

# Meeting global humanitarian needs in 2021

2020 has been a year like no other.

Many have tragically died and fallen ill as a result of COVID-19 and the virus has triggered a global recession not seen since the 1930s. We risk losing decades of human progress. Extreme poverty is rising for the first time in over 20 years.

And, as the UN's Global Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2021 laid out in stark terms, 235 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. That's 1 in 33 people across the globe.

But the story of 2020 is not just about COVID-19. The main drivers of humanitarian crises have not gone away.

Conflict continues to take a heavy toll on civilians and violence against humanitarian workers remains rife. The impact of climate change and weather-related disasters continues to grow. The most vulnerable, including women and girls, are being hit hardest.

As a result, we are now facing the daunting prospect of famine and acute food insecurity in multiple contexts. The UK is particularly worried about the risks in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

As we look ahead to 2021, how do we meet the humanitarian needs of 235 million people? How can we slow increasing funding requirements? And how can we support humanitarians in field?

The UK remains committed to the global humanitarian cause. In September we appointed our first Special Envoy on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs. His immediate focus is building the necessary alliances to drive up levels of humanitarian funding and to develop political solutions to prevent the most acute food security crises.

The UK continues to be a leading humanitarian donor. We have provided \$1.8 billion over the course of 2020. And in the last week alone, we announced almost \$90 million in funding for the CERF and \$18 million to Yemen.

It is no secret that budgets are under pressure around the world. But it is staggering that the top ten donors account for 83% of humanitarian funding. Words are not enough. Major economies, outside of that top ten, need to step up.

The trajectory of ever-increasing funding needs, \$28.8 billion needed at the start of 2020 leaping to \$35 billion for 2021, simply isn't sustainable. So we need to be better at anticipating crises. Investing in a more proactive response to avert humanitarian crises could reduce the cost by as much as 30%. This means using early warning analysis and data more effectively, but

crucially ensuring data is linked to plans in advance of crisis and tied to practical early action.

But a humanitarian response alone is not enough. Humanitarian crises require political solutions. We need to ensure that the UN is making the full use of all the levers at its disposal – development, peace and political actors all have role to play in preventing crises.

We also need to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches those in need – and is not obstructed or frustrated – and that civilians and civilian objects are not the targets of violence. International Humanitarian Law must be respected and we need to unequivocally support the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. A weakened normative framework helps no one.

Mr President, amid these unprecedented challenges, I want to finish by celebrating the successes of the international humanitarian community and, indeed, the successes of multilateralism.

Humanitarian workers, at great personal cost and risk, have adapted and innovated to ensure the delivery of aid and services to 98 million people worldwide. And I congratulate the World Food Programme on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for their commitment to tackling global starvation.

These are extraordinary achievements that we must all build on to overcome the grave challenges we will face in 2021. On this basis, we offer our full support for consensual adoption of the resolutions before us today.

Thank you.

## **Explanation of Vote at UN General Assembly Plenary Session on Humanitarian Affairs**

Mr President, the United Kingdom is grateful to facilitators for their leadership on the draft resolutions before us and we welcome the approach taken not to re-open the text.

We would like to express our disappointment at the calling of a vote by the United States that seeks to delete agreed language on access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The UK is unwavering in its commitment to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights for all and we are concerned about the repeated attempts to pushback against these long-standing rights.

The UK is concerned by attempts to curtail access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls, particularly as access to these vital services have been diverted during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Sexual and reproductive health services are often life-saving, and women and girls affected by conflict and crisis need sexual and reproductive health services more than ever. These needs are particularly acute in crisis,

conflict and humanitarian settings.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights – which includes access to quality, comprehensive health services – are critical to the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. We will not achieve the Global Goals if we do not ensure all people have access to and can realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

So it is essential that the international community reaffirms its long-standing resolve to defend and implement its commitments on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. We cannot accept this attempt to walk back previously agreed language. And this is why the UK will vote in support of the paragraphs on which a vote has been called and we urge all member states to do the same.

Thank you.

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## Supporting the OPCW in its work to investigate chemical weapons use

Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, and Director-General Arias for their briefings to the Council today. The Director-General's attendance alongside Ms Nakamitsu underlines the cooperation between the OPCW and the UN on this issue affecting international peace and security.

I thank Director-General Arias for his 86th monthly report and for his update today on the work of the OPCW. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has spared no effort in attempting to take forward its mandated activities. We are grateful for the professionalism and dedication of the OPCW and its personnel.

We take particular note of updates on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). The Director General's report raises two important points:

First, we note that the Declaration Assessment Team and Syria were able to close three outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration. This shows that contrary to the assertions of some – that the outstanding issues are artificial – they are, in fact, real and eminently capable of resolution.

Second, the report highlights evidence collected by the Declaration Assessment Team since 2014 that indicates the production and/or weaponisation of chemical warfare nerve agents at a production facility that the Syrian regime declared never to have been used for such production. This underlines

the serious nature of, and the importance of, resolving the remaining 19 issues.

In addition, the unresolved issues in Syria's declaration include thousands of munitions and hundreds of tonnes of chemical agents, which Syria has not accounted for. Until all the issues are resolved, the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons program, as required under resolution 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention, cannot be verified. Given that the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), have established that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on at least seven occasions since 2013, it is undebatable that the situation represents an ongoing threat to international peace and security.

In light of this, we welcome the resolve shown by the OPCW Executive Council in adopting its decision of 9th of July 2020 in response to the findings of the IIT on the 2017 chemical weapons attacks in Ltamenah carried out by the Syrian Arab Air Force.

In that decision, the Executive Council was explicit that Syria had to declare the chemical weapons and facilities in its possession, acknowledge its chemical weapons activity, and resolve the outstanding issues with its initial declaration. As Director-General Arias has once again confirmed today, Syria failed to comply with the decision, and this will now be addressed during the next session of the Conference of States Parties in April 2021.

Just as the OPCW Executive Council and Conference of States Parties have a role in upholding compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and its own decisions, so the Security Council has a clear and distinct obligation to address Syria's repeated breaches of resolution 2118.

These breaches include the use of chemical weapons as identified by both the OPCW-UN JIM and the IIT; the retention and/or production of chemical weapons to carry out those attacks and the failure to comply fully with the OPCW, including on its initial declaration and access for the Investigation and Identification Team.

We were unequivocal on the action this Council would take in response to non-compliance with resolution 2118. Not to do so would be a dereliction of this Council's duty.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the UK's trust and confidence in the OPCW, its work and its dedicated staff. We have full confidence in the expertise of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the robust methodologies of its Fact-Finding Mission investigating allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. It is not surprising that individuals working in the Technical Secretariat hold a range of views, and a robust assessment process should involve debate and challenge. However, as the Director-General has confirmed, the Technical Secretariat took all views, evidence and theories into account in reaching its considered overall judgement regarding the attack in Douma. The OPCW Technical Secretariat and its multinational personnel showed great professionalism and resilience under intense external pressure and scrutiny.

This has included, as we've heard, cyber-attacks – for example, the foiled Russian GRU cyber-attack attempt in The Hague in 2018 – and a sustained disinformation campaign designed to undermine its credibility.

Attempts to undermine the OPCW and its staff have intensified since the use of nerve agents attack in Salisbury and Amesbury in 2013; since the OPCW Conference of State Parties voted to give the Technical Secretariat the role of attributing responsibility for chemical weapons attack in Syria in 2018; and since the poisoning of Russian opposition politician, Alexey Navalny, with a nerve agent from the Novichok group this year.

Only a year ago this Council adopted a Presidential Statement which unanimously reaffirmed our strong support for the work of the OPCW. Just two weeks ago, the overwhelming majority of State Parties, from across all regional groups, voted in favor of the OPCW's budget, which included renewed funding for the IIT and other Technical Secretariat teams working on Syria.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, the UK is well aware of the responsibility conferred on us by the members of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. We will continue to act on behalf of the vast majority of Member States who believe in the necessity to protect the long-held norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons and to hold those who violate it to account.

Mr President, I do have questions for the Director-General, which I will indicate now, but he may prefer, as is customary, to answer them in closed session.

Some have argued that Syria verifiably destroyed all of its chemical weapons in 2014 and the OPCW has not been able to find any evidence to the contrary since then. How would you answer this?

Our second question: in some respects, Syria appears to be engaging in process with the OPCW, and yet verification of its declaration has been outstanding for 7 years. How can Syria improve its engagement and how does the Director-General assess the prospects of achieving a complete and accurate declaration of its program by the SAR? What is needed in order to achieve this?

And our third question, does the Director-General know of any other case where it has been necessary for the Technical Secretariat, to engage continually with a state party over several years in order to arrive at a declaration that is considered accurate and complete in accordance with the CWC?

Thank you, Mr President.

