

Human Rights Council Interactive Dialogue on Belarus: UK statement

Thank you,

We welcome the High Commissioner's report, which provides an opportunity to act with resolve on the human rights situation in Belarus.

The United Kingdom is gravely concerned about the fraudulent presidential elections and appalling violations, particularly the targeting of peaceful protesters and restrictions on freedom of expression.

We condemn the excessive use of force by the authorities. The Belarusian people face increasing repression by authorities acting with impunity. We are very concerned that two British diplomats were expelled for observing peaceful protests.

The UK imposed sanctions against Alexander Lukashenko and others responsible for violations.

The UK is engaging with all actors: the authorities, the opposition and civil society. We are doubling financial support to independent media and human rights organisations, with an extra £1.5 million over two years. Our Canada-UK Media Freedom Award was won by the Belarusian Association of Journalists, who bravely defend media freedom.

We repeat our call on Belarus to implement the recommendations of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, in particular the recommendation that new elections, held in accordance with international standards, are required.

Madame High Commissioner, what steps should the authorities take for a genuine dialogue with the people of Belarus?

Thank you.

Climate change and risk management event

News story

GAD held a 2-day event on the risks and challenges of climate change. The online event was attended by around 250 people.



Around 250 people attended a 2-day event on climate change arranged by the Government Actuary's Department's (GAD) in collaboration with the [Civil Service Environment Network](#).

The online event, which was held in November, looked at the government's climate challenge and asked how risk management can help.

Speakers and topics

Attendees heard from 20 speakers who were from 16 different organisations. These included a range of government departments, University College London, the Climate Change Committee, the World Bank and the Insurance Development Forum.

Topics included financial modelling of climate impacts, resilience of schools, upskilling the Civil Service and actuaries, climate-related financial disclosures and how the UK will reach net zero by the year 2050.

GAD's contributions

The Government Actuary Martin Clarke chaired the first 2 sessions. One of the contributors was actuary Chris Paterson, who spoke about some work GAD has done to help funded pension schemes understand climate risks.

He said: "We are proud to be able to bring together such a diverse group of speakers to discuss the urgent challenges we face in government and beyond.

"There's a big role for actuaries in this but we have to work alongside many other professionals to address this enormous risk management challenge. The quantity and quality of questions from the audience were just what we needed and provoked helpful debate.

"The great thing about the event is that discussing climate change risks right now necessitates a dynamic conversation. There are new findings in research, new regulations proposed and always more areas to cover. We were able to bring together the expertise, alongside our own, to do that."

Professor Duncan Selbie elected head of global public health network

Members of [International Association of National Public Health Institutes \(IANPHI\)](#) voted in a virtual election in November, with the result announced at their annual meeting this week.

IANPHI is a network of public health leaders with 111 members, representing 95 countries and works to build global public health capacity by creating, connecting, and transforming the world's national public health institutes.

Professor Selbie's election comes as the landscape of global public health is changing in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, making the work of IANPHI more vital than ever and provides an excellent opportunity for the UK to further strengthen its relationships with our global partners.

He has worked closely with IANPHI members for several years across various projects, including PHE's International Health Regulations Strengthening Project which aims to establish and strengthen the capability of public health institutions to prevent, detect, respond to and control public health threats.

Following a period of transition, Professor Selbie will take over from outgoing president Andre van der Zande in January, beginning a 3-year term.

Professor Duncan Selbie said:

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and the response on a scale we have never before seen in living memory. Public health experts have never been more important to the health of their people and their local economies. We have a huge opportunity and responsibility to share our knowledge and learn from each other, ultimately strengthening global health security. IANPHI have a leading role to play in this.

Outgoing IANPHI president Professor Andre van der Zande said:

IANPHI is very fortunate to have someone of Duncan's experience and skill at its helm. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world of how important it is to have strong, effective institutes protecting the public's health.

Background information

IANPHI was formally launched in 2006, starting with 39 founding [members](#) and growing to 110 as of December 2020.

It is the only organisation that strengthens national public health institutes using an evidence-based international framework for development.

IANPHI provides direct funding to governments in low-income countries to build and strengthen national public health capacity through development of NPHIs.

Human Rights Council Interactive Dialogue on Belarus: Joint Statement on Media Freedom in Belarus

Thank you,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on media freedom in Belarus on behalf of 42 states.

We reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of the targeting, harassment and detention of journalists and media workers. We are deeply concerned by the excessive use of force by the authorities against journalists, including reports of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In a statement on 19 November, UN human rights experts strongly condemned large scale violations in Belarus, and said that peaceful protesters and journalists remain unprotected from disproportionately violent actions of security forces.

