

# Russia's justification for using its veto on Syria is pure fiction

Thank you, Madam President.

The use of the veto is a heavy responsibility. It is, therefore, one that should not be used lightly. It is 50 years since the United Kingdom last vetoed a Security Council resolution unilaterally.

When we negotiate resolutions our objective is to reach agreement, and where necessary, win arguments in votes, rather than use our veto to block Council action.

Unfortunately, the same is not true of Russia. Russia has now used its veto 17 times since 2011 to block the Council's efforts to protect the Syrian people. This is in addition to the numerous other times they've used it, including to protect themselves following their illegal invasion of Ukraine.

These 17 vetoes are a significant cause of the international community's failure to protect the Syrian people from the Assad regime – a failure that has undermined and weakened the Council, and which should weigh heavily on our collective conscience.

The unilateral Russian use of its veto to block a humanitarian resolution for a mechanism upon which 2.4 million people rely is particularly egregious.

Humanitarian need in Syria is the highest it has ever been. We heard repeatedly from the UN and NGOs that renewal of the cross-border mechanism for 12 months was necessary to provide the operational certainty to meet humanitarian needs.

The explanation we heard from Russia today is pure fiction. This includes their farcical suggestion that the UK, alongside the US and France, blocked their proposed text. Let us be clear on the facts – their proposed text was supported by only one other Member of the Council. Two votes in favour is far from the nine required to pass. No amount of disinformation can change the fact that only one Member of the Council chose to politicise this issue. The UK approached this negotiation as we have every year since 2014 – on the basis of humanitarian need, and humanitarian need alone.

We commend the penholders, Norway and Ireland, for their efforts to secure a resolution that would maintain this vital humanitarian lifeline in the face of Russian intransigence – and which achieved 13 votes in favour. And we should be clear, under resolution 2642 the intent of the Council is to maintain this mechanism for 12 months.

The UK will continue to support the UN's efforts to deliver its Humanitarian Response Plan, and we call on other UN member states to do likewise.

Finally, as we have said many times before, a genuine political process is

the only sustainable means of ending suffering in Syria.

Thank you.

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## Eurasian beavers

### Government response

An update on legislation which provides for the protection, control and management of Eurasian beavers in England.



Today (21 July) the government has introduced legislation which establishes the legal mechanism to strictly manage the release of Eurasian beavers and their control after release.

This builds on the programme of work started in 2014, including a five-year trial to investigate the effects of wild-living populations of beavers on the River Otter.

In 2020 we published the evaluation of the results of that trial, and government then launched a consultation which closed in November 2021 on our proposed management approach.

Further details on the management regime will be published in due course.

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# UK universities boosted by 'landmark' agreement with India to recognise qualifications

- UK and India sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) officially recognising each other's higher education qualifications
- Agreement likely to attract more international university students to UK – each estimated by industry to be worth more than £100,000 to the economy
- Deal is one of three signed today implementing aspects of UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership agreed by the Prime Minister last year

The UK and India have today (Thursday 21 July) signed an agreement to recognise each other's higher education qualifications in a move welcomed by British universities.

The Memorandum of Understanding, part of the UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) agreed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year, means A-levels and their equivalents, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees will now be recognised in India. It will allow Indian students who graduate from British universities to apply for postgraduate qualifications, or embark on government careers that require university qualifications, when they return home.

The UK and India are already important destinations for each other's students – in 2020/2021 the UK welcomed 84,555 Indian students to the UK and India is a popular destination for UK students to study abroad as part of the Turing Scheme international education programme.

The agreement will make UK universities even more appealing to Indian applicants and is likely to provide an economic boost, as the benefit to the UK of welcoming non-EU students is estimated by industry to be around £109,000 per person.

It will also increase the potential for UK nationals to travel to India to study, allowing them more choice and broadening their academic and educational horizons, as well as opening the door for institutions to create courses that can be delivered in both countries.

## **International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:**

UK universities already have a fantastic reputation around the globe.

Now, we are delighted to deliver on our promise to unblock barriers to trade between our two nations and make UK higher education even easier to access and more appealing to Indian students.

## **Secretary of State for Education James Cleverly said:**

UK universities are rightly the envy of the world and international education is one of our finest exports.

This agreement builds on our UK-India partnership and removes barriers so even more of the best and brightest students from India can study here, boosting our economy and enriching our campuses and communities.

