

Carwyn Connect heads to Barry

The Carwyn Connect event will give local people the opportunity to meet the First Minister and ask him questions on any issues which affect them or their local community.

The session will take place between 6pm and 7.30pm at the Memo Arts Centre [Gladstone Road, Barry, CF62 8NA].

People are encouraged to register their interest in attending the free events online at the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cyfarfod-carwyn-carwyn-connect-tickets-29821069622>

Questions can be asked in a number of ways – they can be submitted when people arrive at the venue when doors open at 5.30pm; in advance via email on cabinetcommunications@wales.gsi.gov.uk or via Twitter using @fmwales with the hashtag #carwynconnect.

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“Over the past year, I have travelled across the country to hear the views of local communities and answer the burning questions of the people of Wales.

“I would like to see as many people as possible at the event in Barry on 3 April, so if you have a question for me, want to raise issues affecting your community or have a great idea to make your home town a better place to live, come along to the event.

“We always discuss a wide variety of topics at these events, with questions about very local issues, to discussions about broad Government policy.

“This is your chance to meet and speak with me in person. I’m really looking forward to meeting you all.”

News story: Baroness Anelay welcomes conclusions of UN Human Rights Council

This was the first Human Rights Council (HRC) session since the UK’s successful re-election in November to serve a second term on the Council. The UK, represented at Ministerial level by my colleague Mr Sharma, Minister for

Asia, played a leading role on a number of important issues, including Syria, Sri Lanka and South Sudan, as well as supporting on Burma, DPRK and Iran.

I welcome the adoption of a strong resolution on Syria, which includes renewing the mandate of the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI). The COI's vital work highlights the unspeakable atrocities being perpetrated in Syria. We will continue to call for those responsible for violations and abuses of international law to be held to account. We remain concerned at the lack of humanitarian access in Syria. We call on the regime to abandon its callous siege and starvation tactics and allow for the immediate, unhindered delivery of aid.

The report presented by the Human Rights Commission in South Sudan was deeply worrying. Following the peace agreement in August 2015, our hope that a transitional government of national unity might turn the tide of violence and begin the process of reconciliation looks to remain just that, a hope. So I welcome the adoption of a resolution, by consensus and with South Sudan's support, that will extend the Commission's work and strengthen its mandate.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report on Sri Lanka highlighted notable improvements in its human rights situation. But much remains to be done in order to address the legacy of Sri Lanka's armed conflict. I welcomed Sri Lanka co-sponsoring a resolution at this session, sending a strong signal on the importance the Government attaches to reconciliation and human rights. I urge the Government of Sri Lanka to provide the leadership required to fully deliver on its commitments, to develop a comprehensive, time-bound implementation strategy, and to give due consideration to the conclusions of the report of the Consultation Task Force on reconciliation mechanisms.

I thank the Special Rapporteur on Burma for her report to the Council, acknowledging the progress made by the Government in its first year, while outlining the complex human rights challenges that remain, in particular conflict-related violations in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin States. I welcome the establishment of an independent international Fact Finding Mission to look into recent human rights violations, and urge the Burmese authorities to cooperate fully. The UK stands ready to assist the Government in this endeavour and tackling other long-standing human rights challenges. I welcome the resolution on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which draws upon the recommendations made by the Group of Independent Experts on accountability. I hope the UN Special Rapporteur will continue the important task of developing an effective accountability framework with OHCHR in Seoul. The UK will continue to work with partners to maintain international pressure on the DPRK. I call on the Government of the DPRK to take credible steps to address the shocking human rights record and prioritise the welfare of the North Korean people above the country's nuclear and ballistic missile programme.

The situation in Libya remains a grave concern, as highlighted in the latest joint report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. I condemn the recent upsurge in violence between armed groups both in Tripoli and in the oil crescent, and am

deeply concerned by reports of human rights abuses and violations by combatants in Benghazi and elsewhere. Those responsible must be held to account. I welcome the efforts of the Presidency Council and other mediators to de-escalate the situation and secure ceasefires. I urge calm on all sides to avoid further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the country. The UK welcomes the Council's support for the resolution and the emphasis on accountability.

I welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Iran. The human rights situation within the country is deeply worrying, in particular the continued execution of juvenile offenders. The newly introduced Charter on Citizen's Rights has the potential to make a positive impact and I urge Iran to grant immediate access to the Special Rapporteur so she can work with them to implement it.

