

Progress towards peace, prosperity and democracy in Sudan

Thank you Madam President. Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Perthes, Undersecretary-General Khare and Ms. Khair for their briefings.

Madam President, Prime Minister Hamdok and his government have continued to make progress on the path towards peace, prosperity and democracy. The formation of a new Council of Ministers to include signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement, exchange rate reform, the ratification of the UN Convention against Torture, and the Government's cooperation with the International Criminal Court are all noteworthy. As we have heard from Ms. Khair today, civil society, women and youth have a vital role to play in all aspects of the transition process. And we look forward to the establishment of the Transitional Legislative Council with a quota of 40% women in this context.

The United Kingdom stands ready to work with the Government of Sudan as it continues its transition to democracy. During his visit to Khartoum in January, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced the United Kingdom's intention to provide a \$456 million bridging loan to help clear Sudan's arrears with the African Development Bank. This is in addition to the \$55 million already contributed to Sudan's Family Support Programme.

Madam President, after months of delay, the United Kingdom welcomes the deployment of Special Representative Perthes and Deputy SRSG Lo N'Diaye. We also welcome the initial cooperation between the Government of Sudan and UNITAMS.

We recognise that the success of Sudan's transition requires sustained efforts in a number of areas. It is therefore vital for the Government to work with UNITAMS, including its integrated Country Team, to identify priority areas for UNITAMS to provide support in line with its mandate. In order to harness the full potential of UNITAMS's support, we urge the Government of Sudan to work with the UN swiftly to finalise the Status of Mission Agreement.

The United Kingdom has provided \$500,000 in voluntary contributions to UNITAMS. We are the first member state to do so and we encourage others to provide support for UNITAMS efforts to support the Government of Sudan's work.

Madam President, whilst the Government of Sudan has taken many steps to overcome the challenges facing their country, significant obstacles do lie ahead. We cannot ignore the escalation of intercommunal violence in Darfur in recent months. More people have been displaced in Darfur in 2021 than in all of 2020. We are also concerned by the destruction of yet another former UNAMID site on 23 February, after it was handed over to the Government of Sudan.

We echo the Secretary-General's call for the Government to expedite implementation of the National Plan for Civilian Protection, the Juba Peace Agreement and other efforts aimed at preventing and reducing violence at the community level. We also call on the Government of Sudan to secure sites handed over to them by the UN so that they can be used to consolidate peace across Darfur.

I also reiterate our call for those who remain outside the peace process to engage without pre-conditions, to conclude swiftly negotiations on a comprehensive peace agreement.

Finally, Madam President, the United Kingdom continues to closely monitor the situation on the Sudan-Ethiopia border. We call on both sides to engage in dialogue to prevent further escalation, which could have significant ramifications for regional peace and security.

COVID-19 vaccine supply and manufacturing in the UK

I'm grateful to CEPI for bringing us together and to Chatham House for hosting this essential and timely conversation.

It matters because there will be more vaccines produced in the next 10 years than ever in human history.

Our efforts on COVID vaccine supply and manufacturing here in the UK are well progressed:

- over 22 million have received their first dose – two-fifths of our adult population
- we're on course to offer a first dose to the rest of the adult population by the end of July; and
- our second doses are well underway

At the same time-at the global level-we're only just getting started, with much of the world still unvaccinated against COVID-19.

I have a global map of vaccine deployment on the wall of my office. I remember back at the start of December the UK was the only country shaded in blue.

Yes, I felt proud. But equally, I felt anxious – an anxiety that comes from the knowledge that nowhere is truly safe until everywhere is safe.

That's something we're reminded of every time we sequence and discover new variants.

And as we speak, scientists around the world are working to get ahead of some of the new coronavirus variants, looking at how a third vaccine dose could tackle these evolving mutations – much as we do with flu each year.

UK experience

So it's vital we work together to find global solutions, and I think the UK experience can be instructive.

It's worth reminding ourselves that there was nothing inevitable about the position we are in today. It's no accident. It's a result of the hard work of a great number of people and a consequence of a great number of decisions, taken at every point.

In short: we acted early, we acted safely, and we acted quickly.

We acted early, doing things like funding clinical trials and improving access to trials in our National Health Service, partnering University of Oxford's Jenner Institute with AstraZeneca, so they could develop and manufacture a safe and effective vaccine together, and bringing together a Vaccines Taskforce to coordinate work across academia, industry and government, under the leadership of Kate Bingham.