Journalists in Belarus are facing unprecedented levels of harassment. On 20 November, independent journalist Yekaterina Bakhvalova had criminal charges brought against her after filming police firing stun grenades during a memorial for murdered opposition supporter, Raman Bandarenka. A further 23 journalists were detained while covering this event. Since May, 390 journalists have reported some form of persecution. Punishing journalists for doing their job is unacceptable, and we call on Belarus to immediately release all those detained and drop all charges against them.

We strongly urge Belarus to respect the freedom of expression for all, including for journalists and media workers. We urge Belarus to implement OSCE Moscow Mechanism report recommendations on freedom of expression and the media.

The increasing restrictions on independent media actors must stop.

Thank you.

Joint Statement on media freedom in Belarus

List of co-sponsors (42)

1. UK
 2. Canada
 3. Netherlands
 4. Iceland
 5. Norway
 6. Germany
 7. Ireland
 8. Latvia
 9. Lithuania
 10. Czech Republic
 11. Slovenia
 12. Liechtenstein
 13. New Zealand
 14. Romania
 15. Denmark
 16. Switzerland
 17. Luxembourg
 18. Estonia
 19. Spain
 20. Sweden
 21. France
 22. Poland
 23. Bulgaria
 24. Finland
 25. Hungary
 26. Malta
 27. Croatia
 28. Monaco
 29. Belgium
 30. Cyprus
 31. Australia
 32. Slovakia
 33. Portugal
 34. Ukraine
 35. Italy
 36. Austria
 37. Greece
 38. Costa Rica
 39. Chile
 40. Japan
 41. Brazil
 42. Marshall Islands
-

Marketing bosses dupe shareholders into £3.5m investment

Lee Anthony Skinner (60) has been banned for 10 years, while Karen Ferreira (60) has been disqualified for 7 years. The pair are banned from acting as directors directly or indirectly being involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

The pair were directors of an online affiliate marketing company, Our Price Records Ltd, which remained dormant until 2014 before Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner attempted to raise funds from the sale of shares in the company.

The company, however, entered into administration in April 2017 before being referred to the Insolvency Service for further enquiries.

Investigators established that Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner sold shares to 260 investors and secured almost £3.5 million. The pair, however, secured the investment under false pretences and breached financial regulations.

Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner created promotional material duping prospective shareholders into believing that their brand was well known, despite having their application to register Our Price Records as a trademark opposed by the original owner.

Our Price Records sold the shares through a third party but neither had the authority to engage in investment activity, breaching financial regulations.

The pair also failed to tell investors that Our Price Records had entered into agreements to pay up to 50% of total funds raised to the third parties selling the shares. In total, Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner paid at least £1.58 million in commission to third parties.

Investigators uncovered that Karen Ferreira was a director of two other companies which had entered into general service agreements with Our Price Records. But investors were not made aware of this nor that Our Price Records paid the company in total more than £750,000.

One of the companies that Karen Ferreira was a director of entered into a commercial loan agreement with Lee Skinner and granted a loan of up to £1 million on the understanding he would pay for Our Price Record's administrative and marketing services. A total of more than £760,000 was paid to Lee Skinner and no repayments have been made.

The funds raised remain outstanding to the investors in the administration and the investors are not protected under the UK Financial Services Compensation Scheme

The [FCA secured a restitution order](#) in the High Court earlier this year against Lee Skinner, Karen Ferreira and the company. The Court found that individuals and the company were in breach of Financial Services and Markets

Act.

On 28 September 2020, the Secretary of State accepted a disqualification undertaking from Lee Skinner, after he did not dispute that he had caused Our Price Records to breach the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, used the 'Our Price' brand at a time that the 'Our Price' trade marks were subject to dispute and caused the distribution of false and/or misleading information to investors regarding the use of the investment funds. His ban is effective from 16 October 2020 and lasts for 10 years.

Karen Ferreira's 7-year disqualification was accepted by the Secretary of State a few days later on 5 October 2020. In her undertaking, Karen Ferreira, did not dispute that she allowed Our Price Records to breach the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, allowed Our Price Records to use the 'Our Price' brand at a time that the 'Our Price' trade marks were subject to dispute and allowed the distribution of false and/or misleading information to investors regarding the use of the investment funds. Her ban is effective from 26 October 2020.

Robert Clarke, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

Using an agent, Karen Ferreira and Lee Skinner made false and misleading promises to prospective investors when they were trying to entice them to invest into Our Price Records. Not only did this breach financial regulations but investors were totally unaware of other agreements Our Price Records made, which saw millions of pounds being handed over to third parties.

Unfortunately, investors have suffered significant financial losses. However, these bans should serve as a warning to other directors tempted to raise funds by illegitimate means that we will investigate and remove them from the business environment.

Lee Skinner is from Essex and his date of birth is November 1960.

Karen Ferreira is from Essex and her date of birth is July 1960.

Our Price Records Ltd (Company number 04792445)

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: