

UN Human Rights Council 46: Item 2

General Debate

Thank you Madam President.

We welcome the High Commissioner's report.

In response to the human rights situation in Zimbabwe, on 1 February we announced sanctions against four security sector chiefs responsible for serious human rights violations under President Mnangagwa. The Government must respect the rights enshrined in the Zimbabwean Constitution.

The UK continues to be concerned about the protection of civilians in Cameroon, particularly following the appalling killing of children in Kumba, in October 2020, and a series of violent incidents in January 2021. The violence must end. Urgent and impartial investigations must hold the perpetrators to account. In Uganda, we are concerned about the reported treatment of opposition candidates, their supporters, and the media around the 14 January Presidential and Parliamentary elections. The Government of Uganda must meet its international human rights obligations.

In Nigeria, we welcome the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, following 2020's EndSARS protests against police brutality. We are monitoring closely the judicial panels of inquiry established to investigate allegations of police brutality and human rights violations. The Nigerian authorities should ensure accountability for those responsible.

In Vietnam, we are concerned about the treatment and imprisonment of journalists and human rights defenders. A free media is essential to a functioning society. We also encourage Vietnam to share the progress it has made towards implementing the recommendations made during its latest Universal Periodic Review.

Recent violence and an increase in targeted attacks on civilians in Afghanistan, including on those who defend human rights and media freedom, are deeply concerning. We call for thorough and transparent investigations into attacks, and for all perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Finally, we refer to our statements on Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Burundi and Venezuela that have been made, or will be made, at other dialogues during this session. Thank you.

Honduran students return from studying in the UK with Chevening

World news story

2019/2020 cohort finished their studies in UK Universities after being awarded a Chevening scholarship.



The British Embassy organized a “welcome home” event for Chevening Scholars. It was an opportunity look back on a year of study, achievements and cultural activities in the UK, and to open up new opportunities as the scholars become part of the global Chevening Alumni network.

The British Ambassador for Honduras, Nick Whittingham, hosted a virtual reception, with special guests; and Scholars were able to interact in real time, while enjoying a programme of specially curated speeches and entertainment, including the opportunity to know more on the history of whisky.

Ambassador Whittingham encouraged scholars to continue pursuing their dreams whilst building a better Honduras, especially in the difficult times faced due to the pandemic and other challenges.

Honduran awarded scholars are:

- Sofia Alejandra Maradiaga, MSc Behavioural and Economic Science in University of Warwick
- Jose Daniel Madrigal Cerrato, MSc Urbanisation and Development in London School of Economics and Political Science
- Jose Menelio Bardales Urbina, MSc Structural Engineering in University of Birmingham

Chevening is the UK Government’s global scholarship programme. These scholarships are awarded to outstanding professionals from all over the world to pursue a one-year master’s degree in any subject at any UK university. To know more please visit [Chevening Scholarship](#).

[Guatemalan students return from studying in the UK with Chevening](#)

World news story

2019/2020 cohort finished their studies in UK Universities after being awarded a Chevening scholarship.



The British Embassy in Guatemala organized a “welcome home” event for Chevening Scholars. It was an opportunity look back on a year of study, achievements and cultural activities in the UK, and to open up new opportunities as the scholars become part of the global Chevening Alumni network.

The British Ambassador to Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, hosted a virtual reception, with special guests; and Scholars were able to interact in real time, while enjoying a programme of specially curated speeches and entertainment, including the opportunity to know more on the history of whisky.

Ambassador Whittingham encouraged scholars to continue pursuing their dreams whilst building a better Guatemala, especially in the difficult times faced due to the pandemic and other challenges.

Guatemalan awarded scholars are:

- Ana Lucía González Muñoz, MA International Heritage Management, University of Birmingham
- Grecia Anaí Rosal Rosales, MSc International Social and Public Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science
- Daniela Da Costa Franco, MSc Health and Society: Social Epidemiology, University College London

- Javier Zelada de León, LLM International Law and International Relations, University of Bristol

Chevening is the UK Government's global scholarship programme. These scholarships are awarded to outstanding professionals from all over the world to pursue a one-year master's degree in any subject at any UK university. To know more please visit [Chevening Scholarship](#).

Published 26 February 2021

[One year on from Storm Ciara: Progress to flood embankment repairs on the Lower River Aire](#)

We use some essential cookies to make this website work.

We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services.

We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services.

[Launch of Project SPEED challenges rail industry to cut time and costs of rail upgrades](#)

- Rail Minister officially unveils the rail Project SPEED approach, focused on halving the time and significantly reducing costs of delivering rail infrastructure projects
- innovative ways of working and simplification of processes to be rolled out across all rail upgrades
- new approach builds on the Prime Minister's new taskforce, [announced last June](#), to complete public investment projects more rapidly and at lower cost

The government has challenged the rail industry today (26 February 2021) to

pioneer new ways of working that will halve the time and reduce the cost of delivering critical infrastructure projects, as the country builds back better out of coronavirus (COVID-19), with the launch of the next stage of rail Project SPEED.

In a keynote speech at the Project SPEED conference today, hosted by the Rail Industry Association, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris invited the 1,800-strong virtual audience to get on board with the new approach to become faster, smarter and more efficient in the way that projects are delivered.

Rail Project SPEED (Swift, Pragmatic and Efficient Enhancement Delivery) was jointly developed by the Department for Transport (DfT) and [Network Rail](#) last summer. [Infrastructure projects](#) at different stages of development have been reviewed to identify how government funding could go further and work could be carried out faster.

This approach identified 10 key themes to lower costs and speed up the delivery of infrastructure schemes, such as rapidly increasing the use of innovative construction methods and removing complexity from planning processes.

These new and innovative ways of working will be rolled out across all rail upgrades, with the intention of:

- ensuring passengers experience better journeys more quickly
- giving greater value to taxpayers
- transforming the pace and way in which our railways are improved

A project already benefitting from Project SPEED principles is the [scheme to reopen the Northumberland line between Ashington and Newcastle-upon-Tyne](#), which closed to passengers in 1964 as part of the Beeching cuts.

Northumberland County Council, DfT, Network Rail and AECOM have collectively worked to identify opportunities to bring this into service as quickly as possible. This could take months off the schedule and deliver efficiencies that save millions from the programme.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

The whole country has relied on the transport industry over the past year to keep the country moving, supplies delivered and key workers to their jobs saving lives. We are now depending on transport to kickstart our economic recovery.

Rail Project SPEED, forged alongside Network Rail, is a call to arms to cut unnecessary red tape, be bold and purposeful, and empower the railway to be radical in its thinking to halve the time and reduce the cost of delivering infrastructure projects.

By maximising the benefits of every pound that we're channelling into rail, we will make the case for continued investment. Our intention is to create a more resilient, resourceful and robust

railway, equipped for the challenges ahead and delivering better for its passengers, as we build back better from COVID-19.

Andrew Haines, Network Rail's chief executive, said:

There has never been a more important time to make the case for rail. The pandemic has spurred us to make real progress in removing barriers that have long hindered industry transformation.

But, of course, there is still much more to do, and we will do that faster and more effectively when we work together across the industry.

At today's conference, the Rail Minister has called on the supply chain to come up with creative ideas where they can help reduce the cost of delivering infrastructure projects, with the best ideas set to be recognised in future industry awards.

The launch of rail Project SPEED builds on the new [Acceleration Unit](#), announced by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps in August 2020, to complete public investment projects more strategically and efficiently.

The DfT's new unit brings together transport experts, ministers, businesses, local government and other specialists to inspire fresh ideas, getting to grips with opportunities to improve infrastructure delivery, and help transport share best practice and learn from other industries.