This holy trinity of academic excellence, private-sector entrepreneurialism, and civil service grip has forged a team of remarkable brilliance, which is a model for how governments can get stuff done quickly in the future.

The taskforce was charged with helping vaccines get through research, setting up supply chains, and – crucially – with buying vaccines on behalf of the whole UK.

We invested early – and at risk.

Crucially, the approach was never ideological. We didn't just buy British – we backed British and bought from the whole world.

We had no hesitation in embracing the private sector – we embraced their entrepreneurial spirit alongside academic and public-sector excellence.

And we were agnostic about technology – backing candidates that used mRNA, adenovirus, protein adjuvant and inactivated whole virus technologies.

Next, we acted safely, because in the MHRA, we have a regulator that stayed tough and rigorous throughout while also showing great flexibility and a disregard for unnecessary bureaucracy.

Nearly half a million people are on our national registry to take part in clinical trials for vaccines and many of them have stepped up for science this past year.

Taken together, it's meant we were the first country in the world to have clinically approved COVID jabs and, crucially, these are vaccines that people can have faith in.

We recognised early that the order in which you vaccinate really matters – both for protecting lives and to ensure that citizens can see it’s being done fairly, so we asked independent experts at the JCVI to advise on what order would save most lives.

Third, we acted quickly. The NHS has kept pace with our ambitious schedule, showing – once again – why it enjoys such broad national support and affection from the British people.

That said, even they needed extra support. After all, we’ve not done anything quite like this in our history. So, the NHS have been ably backed by GPs, pharmacists, the British Armed Forces – and an army of volunteers too.

Acting globally

We know we can’t rest on our laurels. As UK Health Secretary I’m not only concerned with making sure we get it right here at home but determined to direct the force of our ingenuity to act globally.

It’s not an either/or.

We were an early backer of COVAX, donating over half a billion pounds to support vaccine access for all countries and using our G7 Presidency. I welcome the new commitments made at the G7 leaders meeting last month.

I’m delighted the first vaccine shipments through the COVAX facility have arrived – meaning Ghana and the Ivory Coast could begin their vaccination programmes last week.

I’m so pleased to see our Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine – which is having such a positive impact here at home – play such a vital role in saving lives around the world.

I’m incredibly proud of the decision that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine should be made available at cost – and I encourage other manufacturers to follow suit.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is a gift to the world – and we want to see it used wherever it can save lives.

We in the UK have licensed 100 million doses to protect our population, but billions of doses of the Oxford vaccine will be the mainstay of global access.

This has to be just the beginning – and I’m so pleased we’re talking about global solutions today about how we can broaden access. How we can remove tariffs where they apply. How we can better share data on efficacy and trials. How we oppose vaccine protectionism in all its forms.

Vaccine supply chains are global – and the idea of one part of the world blocking exports is a mistake.

The pandemic has put us all on the same side in the battle for global health.

And when we work together, we'll all be the winners.

Home testing pilots for five court sites

- Government-backed home testing pilot to run for five weeks from five court sites
- Pilots to run from courts in Birmingham, Croydon, Liverpool, Snaresbrook and Wolverhampton
- Pilot follows launch of on-site rapid testing at Manchester and Southwark courts, with more sites to follow in coming weeks

HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has launched a pilot to trial the use of home testing kits among court users. The pilot is part of the government's ongoing UK-wide drive to increase the availability of testing and help stop the spread of COVID-19.

This pilot will inform HMCTS' future plans for workplace testing and follows the recent launch of two on-site rapid testing pilots at [Manchester Civil Justice Centre](#) and [Southwark Crown Court](#). Both pilots have been extended to last until 23 April 2021. More than 600 people have been tested at these sites so far, and results of the plans will inform a wider roll out, with aims to introduce more on-site rapid testing court sites across the country.

From this week, and for the next five weeks, the home testing kits will be available to collect on-site from Birmingham Crown Court, Croydon Combined Court, Liverpool Combined Court QEII, Snaresbrook Crown Court and Wolverhampton Combined Court.

The kits include lateral flow tests, and will be offered to all professional court users, legal professionals, judiciary, contractors, jurors, witness services and staff who attend scheduled hearings at the pilot sites. Each kit comprises either three or seven tests, with results available immediately afterwards.

Rapid tests are easy to use and can give results in 30 minutes, so those who test positive can self-isolate immediately and avoid passing the virus on to others.

Around one in three people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, don't realise they're infected, and are unlikely to get tested or self-isolate. This means they can spread the virus without knowing it. Regular, rapid testing plays a critical role in safer working, stopping the spread of the virus, and is key to breaking the chains of transmission.

Kevin Sadler, Acting CEO of HMCTS, said:

Our courts and tribunals have been operating throughout the pandemic to ensure justice is maintained and accessible to complainants, victims, witnesses and defendants.

We are pleased to be working across government on these pilots for workplace testing and are looking at how we can roll testing out further to court users.

A further roll out of testing across our system is likely to be a combination of local authority testing facilities, on-site testing, and home testing kits.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

We've already come so far since first setting up a national testing programme at an unprecedented pace to help counter COVID-19, but we continue to strive to go further, faster.

Lateral flow tests hold the key to the next phase of our ambition to see rapid testing available to people across the country.

I'm delighted that HM Courts & Tribunals Service are working with us to use the latest technology in Birmingham, Croydon, Liverpool, Snaresbrook and Wolverhampton, and I look forward to seeing the fruits of their labour, both in helping target the virus locally, and helping find ways to roll this technology out further.

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

The innovation and evolution of NHS Test and Trace continues to improve our detection of positive cases and I am incredibly proud of the speed at which we have been able to roll out these initiatives to protect more people more quickly. This is a national effort and a partnership of public and private sectors is instrumental in our response to this virus.

Around one in three people with COVID-19 don't display symptoms, meaning you can infect others unknowingly. This rapid testing programme with HM Courts & Tribunals Service will inform our understanding of how rapid asymptomatic testing can be operationalised in the real world to protect those at high risk, find the virus and help us go back to as normal a way of life as possible.

Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate and sensitive enough to be used in the community for

screening and surveillance purposes.

Once the test gives a result, individuals are expected to register their results via NHS Test and Trace. If the test gives a positive result, the court user will be required to follow [NHS advice on self-isolating](#) and take a confirmatory PCR test. Anyone receiving a negative test should continue to follow the social distancing guidelines for their area, following Hands, Face, Space, and avoiding risky behaviours.

Every building we operate – including our [Nightingale courts](#) – meets the government’s COVID-secure guidelines, and public health experts have confirmed our arrangements remain sufficient to deal with the new variants of the virus.

[New Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner appointed](#)

News story

The Home Secretary has appointed Fraser Sampson as the government’s new independent Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner.



The Home Secretary has appointed Fraser Sampson as the government’s new independent Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner, replacing the two part time posts of the [Biometrics Commissioner](#) and [Surveillance Camera Commissioner](#).

The recruitment campaign was conducted in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments. The statutory responsibilities and duties for both roles will remain the same.

Fraser Sampson, who took up his post on 1 March, will promote compliance with the Surveillance Camera Code and rules on police use of DNA and fingerprints.

The Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I am pleased to appoint Fraser Sampson as the new Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

It is vital the government works to empower police to use technology to keep the public safe while maintaining their trust and Fraser Sampson's extensive experience in law and policing makes him the right person to take up this role.

Fraser Sampson said:

I'm delighted to have been appointed to cover these two distinct but increasingly overlapping roles. I look forward to working with all partners in what is a fast-moving and challenging area of balancing the public interest considerations with the rights of individuals.

Fraser was formerly an Honorary Professor and Research Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University. He is a Solicitor of the Senior Courts of England & Wales. Between 2016 and 2019, he was Chief Executive of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner in North Yorkshire. Between 2006 and 2019, he was the Chief Executive and General Counsel for the Police & Crime Commissioner in West Yorkshire and the Executive Director of the Civil Nuclear Police Authority. He was also a police officer for West Yorkshire Police and the British Transport Police, between 1982 and 1996.

The Biometrics Commissioner and Surveillance Camera Commissioner roles were established by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 which introduced the regime to govern the retention and use by the police of DNA samples, profiles and fingerprints, and to promote appropriate overt use of surveillance camera systems by relevant authorities in England and Wales.

Published 9 March 2021

[New Action Group to boost mental health education](#)

A new coalition of health and education experts has met for the first time today (Tuesday 9 March) to look at the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and education staff across England.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson was joined by ministers from across Government, as well as Youth Mental Health Ambassador Dr. Alex George, to discuss how best to respond to the mental health issues of greatest concern including the increase in eating disorders and self-harm among young people, and how to help education staff manage their mental wellbeing.

The coalition agreed to take forward more action across a range of areas, including boosting the support available to help children and young people move between schools and year groups, and looking at how schools and colleges can target funding and recovery support to ensure that support reaches pupils who need it the most.