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# Secretary of State announces appointment to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

Press release

Secretary of State announces appointment to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.



The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt. Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP has announced the appointment of Sarah Havlin as a member of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.

## **Notes for Editors**

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's role is to review the number, names, designation and boundaries of parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland and to submit reports with recommendations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible for making appointments to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

## **Terms of appointment**

- The position is a part-time appointment for five years. The appointment will end on 10 December 2025.
- The position attracts a daily remuneration of £505.50.
- The position is not pensionable.

## **Biography of Appointee**

Sarah Havlin is a solicitor by profession currently serving as the Certification Officer of Northern Ireland. She holds appointments as the legal member of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority of Northern Ireland, and as a member of the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland. Previous appointments include Assistant Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, Assistant District Electoral Areas Commissioner and she previously served one term on the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.

## **Political Activity**

All appointments are made on merit and with regards to the statutory requirements. Political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in defined categories to be made public.

Sarah Havlin has declared no political activity.

## **Regulation**

This appointment is regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) and all stages of the process were overseen by an independent panel member.

## **Statutory Requirements**

This appointment is made by the Secretary of State in accordance with Schedule 1 Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

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## **[Housing Minister's speech at the Insider Midlands Residential Property Conference](#)**

Good morning and a very warm welcome to everyone attending today's Insider Midlands Residential Property Conference.

It is a real pleasure to be joining you, albeit remotely, which as we all know is the way of the world at the moment.

Can I begin by thanking you, the housing professionals, business owners and

executives – those based in the Midlands, a part of the world well-known to me, and those of you further afield – for all of the resilience, perseverance and hard work that you have put in throughout this extraordinary period.

I think all of us today recognise the unique role which the housing sector plays in our economy, working in close partnership with the government. We've sought to do everything that we can to keep the sector running as smoothly as possible during this pandemic crisis.

From the Safe Working Charter launched with the Home Builders Federation back in May when the sector reopened, to the Business and Planning Act in July, we've worked to make sure the sector has remained open and has been able to work safely and effectively to keep our construction and housing economy on track.

Now with the Pfizer vaccine being rolled out, we have a post-Covid world in sight. We also have in sight the greatest economic comeback the country has ever known. The housing industry has been leading that charge and is pivotal in that process of reconstruction.

For the Midlands, that starts with meaningful investment in growth-spurring projects which support regeneration and new development.

That includes over £100 million of investment from our Land Fund for the West Midlands Combined Authority to deliver 8,000 homes across the region.

That is in addition to the significant funding package announced by the Prime Minister on a visit to Dudley earlier this year with Mayor Andy Street, which saw £84 million from the government's Brownfield Fund supporting the West Midlands Combined Authority to build thousands of new homes on former industrial land.

But this is not just about building new homes – important as we all know that is.

We are also investing in shovel-ready, job-creating infrastructure projects which will be key to helping businesses get back on their feet and for the Midlands Engine economy roar back into life.

Local Enterprise Partnerships across the Midlands are receiving in the region of £214 million from our Getting Building Fund to support innovative, growth-spurring projects.

Initiatives like the Warwickshire Green Recovery Project, which is rapidly expanding on-street charging points for electric vehicles, all the way through to a new Digital Advanced Manufacturing Centre in Chesterfield which is pushing the envelope in 3D prototyping and modular construction.

Of course, government cash, however useful and significant and however targeted, can only go so far in our national mission to build back better.

We need regulatory reform as well, and as many of you will know, the government has published its ambitious '[Planning for the Future](#)' White



Paper with proposals for a reformed planning system to make it simpler, quicker and more accessible.

Local Plans still need to be prepared by local councils, but will be more map-based, more visual, and more digital – to that extent they will be much more easy to use.

Land will be put into one of three categories: areas for growth, for renewal, or for protection.

And to make sure we get the houses we need, we're proposing a new measure for calculating a housing requirement figure for each local planning authority, which will still be the building block for planning.

There will also be a new time limited statutory timetable for preparation, rather than the average 7 years it presently takes to adopt a plan.

If you look around the Midlands, something like 40% of local authorities have a plan which was adopted more than 5 years ago – our reforms will mandate everyone to have up-to-date local plans to benefit their communities.

Together, these reforms will inject much-needed agility into the planning system.

It is the greatest overhaul we have proposed in planning in over 70 years since the Town and Country Planning Act was introduced.

It is fair to say the proposals have conjured up some spirited debate. We have had 44,000 submissions to our [consultation](#), which is the beginning of the process of refining our proposals.