I also welcome the adoption of the resolution on the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The human rights situation there is deeply concerning. For too long, international organisations have been denied access by the de facto authorities to these increasingly isolated territories. I welcome the opportunity for detailed and objective reporting by the OHCHR. I trust that the de facto authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia will grant the mandated access to the High Commissioner and his Office.

The UK once again played a strong role in supporting consensus on the adoption of both the EU's 'Freedom of Religion or Belief' resolution and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's text on the combating religious intolerance resolution. Tackling restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, and addressing intolerance and violent extremism should be a priority for all UN Member States.

This Council has once again reaffirmed the vital role that Human Rights Defenders play in promoting and protecting human rights. The ability of our citizens to hold governments to account, to freely express opinions, to hold and avow their beliefs, is an essential element of protecting our dignity as individuals and societies. In too many parts of the world that ability is being challenged or restricted. During this session, we have also seen attempts by some delegations to restrict the participation of NGOs at the Human Rights Council. Civil society must be able to engage actively in the United Nations – it is in the interests of the international community that they do so. Civil society furthers the UN's ideals, is a source of evidence and expertise, and supports the implementation of the UN's work. We restrict civil society space at our peril.

The UK remains committed to ensuring that the Council's Universal Periodic Review process delivers real improvements on human rights. I am pleased that the UK took the lead alongside Paraguay, Morocco and Brazil on a joint statement this session, outlining commitments to improve implementation of UPR recommendations. We were pleased to lead a joint statement on the Rule of Law, stressing that implementation is as important as the rules themselves.

Finally, in addition to our duty to address egregious human rights issues, I believe we must acknowledge positive developments. We should encourage a

“race to the top” as States engage positively with the UN human rights system and support each other in translating political will into action. Alongside Colombia, the UK launched the “Race to the Top” initiative during the September HRC session. This session we delivered a joint statement on the initiative, which we were pleased enjoyed broad support.

At the start of our second term serving on the HRC, the UK was pleased to play a leading role on a number of critical dossiers. We look forward to working with member states on consolidating progress made in this session.

INTERVIEW: Amid increased suffering, responsibility to protect all the more necessary – UN Special Adviser

24 March 2017 – In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the outcome of the World Summit in which it, inter alia, underscored that each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

In addition to the State’s responsibility, the General Assembly also highlighted that the international community, too, has the responsibility to use appropriate means in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the UN Charter – the chapters dealing with peaceful settlement of disputes and regional arrangements – to help to protect populations from such crimes.

Within the UN system, the Secretary-General has designated a senior official to serve as his Special Adviser and to support both the organization and UN Member States in implementing the principle as well as in fulfilling the obligation.

The current Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect is Ivan Šimonovic who assumed the office in October last year.

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Šimonovic served as the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, heading the New York office of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (July 2010 to September 2016). He has also published extensively in the fields of law and human rights.

UN News spoke with Mr. Šimonovic on the progress made by the international community since the adoption of the principle of Responsibility to Protect, the challenges it is facing at the moment, and his role.

***UN News:* Can you briefly talk about your mandate and role; why do we need the Responsibility to Protect?**

Ivan Šimonovic: I am the Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary-General for Responsibility to Protect. My mandate is to develop 'Responsibility to Protect' conceptually, politically as well as operationally.

This means clarifying what the principle really is. It means gathering political support for Responsibility to Protect and discussing the ways how it should be implemented and what mechanisms should be used.

Responsibility to Protect is very much needed to protect populations from the worst of all crimes – protect them from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Unfortunately, I have to say that those so-called "atrocity crimes" are on the rise. Therefore activating the Responsibility to Protect – not only speaking about the commitments but also implementing it in practice is hugely important.

UN News: Since the adoption of Responsibility to Protect in the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, what major progress has been made by the international community on fulfilling the principles?

Ivan Šimonovic: There has been quite a lot of progress in the sense of conceptual development of Responsibility to Protect, such as through the Secretary-General's yearly reports and informal interactive debates. It has been clarified what Responsibility to Protect means.

It means that UN Member States are obliged to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. However if a State is unable to do it itself, it is the obligation of other States to provide assistance and support to the State that is under stress.