Today's meeting builds on the Government's [commitment](#) to ensure millions more children and young people have access to specialist support, including significantly expanded mental health services, backed by an additional £79 million.

The number of Mental Health Support Teams – which provide early intervention on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in schools and colleges – will grow from the 59 set up by last March to around 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly three million children and young people.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Getting young people back into schools and colleges has been a national priority, not just because of the significant benefits to their education but because of the benefit to their wellbeing as well. Across society the sacrifices we have all had to make to battle to pandemic has had an impact on wellbeing and mental health, and this is especially true for young people who have had to sacrifice so much over the last year.

The important work of this Mental Health Action Group will build on the significant investment we have already put into mental health in education, through training for teachers, our new health education curriculum and expert teams in schools and colleges. Today's meeting highlights the cross-government approach we are taking to make sure we continue to support staff and students.

Jointly chaired by the Education Secretary, Minister for Children and Families Vicky Ford and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan, the first meeting of the action group comes as millions of children and young people reunite with friends, classmates and their teachers, returning to the classroom with mental health and wellbeing at the centre of Government plans to enable all pupils to settle back into their daily routines.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

While the pandemic continues to affect so many people in our country, our commitment to improving mental health support for all

remains firm, especially through early intervention and specialist care for the young people who need it most.

Mental health challenges affect so many of us on a daily basis. That's why promoting wellbeing is at the heart of our recovery plans and why I'm proud to be jointly chairing this important new group.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

We know that this pandemic has taken a real toll on our students and protecting their mental health moving forward is non-negotiable.

It is vital that students get the help they need – for those struggling with their mental health, there is support out there through Public Health England's Every Mind Matters campaign, and students can also access targeted support through our Student Space platform.

This action group will allow us to look further at the evidence available to identify where we can expand and improve the existing support for all who need it.

Action group members also shared ways to improve training, where to focus investment and how to make wellbeing a core part of the school curriculum, as well as considering early years settings and development, university support, and sector-wide widespread mental health and wellbeing training opportunities.

Minister for Mental Health, Nadine Dorries, said:

I am acutely aware of how difficult this pandemic has been and this government is committed to supporting everyone's mental health, including children and young people. Today's meeting is a prime example of the steps we are taking to ensure we're supporting their wellbeing during this pandemic and beyond through early intervention.

The pandemic has disrupted children's routines – particularly with home schooling and the impact of this on their learning and seeing their friends – and although children are resilient, it's crucial we continue to support them as things get back to normal.

I encourage anyone who needs support to reach out to someone they trust or their GP – these services are here to help.

Youth Mental Health Ambassador Dr Alex George said:

Young people in this country have shown incredible resilience during the pandemic, but we need to recognise that many have struggled with their mental health.

Schools can play a vital role in a young person's development and wellbeing, and the extra investment for Mental Health Support Teams will make a huge difference.

I want every young person in this country to know that they can speak out and access support when they need it and I will continue working closely with the Government on this important work.

Education staff will be supported to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a result of COVID-19 as they return to school by the Wellbeing for Education Return [programme](#) backed by £8 million, and free online psychological training modules on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations.

Catherine Roche, CEO of Place2Be said:

We know from our school-based mental health professionals that young people have been deeply affected by the pandemic.

It's therefore really positive to see the worlds of Education and Health come together at this crucial time. Schools are fantastic in providing easily accessible, destigmatised support for children and families, but teaching staff cannot do this alone. Expert support from mental health professionals will be crucial as we move forward and understand the true impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health.

The first meeting of the Mental Health in Education Action Group was chaired jointly by Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, Vicky Ford, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families and Michelle Donelan, Minister of State for Universities. Other action group attendees from within the government include Nadine Dorries, Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health and policy officials from across the Department for Education, the Department for Health and Social Care, NHS England and Public Health England.

Attendees include Emma Thomas, Chief Executive of Young Minds; Paul Farmer CBE, Chief Executive of Mind; Catherine Roche, Chief Executive of Place2Be; Sir Norman Lamb, Chair of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition; Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the National Children's Bureau; Matthew Purves, Chair of the Schools and Wellbeing Partnership; Steve West, Chair of the Mental Health in HE Advisory Group; Rosie Tressler OBE, Chief Executive of Student Minds; Dr Peter Fonagy, National Clinical Adviser on Children and Young People mental health at NHS England; Dr Alex George, Youth Mental Health Ambassador and a student representative from the Office

for Students' student panel.