It creates more opportunities for UK students to study in India, and paves the way for our world-beating universities to deliver more degree programmes in one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic nations on earth.

The deal is one of three signed today implementing the ETP, which sets out a series of commitments to unlock new opportunities for British businesses exporting to India and vice versa.

Trade between the UK and India is already worth over £24bn, and our investment relationship supports over half a million jobs. Since 2017 the UK Government has secured new access to India's market which businesses estimate will unlock approximately £92m of additional UK exports every year in spirits, oats, pork products, and more. India is projected to become the world's third largest economy by 2050.

The two sides also signed MoUs implementing ETP commitments to create a taskforce to provide opportunities for Indian nurses and nursing associates seeking to train and work in the NHS, and to renew a commitment for mutual recognition of the Seafarers' Certificate of Competency.

## **Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive, Universities UK International (UUKi), said:**

This is a landmark, historic agreement which has been many years in the making. Qualifications students receive will be recognised on both sides, making it easier for students to progress in education and move into jobs.

The recognition of UK Masters' is a particularly important development. It means that Indian graduates of the UK's outstanding universities will receive formal recognition of their outstanding achievements and full access to jobs in the public sector in India.

## **Barbara Wickham OBE, Director India, British Council, said:**

The agreement of the mutual recognition of academic qualifications is a significant moment of celebration in the India-UK education

relationship and will benefit thousands of young people and talented students in both countries.

The agreement will support even greater collaboration between our higher education sectors, nurture globally ready graduates through an increasingly internationalised education, and further enable joint education, research and innovation initiatives to explore solutions for shared global challenges.

We are also delighted the agreement has been finalised during our ongoing India/UK Together Season of Culture – our landmark programme that marks India's 75th anniversary and celebrates the deep connections between India and the UK.

## Notes to editors

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Modi announced the [2030 Roadmap for India-UK future relations](#) in May 2021. That included launching the Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP), which included our intent to negotiate a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.
- The Memoranda of Understanding are available on gov.uk:
- Sources:
  - ONS UK Total Trade quarterly statistics, Q4 2021
  - IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2022
  - Higher Education Policy Unit (HEPI), The costs and benefits of international higher education students to the UK economy, 9 September 2021
  - Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2020/21 – Where students come from and go to study

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## Annual progress report on OSCE gender action plan: UK response, July 2022

Thank you, Secretary General, for presenting the Annual Progress Report today. As you mention, gender equality and fighting all forms of violence against women and girls are crucial to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and stability and I express with horror the detrimental impact that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had on women and girls, as was highlighted in last week's [Moscow Mechanism findings](#).

Today, I will focus on three areas in your Report – the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality; the importance of fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda – including in conflict mediation, and peace and negotiations processes – and the devastating and disproportionate impact that Russia's illegal war against

Ukraine is having on the safety, security and well-being of Ukrainian women and girls.

Firstly, as highlighted in the foreword of your report, the continued backsliding we've seen on gender equality during the COVID-19 pandemic remains a cause for great concern. We have seen an exacerbation of pre-existing gender inequalities; women experiencing greater economic setbacks and disproportionately shouldering caregiving responsibilities; and an appalling rise in domestic violence across the region. In particular, we've observed a shocking deterioration in the safety and human rights situation for women and girls in Afghanistan, amplified by the pandemic.

It is the responsibility of us all to address this, and to build back better and more inclusively from the pandemic. The UK commends the continuation of the important work of the OSCE in expanding the capacity of shelters for victims of violence and supporting them in maintaining their fundamental services in the longer term.

Secondly – the OSCE has a key role to play in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We appreciate the ongoing work of the Executive Structures to support participating States in its implementation.

We appreciate the work to ensure that a gender perspective is included in all aspects of peace processes and conflict resolution, including in mediation. We emphasise the full, equal and meaningful participation, leadership and representation of women in all aspects of peace processes and at all levels of decision-making, and will continue to champion this through the development of our new [National Action Plan on WPS](#) to commence in early 2023. We commend the newly launched [OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders](#), which includes Peacebuilders and Mediators. I'd also like to draw attention to the OSCE's toolkit for "[Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes](#)". This is a valuable resource for conflict mediation in all OSCE conflicts, and we continue to encourage full use of this tool.

