

Speech: Early peacebuilding and prevention to avoid escalation of violence

Thank you very much indeed Mr President and welcome back to New York. Can I join other speakers in saying how welcome it is to have ECOWAS and the African Union also with us today.

Mr President, yesterday the Council discussed the complex challenges of post-conflict reconstruction, where President Ouattara reminded us of the immense human and economic cost that civil war wrought on his country and the steps that Cote d'Ivoire had taken to sustain peace and promote economic development.

With the cost of conflict so clear, if we are to prevent the worst atrocities and injustices in accordance with the aspirations of the UN Charter, it is crucial that we learn the lessons of what it takes to resolve conflict and sustain peace in the long term.

Today Mr President, I would like focus on the complementary roles that states, sub-regional and regional organisations, and the UN can and should play in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

I would like to make three specific points:

Firstly, as other speakers have noted, the role of states is paramount. Member States bear the primary responsibility for protecting their inhabitants and for refraining from acts of aggression. That also means, Mr President, refraining from persecuting their own people. The best and most durable solutions are 'home grown' and inclusive.

But building resilient societies is not an easy task. By addressing the structural drivers of fragility, and ensuring that people's legitimate demands are met – including for justice, security, and economic opportunities – we can significantly reduce the risk of conflict. This is why Mr President, democracy and human rights do have a very important role to play in stability but also in prosperity. There is some very good evidence freely available that explains the link between democracy, human rights and prosperity and thriving societies. Strong national capacities for conflict prevention are also essential, and it is important that the multilateral organisations are willing and equipped to support such national efforts. For this reason, the United Kingdom supports the UNDP-DPA joint programme on building national capacities for conflict prevention. The deployment of UN Peace and Development Advisors has assisted Member States to generate the analysis that allows for early identification of conflict risks and the ability to devise de-escalation strategies. One such risk identification system is now operational in Cameroon where it tracks emerging conflict trends and risks in a situation that is of increasing concern for international peace and security.

Secondly, Mr President regional organisations often have a considerable comparative advantage over more distant international institutions, including at times the UN. Few regional organisations have been as active on conflict prevention and resolution as the African Union – a welcome development of the last two decades. And in the Lake Chad Basin, the Central African Republic, Comoros, and the DRC, the AU has often in the driving seat. In countries the Sahel region, where a range of cross-border issues form fertile ground for conflict, the work of ECOWAS has been crucial. When it comes to sustainable and inclusive economic development, regional co-operation can ensure that limited resources are deployed effectively, and economic isolation does not persist to become another cause of conflict. In the Horn of Africa, IGAD supports countries to achieve better economic integration. With regard to support for conflict prevention and mediation, regional actors have a unique advantage due to their understanding of the local context and conflict dynamics. In Guinea Bissau for example, successful ECOWAS mediation delegations comprised senior officials from Equatorial Guinea and Senegal. With regard to peace support operations, regional groups have a crucial role, as we saw in the Gambia in 2017. Quick mobilisation by ECOWAS succeeded in restoring stability to that country.

The United Kingdom is committed to ensuring that regional entities are sufficiently resourced so they can fulfil critical functions alongside the United Nations. Specifically on financing of African Union peace support operations, this is the why the UK supports the principle of providing UN assessed contributions – up to a ceiling of 75 per cent – to AU-led peace support operations authorised by this Council. We continue to work constructively with our partners to ensure the necessary conditions are fulfilled, particularly with regard to human rights compliance, to make this a reality.

And thirdly, I would like to emphasise that coordinated efforts between the UN, regional organisations and member states, based on comparative advantages, increase the effectiveness of all our efforts to prevent conflict and sustain long term peace. The UN Charter, Mr President, underscores the important role of regional organisations in the pacific settlement of disputes, and the Secretary-General was absolutely right to point to the farsightedness of the Charter's framers in this respect.

It is positive to see today the broad commitment from this Council to strengthen work with the AU and others. And it occurs to me that broader support in this forum for the important roles of NATO and the OSCE might have provided for more effective responses to the challenges faced in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Mr President, where national and regional efforts fail, this Council has a responsibility, as the only competent body legally to surpass State monopoly on military intervention, to act to restore international peace and security. This is a last resort we can better avoid by mobilising all the tools at our collective disposal for early peacebuilding and prevention to avoid escalation.

