

# Reiterating the UK's full support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire

Thank you, Mr. President. May I start by thanking you for calling this debate. The United Kingdom reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and the implementation of the commitments under resolution 2532.

Sadly, as we've heard, despite a global pandemic of historic proportions, peacebuilding has not always been afforded the priority it deserves. There has indeed been some progress, but implementation of the resolution continues to be mixed, as the following three examples illustrate.

In Yemen, as we've heard, the Houthis failed to reciprocate the Saudi-led coalition's unilateral ceasefire offers in 2020, and the recent Houthi attack on Aden has gravely undercut peace efforts. Now is the time to rally round the UN Special Envoys efforts to secure a lasting political solution to the conflict. The stakes have never been higher and the humanitarian crisis, already the world's worst, is significantly worsening with the effects of Covid-19. In September the Foreign Secretary warned that Yemen had never looked more likely to slide into famine. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification data, published in 2020, 16,500 Yemenis were living in famine conditions, now set to almost triple to forty seven thousand by June 2021.

Second, in South-Sudan, sustained increases in violence throughout 2020, combined with record flooding, mean areas of the country now likely face famine or famine-like conditions. This is a catastrophe that the government of South-Sudan must urgently address with international support. The 2018 peace deal remains the best chance of an end to violence and longer-term stability. However, implementation has stagnated. As such, greater coordinated international and regional pressure is needed on the government of South-Sudan to ensure they deliver their commitments.

More encouragingly, we welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on the 3rd of October 2020 by the government of Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front and Sudan Liberation Movement, Minni Minawi. This is a crucial step towards comprehensive peace. But despite this progress, significant challenges remain here too, including intercommunal violence. The violence that occurred recently in West and South Darfur highlights the continued need for protection of civilians, which full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement could help provide for. We encourage the signatories of the agreement to begin swiftly the process of implementation, particularly those provisions of the agreement pertaining to security arrangements and addressing the root causes of conflict. We also urge all those who remain outside the peace negotiations to engage immediately and constructively without preconditions.

As we've heard throughout 2020, we sadly saw the voices of women sidelined in peace processes. This is a grave problem, not just morally, but also because peace is more sustainable when it meets and reflects the needs of all people, men and women. The UK strongly urges the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and of youth, religious groups and NGOs in peacebuilding. And we must ensure women are able to carry out their work free from threats and violence. No woman should have to risk her safety to heal her community.

Finally, as we know, the Covid-19 pandemic threatens international peace and security. Ending the pandemic requires equitable global access to vaccines. Yet there are particular barriers to vaccine delivery in contexts affected by conflict and insecurity. We welcome the initiative of the Tunisian presidency to do more at this critical time. And building on resolution 2532 the United Kingdom will convene a meeting in our presidency next month to address potential barriers to vaccine access such as ceasefires, logistics and funding for delivery. Thank you, Mr President.

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## [G7 Foreign Ministers' statement on arrest and detention of Alexey Navalny](#)

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning the politically motivated arrest and detention of Alexey Navalny.

We are also deeply concerned by the detention of thousands of peaceful protesters and journalists, and call upon Russia to adhere to its national and international obligations and release those detained arbitrarily for exercising their right of peaceful assembly on 23 January. The violent suppression by police forces of the right of individuals to express their opinion is unacceptable. These events confirm a continuous negative pattern of shrinking space for the opposition, civil society, human rights defenders and independent voices in Russia.

It is deplorable that Mr Navalny is being detained in relation to court decisions which the European Court of Human Rights determined in 2017 to be arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable. We the G7 Foreign Ministers call upon the Russian authorities for Mr Navalny's immediate and unconditional release. Russia is bound by its national and international obligations to respect and ensure human rights.

G7 Foreign Ministers recall their condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the poisoning of Mr Navalny in August 2020 with a chemical nerve-agent of the "Novichok" group, a substance developed by Russia.

We reiterate that any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and contravenes international norms against the use of such weapons. We, the G7 Foreign Ministers, again urge the Russian authorities to investigate and credibly explain the use of a chemical weapon on its soil in the light of Russia's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The confirmed use of chemical weapons against an opposition politician, as well as Mr Navalny's latest detention further undermine democracy, independent voices, and political plurality in Russia. We urge Russia to fulfill its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to guarantee the rights it sets forth, including the right to freedom of expression, to all individuals within its territory and jurisdiction.