Thirdly – the Secretary General's foreword highlighted the horrifying impact that Russia's war against Ukraine has had on women and girls in Ukraine. This includes an increased risk of trafficking, abuse and sexual violence, as was documented in last week's Moscow Mechanism report. I commend the huge bravery of Ukrainian women responding to the needs of their communities, documenting war crimes, advocating for women's needs and working to build a sustainable future. Again, we call on the Russian Federation to end this unprovoked and illegal war.

I'd like to thank all those who have contributed to advancing gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the OSCE. We also thank Poland for their focus as Chair on gender equality this year, as well as Sweden for their efforts in 2021. It is essential that gender is fully integrated into the organisation's work and any mediation process.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

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## Government contract uses the latest technology for search and rescue

The MCA, an executive agency of the Department for Transport, has today signed a circa £1.6 billion contract with UK company Bristow Helicopters Ltd following an extensive 18-month procurement process.

Minister for Maritime and Aviation, Robert Courts MP, announced today that the contract for the UK Second-Generation Search and Rescue Aviation programme – known as UKSAR2G – would be awarded to Bristow Helicopters Ltd to deliver both rotary and fixed wing services for the next ten years.

Bristow Helicopters Ltd has provided the UK search and rescue helicopter service for the MCA since 2013, with the aerial reconnaissance aircraft provided by 2Excel Aviation since 2019. These aircraft fly not only for HM Coastguard but also on behalf of other Government Departments.

The new contract will see the UK search and rescue region benefit from both innovation and advances in technology to save more lives, even more quickly. It will combine the existing two separate aviation contracts for both fixed wing aircraft and rotary aircraft. It will also include the use of uncrewed aircraft (drones). This will provide better value for money for the taxpayer and allow for more innovation throughout the life of the contract.

As part of the new contract, Bristow Helicopters Ltd will continue to operate from their current ten helicopter bases and launch two new seasonal bases in Fort William and Carlisle, to serve areas around two of the busiest locations for summer tourism.

All helicopter bases will continue to be operational 24 hours a day. The Fort William and Carlisle will operate 12 hours a day from April to September. The transition out from the current contracts will start 30 September 2024 and run through to 31 December 2026, to ensure a continuation of search and rescue aviation services across the whole of the UK. There will be three fixed-wing bases at Doncaster, Prestwick and Newquay.

The MCA has undertaken extensive sophisticated modelling to project future demand on our services. This makes sure the MCA can tailor future services to meet the demand required and to provide enhancements to the service using new systems and technology. Bristow will operate:

- 18 Helicopters including existing Leonardo AW189s and Sikorsky S92As augmented with the introduction of Leonardo AW139 helicopters.
- six King Air fixed-wing planes, including the B350, B350ER and the B200; and
- one mobile deployable Schiebel S-100 drone system.

Drones became part of HM Coastguard's aviation fleet in March 2022 and are currently deployed supporting search and rescue activity in the English Channel. Bristow Helicopters Ltd will therefore continue to build upon this to enhance situational awareness for emergency responders as part of UKSAR2G. Drones have the capability to transmit real-time data including live imagery from the scene to Coastguard operations rooms as well as other responders. As HM Coastguard celebrates its 200-year anniversary, innovations like this will help evolve search and rescue for the next decade and beyond.

A high degree of innovation has also been proposed by Bristow Helicopters Ltd in the form of a new state-of-the-art search and rescue helicopter simulation training facility at Solent Airport next to the Coastguard Training Facility which will house a synthetic rescue hoist and helicopter suspended over a large training pool. Other innovation includes the use of sustainable aviation fuels, reducing our carbon footprint in the delivery of these services.

Today's announcement represents a major investment by the government in providing a national search and rescue aviation service using a tailored solution, making sure the most appropriate aircraft are at the most suitable locations to meet the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's commitment to the public. These services will continue to support the work of other Government Departments in detecting and deterring illegal activity at sea and supporting other Government work where needed.

Damien Oliver, Senior Responsible Owner for UKSAR2G said:

We know there are people alive today because an HM Coastguard helicopter came to their rescue. When looking at the next decade of service and rescue services, the thought of the future people whose lives may well also be saved as a result of this contract was a huge incentive to make sure this will build on that success and improve it still further. I am also delighted that we can continue to support the work of our partners across Government in all the work that they do.

This is the excellent result from an 18-month procurement to deliver a new highly capable and innovative search and rescue aviation service. The new service will build on the success of the current arrangements that have been in place since 2015.