

UK Statement for the Virtual Informal Conversation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Madam President, High Commissioner,

First of all, thank you for taking this initiative and for arranging today's informal briefing.

I want to take this opportunity to express my condolences and sympathies to friends and colleagues in Geneva whose countries have been so seriously affected – and to express my thanks for the expressions of support following the hospitalisation of our Prime Minister.

With your permission, I want to make three points this morning.

First, I want to reiterate the UK's support to the UN, its Funds, Programmes and Agencies, in their effort to tackle these enormous health and humanitarian challenges. The world has never been faced with such a comprehensive and collective challenge as this global pandemic, and we will only get through it together, and by supporting and reinforcing the international institutions that have stepped up to deal with it. The United Kingdom has already provided \$900 million to the UN to fight COVID-19, and we will provide more.

Second, while States are rightly focused on doing everything necessary to bring this pandemic under control in their own countries, in line with WHO guidance, we need to be alive to the wider consequences of our actions, and the need to minimize the long-term damage to our economies, societies and politics. We are already facing the prospect of the worst global recession of our lifetimes, as a result of the measures we are taking, with all of the consequences for people's lives around the world, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.

Which brings me to my third point. We should all seek to ensure that the measures we take are necessary, proportionate, time-bound and transparent, and regularly reviewed. Scrutiny of our actions as governments and international agencies has never been more important than it is now, given the unprecedented actions we are taking, and we need to ensure that our parliaments, media and civil society are all able to play their role.

In that context, High Commissioner, I would like to thank you and your office for the role you are playing in ensuring that we do not lose sight of the international human rights frameworks and considerations that we need to take into account as we respond to this crisis. Your independent voice, at the apex of the UN human rights system, will be vital in helping to ensure that, as we battle this common enemy, we don't inadvertently take a step backwards on human rights, and the hard won progress we have all made in recent

decades.

Thank you.