

Speech: “The United Kingdom supports the U.S. air strike on the Al Shayrat airfield because war crimes have consequences.”

Thank you Madam President,

I deeply regret that the previous speaker showed more outrage against the United States than against the Asad regime that on Tuesday deliberately dropped chemical weapons, killing over a hundred men, women, and children in the most barbaric fashion.

More than three and a half years ago, the Syrian regime made a pledge. They would join the 189 countries who had already signed the Chemical Weapons Convention. They would reveal the full extent of their chemical arsenal and proceed with its full destruction.

What spurred this pledge was a chemical weapons attack. That time in Ghouta. Hundreds if not thousands were dead. There were images of men, women, and children choking, foaming at the mouth, clearly asphyxiated.

Three and a half years after a historically heinous war crime was committed, after the stockpiles were supposed to be destroyed, Asad on Tuesday, showed us yet again – this time in Idlib – that he is capable of redefining horror. Tuesday’s attack must be fully investigated. Impunity cannot be the norm.

We will continue to work with our partners on this Security Council to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

The United Kingdom supports the U.S. air strike on the Al Shayrat airfield because war crimes have consequences. And the greatest war criminal of all, Bashar al Assad, has now been put on notice.

The US strike was a proportionate response to unspeakable acts that gave rise to overwhelming humanitarian distress. It was also a strong effort to save lives, by ensuring that such acts never happen again.

The resolution that we adopted three and a half years ago provided a framework for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria. It had a clear author and a clear guarantor. At the time Russian assured us that Asad would fully declare his chemical arsenal and would continue to cooperate with international inspectors. Perhaps that was the assurance that Russia received from Asad.

And perhaps Russia has now learnt the hard lesson that backing a war criminal comes with its own consequence: humiliation.

Russia has barely any support from the Arab world for its policy of propping

up the criminal Asad regime as it carries out chemical weapons attacks against its own people. Russia needs to listen to this Council, listen to the Arab world, listen to the rest of the international community, above all listen to the Syrian people. Their message is clear: end Asad's bombs, his use of chemical weapons, his torture dungeons.

Instead, Russia has given Assad everything he could dream of. Without Russia's seven vetoes in the Security Council defying the views of other members of this Council, Assad would now have faced sanctions and justice. And what did Russia get for its unconditional support?

Assad ignores Russia's requests for him to obey a ceasefire. Assad defies Russia's request for him not to gas his own people. Assad thumbs his nose at Russia's calls for Assad to join a peace process. Russia sits here today humiliated by its failure to bring to heel a puppet dictator entirely propped up by Russia itself, and Hizbollah, and Iran.

And let me bust some myths about our private negotiations over the last couple of days. We were seeking agreement on a draft resolution. I repeatedly asked the Russian Federation: why could you not support our draft resolution? If you want the truth why did you not want the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to have access to the places, the people, and the information they need? What possible excuse do you have for keeping that information away from the investigators? What reason do you have to carry on protecting Assad? If you care about the UN Charter, why protect a dictator who has violated international law time and time again? Answer came there none.

There is another way for Russia and I appeal to the Russian Federation to abandon its failed strategy. To join the rest of this Council in our call for justice and accountability. To end your protection of a war criminal. To join us, all of us, in supporting a genuine political progress that would lead to a transition to a more legitimate and representative government.

The only reason why we are here. Why these discussions are being had in this moment, in this chamber, is because the international community has not done enough.

Things can be different.

The difference that can be made. The difference that must be made, lies in a political solution. And that won't happen if we take the familiar route that has plagued this Council and the countries of the region, millions of Syrians looking for a future. The new road must see the Syrian regime engage. The new road must have Russia and Iran not only at the table, but negotiating in good faith.

We are sitting in the halls of the organisation that was built to guide us when peace seems out of reach. The United Nations has a vital role in convening those negotiations and helping the parties to resolve their disputes

The agenda has been set and it is long overdue that a proper negotiation on the future Syrian-led transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people happens. Asad must engage in serious discussion about that future to meet those aspirations of all Syrians.

Madam President in conclusion,

The United Kingdom supports the U.S. action as an appropriate response to a heinous act by a brutal and uncaring dictator. By a dictator who thinks that gassing his people is somehow a legitimate step on the road to stability.

It is time now to get a genuine political process back up and running. Those discussions may be long and difficult. But the people of Syria deserve nothing less.

And if we want to ensure that the shocking images that have haunted us this week are truly confined to history, then this is our duty.

Thank you.

Press release: Minister condemns persecution of LGBT community in Chechnya

Reports from international human rights organisations suggest that over 100 gay men have recently been detained in Chechnya, with some reports suggesting that at least three have been killed and many have been tortured.

