friend the UK has in Israel.

My own relationship with Israel goes back to when I worked on a Kibbutz as a young adult, and it was a privilege to work with many partners in Tel Aviv as Mayor of London as it is now as Foreign Secretary with the State of Israel.

I was delighted to see London host the Tel Aviv Festival earlier this month attended by Middle East Minister Alistair Burt. It affirmed the strong cultural ties between two of our respective countries' great cities.

In the coming year, there are two significant anniversaries in UK-Israel relations. November will mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration and in May the 70th Anniversary of Israel's Independence.

Marking these anniversaries is an opportunity to show not only is our friend Israel here to stay, but that the UK and Israel are going to continue to work together, to grow together and to thrive together.

New Year is also a time to make resolutions, and I am going to share three of mine with you – bear down on the scourge of antisemitism, both at home and abroad, build the strongest ever relationship between the UK and Israel and celebrate the UK's Jewish community, a community that has made an enormous contribution to British society.

I wish Jewish friends in the UK and around the World a Shana Tova u-Metuka – a Happy and Sweet Jewish New Year!