Thank you Mr President.

Speech: Michael Ellis' Speech at Heritage Day 2018

Thank you Loyd for your kind introduction.

I am delighted to be here this morning to celebrate and discuss with all of you our shared commitment to our heritage and historic environment.

But before that, I would like to say a few words about Loyd's imminent departure as Chairman of the Heritage Alliance. We have been extremely lucky to have Loyd since 2009. The passion and dedication he has brought to the role were reflected in his well deserved re-election as Chairman for a third time in 2015. That does not happen very often!

On behalf of government, from myself and all of us here: thank you for everything you have done for heritage. My department and I are excited to be working with Peter Ainsworth, incoming Chair of Heritage Alliance, in the future.

Thank you also for hosting us today in this World Heritage site, a stunning reminder of our maritime heritage. The Undercroft here is a beautiful lesson in rejuvenating historic spaces, conserving them whilst ensuring a sustainable future.

Further thanks must go to the Heritage Alliance, for their peerless work in organising this event and for the exceptional work the Heritage Alliance does representing independent organisations throughout England. We are very fortunate to have Loyd, Lizzie and their whole team performing an exemplary service for our heritage and our sector.

2018 has been quite a year to say the least.

It saw the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act which saw some of the first women gain eligibility to vote. 2018 was also the final year of the centenary First World War commemorations, ending in November with events up and down the country, from the Cenotaph to local village war memorials.

It has been a very busy year for the heritage sector, with a number of changes and announcements affecting heritage. There have been – and continue to be – challenges, of course, but there is much to be positive about as well.

A key challenge, which I know is a concern for the sector, is Brexit. Brexit presents both challenges and opportunities for all sectors and I am aware of the sector's concerns, particularly regarding future funding, international research collaboration and access to skills and expertise.

I want to reassure you all today, that we are taking account of the needs and interests of the heritage sector in the negotiations to leave, and establish a new relationship with, the European Union.

Last year, we launched the first Heritage Statement, setting out our direction and priorities for heritage in the years ahead. It built on and supported the commitments we made in the 2016 Culture White Paper.

The Heritage Statement was created to link Government's vision for heritage to our wider agendas and strategies. From industry to the environment; from regeneration to conservation; and from investment in placemaking to investment in skills, the statement is one of ambition for, and confidence in Britain. One that will help create a global, outward-looking Britain.

I am thrilled to be here today to update you all on what has been achieved in a single year. All of it through an ever-strengthening partnership between Government and the heritage sector.

A key achievement has been the establishment of the Heritage Council, which I chair, and which is attended at Ministerial level. We had our inaugural meeting in May of this year, and we had our second meeting last month.

The aim of the Council is to enable collaboration and the exchange of ideas, it especially brings together DCMS with key Government departments impacting on the sector including the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Treasury.

In my experience it has been an extremely useful forum for energetic discussion of those issues most pressing to us all.

This year has also seen great strides for the role of heritage in place making. I am sure you were all as delighted as I was with the commitment of 55 million pounds in funding for heritage through the Future High Streets Fund that was announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn Budget.

The fund will allow for the restoration of historic high streets, which will be delivered through the expertise of the Architectural Heritage Fund and Historic England with other sector partners. We in Government, and I know you in the heritage sector, see this as a major success, of which I am very proud.

The intertwining of culture, creativity and heritage has been given a great boost since the launch of the Cultural Development Fund this June. Central to England's culture is our heritage – it provides both an anchor and bedrock from which to build.

I am pleased to say that the 20 million pounds available as part of the Fund is fully integrated into the aims of the Heritage Statement, with two key heritage actors – Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund – being members of the advisory panel.

Last year, we also announced exciting plans for Historic England to develop a new scheme to enable communities to identify, permanently mark, and celebrate

the spots where history has been made, and the people, places and events that are important to them. I am pleased to be able to announce the next stage of these plans.

The scheme will engage the public in the significance of the historic places on our doorstep and the important things that happened there. It will provide a nationally-representative, alternative way of marking more tangible and previously-unrecognised histories across England; encouraging communities to celebrate and map the places that contribute to our national story in a genuinely diverse and inspiring way.

Such enthusiasm for marking and celebrating local histories should be harnessed to prove a positive addition to plaque schemes across the country that most often celebrate the lives or achievements of individual people in history as opposed to the events and places.