The detention and ill-treatment of over 100 gay men in Chechnya is extremely concerning. Reports have also suggested that at least three of these men have been killed. The statement by the regional Government, implying that such treatment towards LGBT people is acceptable, is particularly abhorrent. We condemn any and all persecution, and call on the authorities to promptly investigate and ensure that perpetrators of human rights abuses are brought to justice.

The human rights situation for LGBT people in Russia has deteriorated significantly in recent years and we continue to voice our serious concern with Russian authorities at all levels. Russia's international human rights obligations require them to protect citizens who may be at risk of persecution. We expect the Russian government to fulfill its obligations to this end, and to uphold the rule of law.

Press release: RACE to host €10m ITER test facility

The UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the ITER Organization have entered into a technical collaboration which will see the UKAEA's centre for Remote Applications in Challenging Environments, RACE, host the ITER Remote Handling Test Facility (IRTF) for a period of at least five years.

The UK Government is investing €5 million over this period, matched by the ITER Organization, to perform testing of critical remote handling operations necessary for the maintenance of components for ITER – the international fusion energy project based in Cadarache, France.

The IRTF will be used to test and evaluate remote handling system designs, conduct remote handling trials of generic and specific maintenance tasks and thus demonstrate the feasibility and compatibility of these remote handling tasks and to provide operational feedback into the final component designs. Test facilities will be established across many of the ITER systems, including Diagnostics, Heating, Vacuum and Port Plugs. UKAEA's RACE centre, at Culham Science Centre near Oxford, is actively supporting a number of industry-led partnerships developing remote maintenance systems for the ITER project, including the Divertor, Neutral Beam and the Cask & Plug Remote Handling System. Having this common link provides the opportunity for sharing best practice, creating common standards, sharing development effort and the development of generic test facilities.

UKAEA Head of Business Development, Martin Townsend, explained:

UKAEA remains committed to the realisation of ITER, helping to support industry to secure business from the ITER programme and partnering with all stakeholders to deliver the new technologies and processes necessary for success. Hosting the ITER remote handling test facility provides an excellent opportunity to link UKAEA's know-how with ITER Organization technical experts, supported by industry.

The ITER Organization's Division Head for Remote Handling & Radioactive Materials, Spencer Pitcher, summarised the win-win nature of the collaboration:

At the RACE centre, we now have access to an excellent new facility at a fusion laboratory dedicated to remote handling and staffed with expertise arising from long experience in performing such tasks on the JET fusion experiment. Meanwhile at ITER, we are in

the midst of designing components that will require remote maintenance and for which validation of maintenance schemes by mock-ups can greatly reduce the risk to the ITER project. ITER itself will not have facilities on our premises to perform such tests for several years. This UKAEA contribution to the success of fusion and ITER makes an excellent match with ITER's remote handling >mock-up and testing requirements.

Ends

For more information please contact Nick Holloway, UKAEA Media Manager, on 01235 466232 or email nick.holloway@ukaea.uk

Notes to Editors

RACE (Remote Applications in Challenging Environments) Part of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, RACE is conducting R&D and commercial activities in the field of Robotics and Autonomous Systems. Based at Culham Science Centre near Oxford, RACE offers access to test facilities, robotic equipment and expertise for SMEs, multinationals, research laboratories and academia from sectors with 'challenging environments' such as nuclear fission and fusion, petrochemical, space exploration, construction and mining. Further information: <http://www.race.ukaea.uk>

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority The UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) carries out fusion energy research on behalf of the Government at Culham Science Centre. It is also developing Culham as a location of hi-tech research and business, with around 40 tenant companies now on site and UKAEA's new RACE robotics centre and Materials Research Facility, which both opened in 2016.

UKAEA's fusion lab Culham Centre for Fusion Energy oversees Britain's fusion programme, headed by the MAST Upgrade experiment. It also hosts the world's largest fusion research facility, JET (Joint European Torus), which it operates for European scientists under a contract with the European Commission.

ITER ITER ("The Way" in Latin) is one of the most ambitious energy projects in the world today. At Cadarache in southern France, 35 nations are working together to build the world's largest tokamak, a magnetic fusion device that has been designed to prove the feasibility of fusion as a large-scale and carbon-free source of energy based on the same principle that powers our Sun and stars. The work that will be carried out at ITER is crucial to advancing fusion science and preparing the way for the fusion power plants of tomorrow.

ITER will be the first fusion device to produce net energy. ITER will be the first fusion device to maintain fusion for long periods of time. And ITER will be the first fusion device to test the integrated technologies, materials, and physics regimes necessary for the commercial production of fusion-based electricity. The ITER Organization is an intergovernmental organization that was established by an international agreement signed in

2006. The Parties to the ITER Agreement (the ITER Members) are the People's Republic of China; the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom); the Republic of India; Japan; the Republic of Korea; the Russian Federation; and the United States of America. Further information: <https://www.iter.org/>

[News story: Review of methods for coffee bean authenticity testing](#)

Why is coffee authenticity an issue?