We will continue to monitor closely Russia's response to international calls for the immediate release of Mr Navalny and any protesters and journalists who have been detained arbitrarily, as well as a criminal investigation into Mr Navalny's poisoning. We remain strongly committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to our support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Russia, as well as to bolstering our support to Russian civil society.

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## **Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 26 January 2021**

I am sorry to have to tell you that today the number of deaths recorded from Covid in the UK has surpassed 100,000, and it is hard to compute the sorrow contained in that grim statistic.

The years of life lost, the family gatherings not attended and, for so many relatives, the missed chance even to say goodbye.

I offer my deepest condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one: fathers and mothers; brothers and sisters; sons and daughters and the many grandparents who have been taken.

And, to all those who grieve, we make this pledge: that when we have come through this crisis, we will come together as a nation to remember everyone we lost, and to honour the selfless heroism of all those on the front line who gave their lives to save others.

We will remember the courage of countless working people – not just our amazing NHS and care workers, but shop workers, transport staff, pharmacists, teachers, police, armed forces emergency services and many others – who kept

our country going during our biggest crisis since the Second World War.

We will commemorate the small acts of kindness, the spirit of volunteering and the daily sacrifice of millions who placed their lives on hold time and again as we fought each new wave of the virus, buying time for our brilliant scientists to come to our aid.

In that moment of commemoration, we will celebrate the genius and perseverance of those who discovered the vaccines and the immense national effort – never seen before in our history – which is now underway to distribute them, one that has now seen us immunise over 6.8 million people across the United Kingdom.

And when those vaccines have finally freed us from this virus and put us on a path to recovery, we will make sure that we learn the lessons and reflect and prepare.

And, until that time, the best and most important thing we can all do to honour the memory of those who have died is to work together with ever greater resolve to defeat this disease.

And that is what we will do.

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## [Funding for new checks on animal products creates 500 jobs](#)

£14 million in [funding](#) has been given to local authorities across England to help them maintain the UK's high standards on imported animal products, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has today (26 January 2021) confirmed.

Over 500 new port health roles are being created to facilitate the new checks on imports of animal products from the EU from April 2021, with £8.8 million invested in Ashford Borough Council and Dover District Council.

A further £5.2 million is being spent on recruiting staff, equipment and new systems in 19 other local authorities around England, including East Suffolk District Council, Manchester City Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, Portsmouth City Council and the City of London.

Farming, Fisheries and Food Minister Victoria Prentis said:

We are rightly proud of our high standards of animal and plant goods, and we are determined to maintain them, while ensuring that operations at our ports continue to run smoothly.

This funding will allow local authorities to play their part in maintaining standards and efficiency at our borders, while also providing investment in new jobs and infrastructure.

The new checks will be introduced in a phased way, with documentary checks on animal products for human consumption starting from April 2021, followed by additional identity and physical checks at Border Control Posts from July 2021. Together with other checks on live animals, plants and plant products carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), the new port checks will safeguard public, animal and plant health.

Ashford Borough Council, which is receiving the greatest share of the investment to support the upgraded Sevington Inland Border Facility (IBF) built alongside Junction 10A of the M20, will carry out an estimated 124,000 checks on imports a year.

Cllr Peter Feacey, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing at Ashford Borough Council, said:

The new service is an exciting challenge for us. The scale of the task is vast, logistically complex and extremely time sensitive. We are, however, fully committed to implementing the changes that are necessary and meeting our responsibilities.

I am heartened by the support being provided by Defra, not only from a financial perspective but also practically in terms of designing and implementing this service in just a few months.

I am sure that we will rise to the challenge before us and provide this nationally strategic service.

Toby Howe, senior highways manager at Kent County Council, said:

Getting Sevington operational in time to play its part in traffic management plans for the UK's departure from the EU was a huge undertaking. But the hard work hasn't stopped there and now the focus is on transforming the facility into a fully-fledged Inland Border Facility to help trade flow without disrupting traffic.

It's fantastic to see the site plans moving forward and the job opportunities created for the local community in the process.

Just as we did in preparation for the end of the Brexit transition period, the Kent Resilience Forum, including Kent Police, KCC and Highways England, will work closely with Ashford Borough Council to deliver this challenging, but exciting, project. It puts the town at the very heart of operations for the UK's new trading arrangements with the EU.

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# Education Secretary speech to Education Policy Institute on remote learning

I'd like to thank the Education Policy Institute for the opportunity to join your discussion today, and for keeping their focus on this crucial issue. Of course, I'd also like to thank Apple as well for hosting the event. The Covid pandemic has changed our way of life: we do business differently... we shop differently... and of course we learn and we teach differently.

Technology moves rapidly at the best of times but no one could have foreseen how fast it would have to travel to help us navigate a way through this global health crisis.

Unprecedented problems require unprecedented solutions – and schools, teachers, and leaders have all pulled together to bring about one of the biggest shifts the education sector has ever seen. Our increasing dependence on technology has changed our entire approach to teaching with a switch to remote education.

Because we have become so used to looking at the negative effects of the pandemic we have lost sight of one of the more positive aspects and how it has changed learning for the better.

While some of the consequences of remote learning have been challenging to say the least, some of them have turned out to be an unqualified success.

First I must start by congratulating the teachers and school leaders who have made it so, and who have worked so hard and so fast to transfer their curriculum into a series of lessons and materials that can be applied remotely as well as to the classroom.

Schools are now routinely delivering high-quality teaching for up to five hours a day to children who are learning at home. This is giving them a better chance to keep pace with what they would have been learning if they'd been in school.

This pandemic has certainly brought communities closer... as teachers and parents have often had to work together. I'm sure both have a far better grasp of what the other has to contend with as a result of this experience. This rapid shift in teaching methods means teachers have built up a wealth of experience to help make remote education smoother and more effective. For instance schools are now delivering recorded or live teaching online as a matter of course, with time given for pupils to work independently to complete assignments.

I know most teachers have probably produced their own materials to support remote education but there is also a wealth of extra resources teachers can call on.

I'm sure you are all familiar with the Oak National Academy lessons. These recorded video lessons were assembled across a broad range of subjects and age ranges by teachers coming together. Oak Academy is one of many examples of the additional help that is out there, from textbook publishers, digital teaching tools and training providers.

This has been another stand-out success in an otherwise grim pandemic landscape but it will be giving an enduring and invaluable legacy that future generations of children will be able to benefit from. I don't underestimate the extra challenge involved in this immense transformation, which has been nothing less than a total stepchange in how children learn.

I want all school leaders to know that they are not alone in adjusting to this. Any school can get immediate free support at Get Help with Remote Education on the gov.uk website. As well as free access to digital education platforms and devices, this provides an online 'one-stop-shop' for all schools and colleges to help them keep up to date with the latest information and guidance on remote education, as well as tips and advice from teachers and leaders.

There are a number of designated EdTech Demonstrator Schools and Colleges that can give friendly support and advice and guidance to help schools with technology issues, including those schools whose pupils have special educational needs.

I said that today I was going to focus on what we have to celebrate in our teaching communities from the past year which brings me to something that I am enormously proud of.

From the start of the pandemic we knew that while many children would have the necessary technology and access to it to enable them to study remotely, there would be a number who did not.

I am acutely aware of the huge responsibility we have for all of our children, but none more so than those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

For this reason, my department has been engaged in a massive logistical project to deliver hundreds of thousands of extra devices to schools across the country, so that every child, especially those from disadvantaged homes, can keep their learning on track.

Now, thanks to one of the world's largest hardware shopping expeditions, we have purchased an additional 1.3 million devices. Of these, we've already delivered an additional 800,000 laptops and tablets and nearly 240,000 have gone out to schools since the start of this month.

We are also working with the country's leading mobile network operators, enabling schools to request free data uplifts for disadvantaged families.

And this really signals our vision for the future of technology in education beyond Covid... making sure that digitally agile teaching becomes the standard and not the exception, and that we continue to stretch ourselves to make the most of what technology can offer us.

I know that for EPI, today's event is just one of a series of conversations that you are having with the sector. But's it's an important conversation. Because it's not just about looking at where we are today, but making sure that we take advantage of what we've learnt today to make sure it's fit for the future.

For us, the future of technology needs to be that continued conversation, and I welcome your insights on how we can work better and together to keep it going but making sure that we are delivering real change, where it is felt in our schools by the pupils who are learning.

When we eventually move on from this pandemic we will be able to look back with huge pride at what we were able to do for our pupils and students despite the extreme challenges posed by the Covid pandemic. Remote education has been a major achievement, not just for children today but for all of those in the years to come. And the revolution in learning that it will bring.