But if all these efforts do not work, if the State manifestly fails to protect populations or the State itself targets the population, then it is the obligation of other States to act collectively through the Security Council to protect populations.



Women wait with children to be examined at a mobile clinic run in the village of Rubkuai, Unity State, South Sudan. Photo: UNICEF/Modola

UN News: What are the biggest challenges at the moment?

Ivan Šimonovic: The biggest challenge is implementation.

We have seen from 2005 until now, many interactive dialogues, UN Member States expressing commitment, we have also seen Security Council as well as Human Rights Council resolutions having specific provisions dealing with Responsibility to Protect. More and more peace missions have protection of civilians in their mandate.

These are all [indicators of] progress.

But reality check: we are facing an increase of atrocity crimes and this is very concerning.

UN News: Going forward, how can the Responsibility to Protect agenda be advanced? For instance, what can UN Member States do?

Ivan Šimonovic: What UN Member States not only could, but in my firm belief – should do – is that they should regularly conduct risk assessments of risks of atrocity crimes in their own country, and they should introduce mitigation measures to prevent it from happening.

It is not only the responsibility of the Member State to prevent atrocity crimes and punish those who commit them, if they occur. It is also their obligation to prevent them through a set of measures such as through adequate budget allocations; ensuring their security forces are properly trained, professional, and they know about their obligations in protecting human rights and preventing mass atrocities. There is also a need to ensure that there is no structural discrimination and that there is equal access to justice, so it is a lot to do.

But is also an obligation of Member States who can afford and who have the capacity to help other Member States that have protection gaps to prevent mass atrocities. A very good opportunity to do this is the Universal Periodic Review, which is conducted by the Human Rights Council.

Finally, I think what should also be improved is the Security Council reaction to mass atrocities.

Unfortunately, far too often we have faced situations such as in Syria during which terrible crimes are being committed without adequate reaction because of divisions within the Security Council. So I fully support all initiatives to reduce the veto power in the Council when the issue of atrocity crime is at stake.

As far as peace operations are concerned, we must ensure that their mandates have protection of civilians included. At the same time, adequate means of protection should be provided so that it can work in practice.

UN News: Also, what role can the civil society and other organizations play to help progress the agenda?

Ivan Šimonovic: Responsibility to Protect is defined in outcome document of 2005 World Summit as primarily the obligation of Member States so the civil society in this respect serve as a watch dog – whether the Member States are observing the obligations that they have themselves, free willingly, undertaken.

In practice this could also mean, for example, ahead of the Universal Periodic Review, civil society can submit stakeholder reports emphasizing protection gaps that exist in a country.

Beside this watchdog function, civil society itself can have an active role, it is not obliged by the principle of Responsibility to Protect, because it

applies to States, but in the sense of preventing atrocity, especially on a local level, civil society can do a lot in the sense of conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

At the global level, the civil society can work to remind both Member States and the UN of their obligations under Responsibility to Protect.

UN News: In the end, would you like to add anything from your side?

Ivan Šimonovic: I think that in challenging situation, where we are, with atrocity crimes on the rise, all of us – the UN system, Member States, regional organizations and civil society – must work together.

The increase of atrocity crimes is simply unacceptable, we should do more to protect the most vulnerable against horrific crimes, namely: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

Speech: “What we’re witnessing is a systematic and corrosive assault on history, on religion, on the very fabric of identity”

Let me begin by thanking our briefers this morning, by welcoming the unanimous adoption of resolution 2347, and by paying tribute to France and to Italy for bringing this issue to the Council.

Today all our briefers, and all members of this Council, have really brought home the sheer scale of the problem that we face. Whether in Timbuktu, Palmyra or Bamiyan, this is an issue that goes beyond statues, beyond artefacts and beyond museums. What we’re witnessing is a systematic and corrosive assault on history, on religion, on the very fabric of identity. What we are witnessing are, in many cases, war crimes.

This isn’t just wanton pillaging and vandalism, this is a matter of international peace and security. Stolen statues in Syria and Iraq don’t just line the pockets of opportunists and looters, they provide a source of revenue for Daesh. And in the region, the destruction of religious and cultural sites is about more than just bricks and mortar; sectarian division can be fuelled by pickaxes and sledgehammers just as it can be by bullets and guns.

So let us respond to this cultural destruction with the same intensity and the same unity of purpose as any other threat to international peace and security.

Through this resolution today we have taken a step forward in doing so. This unanimous resolution shows the strength of our resolve and of our condemnation of such actions. It shows our commitment and determination to act against perpetrators so that we can combat terrorism, prevent conflict and protect vulnerable communities. But as with so many issues before this Council, implementation is now needed. The UK will do its utmost to do so.

That is why we have established a \$30 million Cultural Program Fund to support projects which help foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage in countries affected by conflict.

These projects are helping complete the new museum in Basrah, helping protect heritage and traditional craft skills in Kabul, and supporting advanced archaeological techniques and technology for archaeologists across the Middle East and North Africa.

It's an effort furthered by the British Museum who are training Iraqi heritage sector workers, so that they have the skills needed to assess and record the condition of their heritage sites and carry out "rescue archaeology" as required. It's already bearing fruit; a participant in the training has been appointed by the Iraqi State Board to lead the assessment of the site of Nimrud, recently released from Daesh control. And another participant is looking forward to returning to Mosul Museum soon.

But it isn't enough to train civilians. It's often the brave men and women of the armed forces who are at the frontline of the threat against culture heritage. That's why the United Kingdom last year set up a Cultural Property Protection Unit so that respect for cultural property is further integrated into training and operations of our armed forces. This includes respecting domestic and international law, as well as the obligations of the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols, which we will shortly ratify.

The action we take as a Council or as member states will count for little unless we show there are real consequences for those who carry out these acts. Truly to rid the world of this scourge, we need to deter and punish, as well as prevent.

Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi was the first person convicted by the International Criminal Court for attacking protected sites, but he cannot be the last. If we are to deter others from following his path, we need to see more convictions, more consequences. His story should serve as a warning to all those who choose to attack cultural heritage; a warning that this Council must ensure is heeded.

Thank you.

Marking World Tuberculosis Day, UN seeks to address stigma, protect patient rights

24 March 2017 – To mark World Tuberculosis Day, the United Nations health agency has launched a new set of ethics guidance to protect the rights of all people affected by the infectious disease, which claims 5,000 lives each day.

New tuberculosis (TB) ethics guidance, launched earlier this week by the World Health Organization (WHO), aims to help ensure that countries implementing anti-TB strategy adhere to sound ethical standards to protect the rights of all those affected.

“TB strikes some of the world’s poorest people hardest,” said WHO Director-General Margaret Chan in a news release.

“WHO is determined to overcome the stigma, discrimination, and other barriers that prevent so many of these people from obtaining the services they so badly need,” she said.

World Tuberculosis Day, celebrated on 24 March each year, is an opportunity to raise awareness about the burden of tuberculosis worldwide and the status of prevention and care efforts.

This is the second year of a two-year Unite to End TB campaign. WHO is placing a special focus on uniting efforts to ‘Leave No One Behind,’ including actions to address stigma, discrimination, marginalization and overcome barriers to access care.

The heaviest burden is carried by communities which already face socio-economic challenges: migrants, refugees, prisoners, ethnic minorities, miners and others working and living in risk-prone settings, and marginalized women, children and older people.



With over 118,000 displaced sheltering in Bentiu, the spread of Tuberculosis in South Sudan is still a concern. Photo: IOM

The new WHO ethics guidance addresses contentious issues such as, the isolation of contagious patients, the rights of TB patients in prison, discriminatory policies against migrants affected by TB, among others. It emphasizes five key ethical obligations for governments, health workers, care providers, nongovernmental organizations, researchers and other stakeholders to:

- provide patients with the social support they need to fulfil their responsibilities;

- refrain from isolating TB patients before exhausting all options to enable treatment adherence and only under very specific conditions;
- enable “key populations” to access same standard of care offered to other citizens;
- ensure all health workers operate in a safe environment; and,
- rapidly share evidence from research to inform national and global TB policy updates.

“Only when evidence-based, effective interventions are informed by a sound ethical framework, and respect for human rights, will we be successful in reaching our ambitious goals of ending the TB epidemic and achieving universal health coverage. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aspiration of leaving no one behind is centred on this,” said WHO Global TB Programme Director Mario Raviglione.