

[UK Minister for Africa visits Nairobi to progress UK-Kenya Partnership on security and education](#)

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[Joint statement by the UK and Viet Nam](#)

News story

Joint Ministerial statement from the United Kingdom (UK) and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (Viet Nam) on the conclusion of the UK-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement



The UK and Viet Nam are pleased to announce the conclusion of the UK-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (FTA). 1. UK and Viet Nam enjoy excellent diplomatic relations and increasingly common goals. This is demonstrated by the renewing of our UK-Viet Nam Strategic Partnership for a further ten years in September this year. The Partnership provides a framework for a strong bilateral relationship and outlines key priorities, including low-carbon development, multilateralism, the promotion of human rights, and trade. Under Viet Nam's

effective role as chair of ASEAN in 2020, the UK has taken the significant step of requesting to become a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN.

1. The UK and Viet Nam share a strategic commitment to global trade, and the free flow of capital and investments. The bilateral Free Trade Agreement provides vital continuity for our fast-growing and dynamic trading relationship. In 2019, UK businesses exported goods to Viet Nam worth over £600 million. In the same year, Vietnamese businesses exported goods to the UK worth around £4.6 billion.
2. The bilateral FTA locks in benefits of our existing trading relationship through the EU-Viet Nam Agreement. Trade in goods ranging from clothing and footwear to seafood and pharmaceutical products can continue uninterrupted. Trade in services, in particular financial services and e-commerce, can continue to flourish.
3. Companies can continue to benefit from reduced tariffs on imports and exports, from increased access to services and from the protection of key British and Vietnamese products. This includes 65% of all tariffs that have already been eliminated on UK-Vietnam trade. This will increase to 99% of tariffs by the time of full implementation. Vietnam stands to benefit from tariff savings of £114 million on Vietnamese exports. For UK exports, this figure will be £36 million.
4. This bilateral agreement therefore represents the beginning of a new phase in the relationship between our two countries in developing key areas of trade. Not only does the FTA liberalise goods and services trade, it incorporates many other important elements, such as working towards clean growth and sustainable development.
5. This agreement is also a key step towards the UK joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). As a founding member of the group, Vietnam has welcomed the UK's interest in joining the CPTPP agreement and publicly shown their support for the UK's accession to the CPTPP in the future. Accession to the CPTPP is a priority for the UK Government, which plans to apply for this in early 2021. CPTPP is one of the most important free trade agreements in the world, accounting for 13% of global GDP in 2019. This would rise to 16% of global GDP if the UK were to join. The UK and Vietnam look forward to working closely on this.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE, UNITED KINGDOM, RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE, VIET NAM, MR H.E TRAN TUAN ANH
11th DECEMBER 2020

People with long-term health conditions urged to get flu vaccine before Christmas

Health chiefs, and a coalition of charities, are urging people with long-term health conditions to get the [flu vaccine](#) before the virus starts to circulate. Public Health England (PHE) analysis shows 6 in 10 deaths from flu are seen in people with underlying conditions.

A coalition of charities, including the British Heart Foundation and Mencap, are joining PHE and the NHS in urging them to get vaccinated before Christmas.

Flu is a highly infectious disease and can lead to serious complications for those living with a long-term health condition, including:

- respiratory and heart conditions
- diabetes
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- chronic neurological disease like multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy

People with chronic respiratory diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or asthma, are 7 times more likely to die if they catch flu compared to healthy adults. People with cardiovascular problems, such as chronic heart disease or angina, or who have had a stroke, are 11 times more likely.

Some people with certain long-term health conditions may not view themselves as being at increased risk of serious illness from flu, especially if their condition is not related to the respiratory system. However, people with chronic liver disease and immunosuppression are 48 and 47 times more likely, respectively, to die from flu compared to healthy adults.

So far this year, 46.8% of people with a long-term health condition (under the age of 65 years) have had the flu vaccine. While vaccine coverage in this group is higher than it has been at this point compared to the last 6 flu seasons, it still lags behind coverage in other eligible groups. This year, we have already achieved the highest ever recorded flu vaccine uptake among older people.

Uptake also varies greatly between the different at risk groups. Last year, it was highest in people with diabetes at 61.2% and lowest in people with a BMI over 40 at 30.9%.

Over the last 5 years, flu has killed an average of 11,000 people in England

each year, but the figure has ranged from around 4,000 deaths in the 2018 to 2019 season to more than 22,000 deaths in 2017 to 2018.

This year, with those most vulnerable to flu also being at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19), it is more important than ever that eligible people get the flu vaccine.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Head of Flu at Public Health England said:

The flu vaccine is the best defence against what can be a serious illness, especially for those living with long-term health conditions, such as respiratory diseases, diabetes and liver disease.

People living with long-term health conditions are also at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, and having both flu and COVID-19 at the same time is associated with a greater risk of more severe illness and death. Therefore, it is more important than ever to get vaccinated against flu.

People aged 6 months to 65 years with one or more long-term health conditions, pregnant women and those aged 65 years and over are at a greater clinical risk from flu. All these groups are eligible for a free vaccine, which is the best defence against flu. From 1 December, 50 to 64 year olds also became eligible for the first time.

