

We urge Russia to match its words with actions

I thank you and I thank the briefers for the information that they've given today. The United Nations, the OSCE, and the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission continue to command our full support. The rights of all Ukrainians, whether they are in Kyiv, Lviv, Donetsk or Luhansk, can only be served by peace, diplomacy, and dialogue.

I want to make absolutely clear the United Kingdom's support for implementation of the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by UNSC resolution 2202. That resolution reaffirmed the Security Council's full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

It remains the responsibility of all parties to implement fully their commitments and seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

In this respect, we condemn the actions taken by the Russian Duma to propose that the Russian President recognise the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk as independent. This would directly undermine the Minsk agreements and must be rejected by the Russian authorities, in line with the commitments that they have made.

We welcome all efforts to support the process and avoid escalation, including the role of the OSCE and the Normandy format.

This remains our long-standing position. Mr President,

Let us remind ourselves of the context for the Minsk agreements, and the situation in which Ukraine finds itself today:

In March 2014, Russia invaded and illegally annexed Crimea, in flagrant violation of international law.

A few weeks later, in April, Russia instigated a conflict in the Donbas, which it continues to fuel today.

More than 14,000 have died in the fighting there.

Now, today, the Ukrainian people are yet again living under threat of invasion with well over 100,000 Russian troops, heavy weaponry, and military vessels amassed and exercising on their northern, eastern and southern borders, from Belarus to the Black Sea.

Let us say clearly what the world can see:

Russia has deployed the forces necessary to invade Ukraine, and now has them readied them for action.

In the past days we have heard Russian claims that some units are returning

to barracks. It is, however, all too clear that the opposite is in fact true, and the Russian military build-up continues.

Russia will say it has the right to move its forces on its own territory, but no one has the right to threaten the use of force. Russia is patently failing to live up to the international commitments it has made around military transparency, by refusing to adequately explain its military build-up or provide the necessary transparency to build trust and de-escalate the situation. If the Kremlin is serious about a diplomatic resolution then it needs to show up to diplomatic meetings and commit to meaningful OSCE talks, including via Chapter 3 of the OSCE Vienna Document. They did not show up on Wednesday, and do not intend to show up on Friday.

Russia's actions are clearly designed to intimidate, threaten and destabilise Ukraine. We know it, they know it, and the international community knows it.

Mr President,

Russia called this meeting today to discuss resolution 2202.

That text is very clear on two points that reflect the core tenets of the Charter emphasised by the UN Secretary-General when he addressed this situation only a few days ago:

One, that resolving the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine can only be achieved through a peaceful means, and

Two, that there must be full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Yet we are seeing increasing disinformation about events in the Donbas that are straight out of the Kremlin playbook: a blatant attempt by the Russian Government to fabricate a pretext for the invasion of Ukraine.

It is therefore clear that we are at a critical juncture to prevent further escalation.

Upholding the core tenets of the Charter in respect of peaceful resolution and respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity has never been more important.

Russia must now engage with the diplomatic processes we have built up over several decades, and on which global security depends, to resolve the situation through peaceful means.

If Russia chooses to launch an attack at this time of heightened tension, using disinformation as a pretext, it will show that Russia was never serious about diplomatic engagement.

Any Russian invasion now would be a conflict of choice for President Putin, and an abdication of Russia's responsibility under the UN Charter to refrain from the use of force and to maintain international peace and security.

There should be no doubt that any further Russian incursion into Ukraine would be a massive strategic mistake, and a humanitarian disaster, that will be met with strength, including significant coordinated sanctions. And we will continue to call out the pattern of deception and disinformation from the Russian state.

If Russia is serious about the Charter and its role as a permanent member of this Council:

it should give the Minsk agreements the chance to be implemented, free from coercion;

it should engage seriously with diplomacy;

and it should stand down all its troops.

There is still time to change path. Conflict can be avoided.

We urge Russia to match its words with actions, to withdraw its troops, to engage in meaningful talks and to act in the best interests of peace, security and stability in Europe.

I thank you.

[OSCE report on climate and security:](#) [UK statement](#)

Thank you, Secretary-General.

I would like to share a few brief reactions in response to your report

We share your view, which is widely held, that climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time. The security implications of climate change reach across the OSCE's 'comprehensive' concept of security and I share your enthusiasm about [the new Decision](#) and the useful work we can do.

We thank you for your consideration of the way forward, and agree with your 5 proposals.

Particularly, we support the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)'s planned work to launch a regional consultation process to identify and implement joint climate adaptation initiatives. Adaptation is a key approach in responding to the climate crisis.

Also, climatic systems are large and complex, and expert gathering and analysis of data is essential for an effective response. The OSCE could play

a crucial role in bringing these actors together and identifying these climatic risks early.

We also welcome an inclusive approach which takes into account the differentiated effect of climate change on different groups, and the role they can play.

As the decision itself said, the OSCE can complement efforts, in partnership with other bodies. I welcome the suggestion of further consultation with others working in this field so that we may learn from each other and more effectively respond to the common threat.

Our momentum is timely. Across the world but also in our own region, we are seeing how climate change is having an increasingly direct impact on security, through issues like migration and water scarcity.

I thank you again, Secretary-General, for the report and I look forward to the deliberations it has started, including at the high-level meeting on March 25th.

Thank you.

New research reinforces the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines

The [UKHSA-backed study](#) is the world's biggest study into COVID- 19 antibodies and regularly tests a large cohort of healthcare workers to answer the most important questions about the virus.

The latest paper focuses on the protection provided against COVID- 19 infection in those who have had 2 doses of the vaccine, as well as those who have previously been infected with COVID-19.