Looking forward, Historic England will look to run a live trial phase next year with a competition launched to source a final design for the marker that will be used at each location.

I am sure, like me, you will be encouraged that this scheme will celebrate national history of local importance in collaboration with communities across the country.

From the local context to the national, supported by our historic environment, Britain's cultural output is the most influential in the world, as part of our world leading soft power. I am very happy – but not surprised – to see Britain topping the world soft power rankings once again.

Here, I must give credit to a Heritage Alliance member, the World Monuments Fund. You have successfully brought the world to Britain's heritage, through admirable schemes such as the Fund for Syrian refugees.

At the same time, the UK continues to be recognised for its exceptional World Heritage: this year we nominated the Jodrell Bank Observatory for World Heritage Status, and it will be considered by the committee next summer, potentially becoming our 32nd World Heritage site.

The UK ratified the Hague Convention and acceded to its Protocols in 2017. We take our international humanitarian law commitments seriously and part and parcel of those commitments is to preserve and protect the most vulnerable cultural heritage across the world.

I am pleased to say that thanks to initiatives like the DCMS sponsored 30 million pound Cultural Protection Fund, we are now one of the world's leading lights in cultural protection. Whether it is preserving Yazidi Heritage in Iraq or helping rebuild Coptic heritage in Egypt, the Fund has already contributed vastly to the UK's standing in this field and by extension its soft power in some of the most challenging conflict-affected parts of the Middle East.

There is no doubt that our heritage is international. I must also mention here the Heritage Alliance and British Council's new travel grant scheme,

which will offer travel grants to support UK heritage professionals to develop mutually beneficial international projects and partnerships for their organisations. Applications will be open from today.

I also want to pay tribute to local planning authorities, and volunteers in the heritage sector, who play a central role in conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Their specialist advisers have valuable expert knowledge of their local areas and are best-placed to know how to maximise the benefits of heritage in their local area and respond to the needs of local communities.

And as we know, and as outlined in the Government's Culture White Paper of March 2016, Historic England is leading the development of new heritage apprenticeship standards, their promotion and uptake across the sector.

Over the past 18 months, Historic England has convened three Trailblazer working groups to develop new apprenticeship standards in archaeology, conservation and historic environment advice.

Through this scheme, Historic England are ensuring that new routes are available into the sector for the next generation, and I commend this hard work.

The Heritage Statement was comprehensive, and many more advancements have been made to better protect and nourish the sector.

Recently, my department published revised principles of selection for listed buildings, to ensure they are fully conserved and appreciated.

Young people – the future – are being increasingly encouraged to enjoy the nation's rich heritage offer, with more than 700 heritage organisations having signed up to our #iwill campaign, to encourage young people to get involved with heritage projects.

I could go on. But truthfully 2018 has been, and continues to be, a great year for heritage. That is, in no small part, down to the work of everyone here. We have put heritage into the mainstream where redevelopment is concerned.

We have reduced the number of at risk heritage sites, and better protected others. We have secured diverse and significant new investment for heritage projects, whether they be local or national.

I believe we can all continue delivering for a sector we cherish, and I hope that you will be heartened by the snapshot of all the progress we have heard today. There are, of course, always challenges ahead; but, as ever, the passion and dedication of every one of you gives me great confidence that our challenges will be overcome.

Protecting and championing our historic environment and heritage is a noble calling – and you all play a vital role. Thank you for all your work, for having me here, and for ensuring our heritage is secured.

[News story: Colleges receive funding boost to help raise standards](#)

Thirty six colleges across England will receive funding totalling £5.5 million to help drive up standards, Apprenticeship and Skills Minister Anne Milton announced today.

Successful colleges from the first round of the [Strategic College Improvement Fund \(SCIF\)](#) will receive a total of £5.5m between them from the overall £15m fund.

The colleges will work with a high performing 'partnering' college to share their knowledge expertise to help tackle issues – such as raising the standard of teaching or improving learner recruitment and retention.

Today's announcement follows a successful £2m pilot phase, which showed strong support for the partnership model and led to colleges reporting how the fund enabled rapid improvements in quality.

Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships Anne Milton said:

Colleges play a vital role in our education system and we want that to continue. The Strategic College Improvement Fund is designed to help support colleges to improve so that their students get the best possible education and training.