Public Health Minister, Jo Churchill, said:

The flu vaccine is there to protect as many people as possible, especially those living with long-term health conditions who carry a higher risk of falling seriously ill.

This winter with COVID-19 circulating, it's more important than ever that all those eligible get their jab. Our brilliant GPs and pharmacists are delivering the vaccine to record numbers and if you are contacted by your GP, make sure you take the opportunity to get your free flu vaccination.

Dr Nikki Kanani, Medical Director of Primary Care in England, said:

As well as kicking off the world-first COVID-19 programme this week, the NHS continues to offer essential flu vaccines for those who need it, and it's especially important that those most at-risk, including with long-term conditions, get vaccinated.

We have written to eligible patients inviting them to get vaccinated without delay, and NHS services have put a range of measures in place to minimise any risk of COVID-19.

Dr Michael Brady, Medical Director at Terrence Higgins Trust, said:

We strongly encourage people living with HIV to visit their GP or local pharmacy for a quick, painless flu jab this winter. Research shows that HIV is associated with an increased severity of flu and greater risk of complications relating to that. Being on effective HIV treatment reduces the possibility of hospitalisation because of flu, but it's still better to get the protection of the flu jab, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when infection with both viruses could cause additional problems.

Vanessa Hebditch, Director of Policy and Communications at the British Liver Trust, said:

The liver is a vital weapon in our body's armoury for fighting infection. If the liver is damaged, our bodies find it much harder to fight off illnesses of all kinds, including the flu. Liver disease has many different causes, but any kind of long-term damage to this organ, no matter what the cause, can leave people more prone to infection.

Many people with chronic liver disease don't realise that they are at much higher risk of serious illness or even death if they were to catch the flu. The shocking statistics speak for themselves. That's why it's so important people with long-term liver disease take steps to protect themselves by getting their winter vaccinations.

Dr Keith Brownlee, Director of Policy, Programmes and Support at the Cystic Fibrosis Trust said:

We urge everyone with cystic fibrosis and their families to protect themselves by getting the flu jab. Everyone with cystic fibrosis is at higher risk of being seriously unwell from the flu, and flu can also cause long term damage. However every year lots of people miss out on getting their jab which is an important layer of protection against becoming ill so don't delay, get the jab.

Karen Davies, Senior Clinical Advisor at Diabetes UK, said:

Flu can be incredibly serious, and people with diabetes are particular vulnerable to serious complications if they get it. Getting flu can make your diabetes harder to manage and can cause your blood sugar levels to rise dangerously high. With the coronavirus pandemic still posing a very real threat, it's incredibly important that people with diabetes stay well and stay

out of hospital. That's why this year, more than ever, it is so important that people with diabetes take up the offer of a free flu jab.

We know all flu jab providers will be facing increased demand this year. But we want to reassure people that there are a number of options available to them to get their jab, that include their GP surgery or their local pharmacy. The jab can take up to 2 weeks to be effective, so we're urging everyone with diabetes to get booked, and get vaccinated, as soon as possible.

If anyone needs advice on how or where to get a flu jab, our helpline is available on 0345 123 2399, Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm, or you can find more information on diabetes and flu at [diabetes.org.uk](https://www.diabetes.org.uk).

Ismail Kaji, Parliamentary Support Officer at the learning disability charity Mencap, who has a learning disability, said:

It's very important people with a learning disability get the flu vaccine to stop them getting ill, especially as many people with a learning disability also have health conditions which means they could become very unwell. And while you should get it every year, it's more important than ever this winter because of coronavirus – and it's also free for people with a learning disability and their main carer. You can keep you and those around you safe.

If you're feeling nervous, remember you can ask for reasonable adjustments to get the support you need. You can ask for more time in the appointment and for the nurse to explain everything clearly to you, and show you the equipment they will use to help you feel more comfortable.

People with a learning disability can have more health problems than other people and can find it harder to get the healthcare they need, so it's a good idea to get as much protection as possible. The flu jab can help with this so make sure you get it done this winter.

Barbara Kobson, Senior Cardiac Nurse at the British Heart Foundation, said:

With the COVID-19 pandemic still looming, getting your flu jab is as vital as ever, especially if you have a heart and circulatory condition or are older. It only takes 5 minutes and reduces your chances of catching flu, which can exacerbate conditions such as coronary heart disease and heart failure. Getting the jab will mean you're also supporting the NHS as it may stop you becoming ill and needing treatment at a time when hospitals are under immense pressure from a potential winter rise in COVID-19 cases.

Jessica Kirby, Head of Health Advice at Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation, said:

One in five people in the UK has a long-term lung condition, including asthma and COPD, making them more likely to develop the most severe symptoms of the flu, which is more likely to be fatal for people with health conditions.

We'd urge everyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccine to get one as soon as possible and ideally before the Christmas break, when people are likely to mix in larger groups making it possible for the virus to spread more rapidly. For those who have been unable to get a vaccine due to shortages in their area, do keep trying as new stocks are becoming available. If you are unsure if you are eligible, our advice is to speak to your GP who can assess your individual risk.