Coffee is one of the most widely traded tropical products at a global level. Arabica and Robusta are the most popular varieties with Arabica generally favoured by discerning coffee drinkers. With a high market value and commercial importance coffee is in the top 10 products most at risk of food fraud. Fraud takes a variety of forms:

- adulteration of coffee with cheaper materials such as coffee husks, chicory, cereal grains, woody tissue, cocoa or soya beans, acai berries or exogenous sugars
- substitution of the more expensive Arabica with cheaper beans.

Where should you start analytically checking the coffee supply chain?

This problem has been tackled by the Government Chemist's team at LGC and the Institute of Global Food Security in Queen's University Belfast. Distilling the results of a number of studies in scientific literature, Laura Tweed, Prof Duncan Thorburn Burns and Dr Michael Walker have produced key instructions for probing the authenticity of coffee.

Common adulterants

Most of the common adulterants can be detected by chromatography of marker carbohydrates as detailed in standard methods (BS ISO 24114 and BS 5752-15) with the help of chromatograms of authentic coffee/ adulterant mixtures. Looking at DNA with Real-Time PCR is a viable alternative to chemistry-based methods.

Geographic origin

Claims for specific coffee bean geographic origin can be checked by

identification of discriminant molecular markers, although these are not as yet available for all coffee growing areas. A method using solvent extraction and Fourier Transform infrared spectroscopy, FTIR, has the advantage that the FTIR spectra for authentic dichloromethane extracts are freely available online.

Coffee bean species

Discrimination between Arabica and Robusta species in coffee samples is possible via the marker compounds kahweol and 16-O-cafestol, predominant in Robusta. Determination of the latter by nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy has the advantage of speed and relative simplicity.

Kopi Luwak

The most intriguing coffee authenticity problem is posed by Kopi Luwak, coffee beans harvested from the faeces of the palm civet cat. The processing of the beans in the digestive tract of this cat indigenous to Indonesia contributes to Kopi Luwak's mystique and price. Although proof of identity of Kopi Luwak has been made more difficult by the possibility of mimicking the effect of the cat's gut on beans through the use of microorganisms and enzymes, discriminant markers identified by gas chromatography combined with mass spectrometry (GC-MS) has proved successful. The question as to whether or not any residual civet cat DNA can be detected on ground roast coffee can be detected remains unanswered.

The review

The [full paper](#) contains outline experimental details and references to the key studies so that any laboratory wishing to check coffee in the supply chain can make a good start.

Reference

Thorburn Burns D, Tweed L & Walker MJ. Ground Roast Coffee: Review of Analytical Strategies to Estimate Geographic Origin, Species Authenticity and Adulteration by Dilution (2017) Food Anal Methods.

DOI:[10.1007/s12161-016-0756-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12161-016-0756-3)

[Press release: Four NI charities for women and girls to receive UK Government funding](#)

Minister Kris Hopkins today visited one of the charities, Autism NI, which

supports individuals with Autism and their families and campaigns to raise awareness of Autism within wider society. The other organisations benefiting from the new tranche of money are Mid Ulster Women's Aid, Foyle Women's Aid and HomeStart North Down.

The news of final funding confirmation follows last week's announcement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, that four projects based in Northern Ireland were set to benefit from the Fund. The scheme is set up to help create a fairer, shared society for women across the United Kingdom.

At Autism NI's South Belfast base this morning at the start of Autism Awareness Month, Minister Hopkins donned a blue tie in support of the organisation's 'Wear It Blue' campaign which encourages supporters to wear blue clothing for the day to increase awareness of autism and fund-raise for the charity.

Minister Hopkins said:

"I am delighted to extend my congratulations to Autism NI on their success in the latest round of Tampon Tax funding – and indeed to all four local charities that will benefit from a total of £451,411. The money will support projects that will have a real and vital impact in improving the lives of disadvantaged women and girls throughout Northern Ireland.

"It has been truly inspiring to see first-hand the important work of Autism NI and its impact on the lives of individuals with autism and their families.

"Currently over 6,900 children are diagnosed with Autism in Northern Ireland and this number is increasing steadily. At a time when voluntary and community groups in Northern Ireland face concerns and challenges due to the current political situation, statistics like these – and the real lives of the people and families behind them – vividly underscore the importance of having devolved institutions up and running and serving the whole community."

Autism NI CEO Kerry Boyd added:

"I am delighted that the Tampon Tax Fund has supported such a significant project for the Autism community in Northern Ireland. Many girls with Autism are not diagnosed until later in life and therefore miss out on critical intervention support at an early age. This project aims to bridge that gap through tailored support for females living with Autism so they can fulfil their full potential in life and also give them a voice to advocate their own needs."

The money will help Autism NI remove barriers for Autistic girls within the home, school and community environments to support achievement, enjoyment and full participation in a society that respects their rights.