Although the consultation is now closed, I am very keen that we maintain connection with all the people and parties that have contributed to the consultation – that we continue to work with professionals across the sector to ensure we approach those reforms on a consensual basis and that we get them right.

Because we know that it is incumbent upon government to equip the housing industry with the right tools, the right regulations and the right resources and funding to build the homes the country needs at pace and at scale.

That also means accelerating delivery of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), including offsite and smart techniques, to encourage a more innovative, diverse, competitive market.

I think you will be hearing from a host of speakers later today about MMC – we certainly believe in government that MMC could be revolutionary for the industry in terms of improved productivity, build speed, and economies of scale.

That is why we are committed to tackling the barriers to increasing use of MMC – the most common one being a lack of standardisation in components and designs.

Those difficulties add unnecessary costs to the MMC process and hampers the sector from being able to compete with traditional methods of building.

We will shortly engage with industry on this very issue to drive efficiencies and create a more resilient MMC pipeline.

We know that Modern Methods of Construction are thriving in the Midlands too.

We are investing £30 million in a landmark deal between Sekisui House and Urban Splash to build thousands of homes using the latest modular construction techniques from Japan.

So I think MMC can be a tremendously powerful tool for us and can also help us build out those greener, more sustainable homes.

Industry research shows homes built using MMC techniques can have up to 80% fewer defects whilst reducing heating bills by up to 70 per cent.

That's not just important when it comes to fuel poverty, but is important when we consider that housing accounts for around 15% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions through their use of oil and gas for heating and hot water.

Making homes greener, cleaner and better insulated is integral to combatting climate change and is one of the reasons why we have introduced the Future Homes Standard, which by the middle of this decade will see new houses producing at least 75% fewer emissions.

Homes built to those new standards will be future-proofed, with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency.

Crucially, they will be 'zero carbon ready' – so there will be no costly retrofits. MMC has a crucial role to play in the development of those homes and in the Future Homes Standard.

That, I think, is what lies ahead – a modern housing industry truly empowered to build cleaner, greener, more sustainable homes for the communities around the country and around the Midlands that need them – and build those homes faster than ever before.

And you are the integral players in making that vision a local reality.

The Midlands – I was born there, brought up there, have a constituency in the Midlands – was the cradle of the industrial revolution.

It's where the nail makers came together to "gi'it some 'ommer", as we used to say in Wolverhampton.

Now, with its unrivalled expertise, with its skills and its innovation, I think it is perfectly placed to lead Britain's green revolution – to be the new green workshop and tech chamber of the world.

It's a 'once in a generation' opportunity to grasp – to build back greener, to build back faster, and build back better from this pandemic.

And I know you in the Midlands will grasp it.

I hope you enjoy your conference. Thank you for listening.

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## **UK Government provides £31m for flooding and coal tip repairs**

Press release

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Barclay agree funding for coal tip and flood damage remediation work across Wales.



The UK Government has confirmed that £31 million will be made available to repair damage caused by severe floods, including to coal tips, following storms across Wales earlier this year.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Barclay accepted the claim for funding from the Welsh Government, which will result in £22 million for local authority flood recovery costs and £9 million to repair vulnerable coal tips across Wales.

Ever since parts of Wales were hit by devastating flooding in early 2020, the UK Government has worked with the Welsh Government and local authorities to assess how extra support and protection could be provided for the affected communities.

Although responsibility for flood defences and flood management is devolved, the UK Government agreed to provide funding from the UK Reserve for 2020-21 given the exceptional circumstances.

Following a meeting between the UK and Welsh Governments on Thursday 10 December £31 million funding was agreed and will be provided to the Welsh Government to carry out coal tip and flood damage remediation work.

## **Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:**

The devastation caused across Wales by the storms of early 2020 was heartbreaking, while the impact on coal tips in former mining areas was extremely worrying for the those communities.

Ever since, we have been working with Welsh Government, local authorities and others on how we can provide extra support for flood relief and protection for communities which were so badly affected. I'm pleased that this has now been agreed and this much-needed work can be carried out.

## **Chief Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Barclay said:**

Storm Dennis caused devastating destruction across Wales and we've been working constructively with the Welsh Government since then to provide the much-needed support for the communities affected. The funding announced today showcases the strength of our Union and will mean vital repair and remediation work can be carried out.

We have also provided the Welsh Government with an additional £1.3 billion for next year at the recent Spending Review so they are well placed to continue this work.

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