[Virgin and O2 merger referred for in-depth investigation](#)

Press release

The CMA has referred the proposed merger of Virgin Media and Virgin Mobile with O2 for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation.



The move comes after Virgin and O2 requested that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) move quickly to the in-depth Phase 2 stage of its review through a 'fast-track' process.

Merging companies can ask for a case to be fast tracked to Phase 2 where there is sufficient evidence at an early stage of the investigation for the CMA to conclude that there is a realistic prospect that the transaction would

result in a substantial lessening of competition in one or more markets. The option to fast track provides flexibility in the CMA process and enables such cases to progress efficiently and quickly.

The CMA has today accepted this request given the deal's potential impact on competition in several telecommunication markets in the UK, and the Phase 2 probe will begin immediately.

Both Virgin and O2 provide certain wholesale services to other mobile network operators in the UK – wholesale mobile services and mobile backhaul, respectively. The CMA is concerned that, following the merger, Virgin and O2 may have an incentive to raise prices or reduce the quality of these wholesale services, ultimately leading to a worse deal for UK consumers.

The Phase 2 investigation will be overseen by an inquiry group chosen from the CMA's independent panel members. Over the course of the investigation, the group will gather evidence from a range of sources to inform its in depth analysis.

In the coming weeks, the group will publish an issues statement setting out in detail the aspects it expects to investigate. Interested parties will then have the opportunity to present their views on the merger and the issues to be examined by the group.

The CMA's full referral decision and expected timelines for its Phase 2 investigation will be published shortly on the [Liberty Global plc / Telefónica S.A. merger inquiry case page](#).

Notes to editors

1. Liberty Global plc (Liberty) owns Virgin Media and Virgin Mobile in the UK, and Telefónica S.A. (Telefónica) owns O2 in the UK.
2. Following a request from the CMA, the European Commission referred the proposed merger of Virgin Media and Virgin Mobile with O2 to the CMA for investigation on 19 November 2020.
3. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a reference to Phase 2 if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a relevant merger situation has been created, or arrangements are in progress or in contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.
4. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.

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A year of climate action: op-ed by Charles Hay

As the world continues to deal with the Coronavirus, we must not neglect global warming, which is becoming a greater threat by the day. If COVID-19 is the storm that we will ride out soon, climate change is the catastrophe that will affect us for decades ahead.

In Asia, 2020 has seen some of the worst monsoon flooding in decades, affecting countries from China to Vietnam. In 2018, Bank Negara reported that the growing intensity and frequency of climate-related events are increasingly a risk to the Malaysian economy.

According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Malaysia has, in the two decades up to 2018, experienced more than 50 natural disasters, affecting more than 3 million people. The increasing severity and frequency of major floods and dry spells have severely affected livelihoods – particularly in the agriculture sector. Climate disasters have cost the Malaysian economy around RM8 billion.

As countries manage the impact of the global pandemic, they have an opportunity to use the economic stimulus to invest in building back greener economies, and reduce the emissions that cause damaging climate change.

In November 2021, the UK will host the United Nations Conference of Parties (CoP26) climate summit in partnership with Italy. This will be a pivotal moment for the world to come together and agree on ambitious steps to address global warming.

Governments are starting to rally behind the goal of reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions. China has set the ambitious goal of being “net zero” by 2060, and Japan and South Korea by 2050. 126 countries, together responsible for over half of global emissions, now have similar targets.

And it is not only at the national level we are seeing action. Here in Malaysia, TNB, the country’s biggest utility, has announced that it has built its last coal-fired power plant. Kuala Lumpur City and Petronas have pledged net zero aspirations by 2050.

These commitments will cut emissions and help Malaysia deliver its contribution a low carbon transition. But there is more to be done. Tackling and adapting to climate change cannot wait.

On December 12, the UK will co-host a Climate Ambition Summit to mark the fifth anniversary of the landmark Paris Agreement. Every country that is part of the Paris Agreement is invited to the virtual event, which will focus on action to reduce emissions and build resilience to climate impacts. We expect some really significant commitments at that summit, which will provide further impetus for even more countries to cut emission targets even further.

I was therefore delighted that the Malaysian Budget announced on 6 November includes plans for investment in the sustainability of key sectors to encourage a green recovery in Malaysia. This includes Malaysia's first Sustainability Bond for environmental and social initiatives in 2021 and other sustainable financing schemes.

The UK has demonstrated it is possible to decouple emissions from economic growth. Since 1990, we have grown our economy by over two thirds, while reducing emissions by 42%. On 4th December, we announced that we will reduce our emissions further by 68% and this commitment will now be deposited into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process as UK's official Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) offer.

The economic case for transition is now even more compelling, with solar – a Renewable Energy source with great potential in Malaysia – now the cheapest form of power globally. So it's great to be working with Malaysia to realise these opportunities here.

The challenge in the coming year will be to bring together all these efforts so that globally we can secure even higher ambitions at CoP26. It is vital that we now work together as a planet for a sustainable future for our children and their children.