The results show that 2 doses of vaccine provide significant short-term protection against infection among those who had not had a previous infection – but that this protection wanes significantly after 6 months.

Analysis was also carried out on participants, both unvaccinated and vaccinated, who had been previously infected with COVID-19.

Unvaccinated participants who had been previously infected with COVID-19 were found to have 86% reduced risk of reinfection, when compared to the risk of primary infection in those who had no previous infection and were also unvaccinated. This protection waned to 69% after a year.

Dual protection in people who had been previously infected and subsequently double vaccinated was even greater and more durable, standing at over 90%

after 2 doses. This protection remained strong over a year after infection and over 6 months following vaccination.

Susan Hopkins, SIREN study lead and Chief Medical Advisor at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

This research demonstrates why it is crucial to get vaccinated, as it provides a significantly greater level of protection against infection from COVID-19, whether or not you have been previously infected.

However, the analysis also clearly shows that this protection from just 2 doses wanes significantly within months, which is why the rollout of booster jabs has been an instrumental part of our efforts to contain COVID-19.

To avoid infection and illness, it is vital that everyone eligible takes up the offer of a booster as soon as it is offered.

Vaccine effectiveness for Pfizer, where the second dose was administered 6 weeks or more after the first dose, stood at 85% from 14 to 73 days after, falling to 51% after 6 months.

Vaccine effectiveness for 2 doses of Pfizer, where both doses were administered within 6 weeks of each other, stood at 89% 14 to 73 days after dose 2, decreasing to 53% after 6 months.

Results from this SIREN study were gathered between 7 December 2020 and 21 September 2021.

[Tier 1 Investor Visa route closes over security concerns](#)

The Home Secretary has taken decisive action to shut the Tier 1 Investor visa route to all new applicants from all nationalities with immediate effect.

The route had allowed entry and stay in the UK if an applicant invested funds in share capital or loan capital in active and trading UK registered companies.

It has been under constant review and some cases had given rise to security concerns, including people acquiring their wealth illegitimately and being associated with wider corruption.

While work has been done to reform the route in order to prevent abuse, the

Home Office has acted to close it today.

This demonstrates the government's New Plan for Immigration in action – being firm against those wanting to abuse the immigration system while those who want to come to the UK and play by the rules will have that opportunity.

The Home Office will be making reforms to the Innovator route, part of the new points-based immigration system, to provide an ambitious investment route which works more effectively in support of the UK's economy.

Findings of a Home Office review, which looked at all Tier 1 Investor visas granted from when the scheme launched in 2008 up to 5 April 2015 when the route was reformed, will be published in due course.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I have zero tolerance for abuse of our immigration system. Under my New Plan for Immigration, I want to ensure the British people have confidence in the system, including stopping corrupt elites who threaten our national security and push dirty money around our cities.

Closing this route is just the start of our renewed crackdown on fraud and illicit finance. We will be publishing a fraud action plan, while the forthcoming Economic Crime Bill will crackdown on people abusing our financial institutions and better protect the taxpayer.

Since its introduction, the Investor visa route has been reformed to improve its value to the UK economy and to reduce the exposure of the route to illicit finance.

The introduction of the points-based immigration system has allowed us to target investors we want in the country. Improvements will be made to the Innovator visa route to support this.

Settlement will now be conditional on applicants executing an investment strategy that can show genuine job creation and other tangible economic impacts, passively holding UK investments will no longer be enough to obtain settlement.

[I-VMS grants system now open](#)

Press release

The online system making it quick and easy to apply for a grant of up to £650 to cover the costs of an IVMS device has gone live today.



The online system making it quick and easy to apply for a grant of up to £650 to cover the costs of an IVMS device, is now live.

[Applications are now welcome](#) from the first tranche of under-12 metre fishers installing devices on their vessels ahead of enforcement coming in.

As part of the launch [full guidance on how to apply](#) is now available for the start of the installation phase. A full programme of engagement and support is also planned throughout 2022 to help fishers to access the funding.

Michael Coyle, MMO's acting Operations Director, said:

We recognise the concerns fishers have expressed about meeting the costs of IVMS devices. We have therefore devised a system and process that is simple and fast to use, with the clear intention of paying the >grants of up to £650 to eligible fishers within a matter of days of their application.

[Full terms and conditions](#) for the funding have been published alongside the guidance that fishers will have to meet to qualify for the funding. They will need to:

- Purchase the device of their choice. The contract for the device is a private one between the fisher and the supplier so fishers must meet the upfront cost of the unit before claiming a grant
- Ensure their chosen device is installed by a suitably qualified marine engineer and is transmitting
- Provide the MMO with proof of purchase – typically a photo or screenshot of the invoice for the product and a similar digital image of the fishers' bank transaction to show payment has been made.

Once submitted the grant applications team will work with individual fishers to help ensure funds can be transferred into their bank accounts as quickly as possible to cover their initial device and installation costs. IVMS is being introduced in four tranches to allow time for installation by size category on the more than 2,000 vessels in the English under-12m fleet.

IVMS records the accurate location, speed and course of individual vessels via a secure, tamper-resistant device that transmits this data to a national operations centre via mobile phone signal.

Michael Coyle, MMO's acting Operations Director, added:

Data taken from VMS will provide a more complete picture of all fishing in our seas by all fishing vessels. Combined with data on catch volumes, scientific evidence of stock levels and a range of other significant data, I-VMS will enable more efficient and informed decisions on local and national measures and policies. To sustain fishing for the future we need to modernise the industry and make best use of this technology.

For any further enquiries please contact media@marinemanagement.org.uk

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