I'm thrilled to announce the first round of colleges to receive funding from the scheme. I wish them all the best for the future and look forward to hearing how they are all progressing.

The SCIF was introduced following calls from the sector for a peer-to-peer support programme. It is playing a vital role alongside the Government's National Leaders of Further Education (NLFs) programme helping to share best practice and boost standards throughout the further education sector, so more people can access high quality education and training.

Funding will help pay for training and services to improve best practice and with it the quality of education on offer to students.

Press release: Construction of thousands of new homes to be accelerated following Homes England loan to St. Modwen

The loan, which is part of the Government's Home Building Fund, will support St. Modwen to speed up the installation of vital infrastructure, such as roads and schools, on a number of sites.

The new infrastructure will enable the company to deliver homes through its housebuilding business, St. Modwen Homes, as well as sell other plots to third party housebuilders – helping to fulfil Homes England's goals of diversifying the market, promoting better design and creating higher quality homes.

Chief Executive of Homes England, Nick Walkley, said:

This type of investment is a key example of how Homes England is stepping in to disrupt the housing market and provide homes for those wanting to get a foot on the housing ladder.

By equipping medium sized homebuilders like St. Modwen Homes with the resources to speed up construction, we are not just handing them the powers to make homes happen, but also to drive up the quality of new homes.

Rob Hudson, Chief Financial Officer, St. Modwen, said:

Our partnership with Homes England will enable us to bring forward our housing developments more quickly, providing much-needed housing across the country.

This investment from Homes England will enable St. Modwen Homes to more than double its housebuilding output by 2022.

One site set to benefit from new infrastructure funding from Homes England includes St. Modwen's largest residential scheme, Kingsgrove, a new settlement which will total 1,500 homes, sports pitches, open green space and community allotments, located in the Oxfordshire town of Wantage. St. Modwen recently announced the sale of a 9.65-acre plot to CALA Homes which will deliver 174 homes for the scheme, with St. Modwen Homes currently delivering 70 new homes on site.

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Notes to editors

1. Homes England is the new housing delivery organisation that has been created to adopt a more commercial approach to respond to the long term housing challenges facing this country. The new, expanded agency will play a far bigger role in investing in supply and intervening in the market to help deliver 300,000 homes a year by the middle of the next decade. Homes England will act differently from its predecessor, bringing together money, land, expertise and planning and compulsory purchase powers to accelerate the supply of new homes and address affordability issues in areas of highest demand.
2. St. Modwen is a different kind of property partner, taking a different view. Thirty years' experience as an expert developer and regeneration specialist, dealing with complex and challenging sites, has taught us to look at things differently, challenge the norm and create new and sustainable solutions to benefit all those involved. Today, we continue to unlock value and deliver quality outcomes across a wide range of activities, from regeneration to the long-term planning and development of commercial and residential assets, as well as active asset management.
3. In the 2017 Budget the Chancellor set out his plan to increase funding available through the Home Building Fund from £3 billion to £4.5 billion to support more new homes to be built in England. The revitalised fund will continue to support key marginal sectors like the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) developer market and will continue to be available nationally, although there will be an increased focus on investment in areas with the highest affordability pressures.
4. The loan – which comes from the Long-Term Home Building Fund – has an initial maturity of seven years which can be extended to a maximum of ten years, subject to Homes England's consent.

[Press release: Homes England acquisition boosts housing in Coventry](#)

The national housing agency is currently working with City Council's planning team on proposals for the former pumping station site, on London Road, which will connect communities and transform the location into a much needed residential scheme.

Land for the new homes was allocated by the council to unlock the brownfield site and meet Coventry's current housing need. This is following increased demand for houses by the expansion of Coventry-based manufacturing businesses.

The Whitley pumping station is known for its Victorian historic legacy, which Homes England is keen to retain and bring back into use by working alongside the council. Proposals for the site will be shared with the public over the course of the coming year.

Homes England's involvement in the site will help to speed up delivery of this project and ensure that the land is used to its maximum potential. The provision of a good quality residential development and enhanced green infrastructure will also benefit local communities.

Stephen Kinsella, Executive Director for Land, at Homes England added: "Our role is to ensure more people in England have access to better homes in the right places. To make this happen we intervene in the housing market to build more homes where they are needed. We accelerate delivery and help to shape a more resilient and diverse industry.

"With a strong demand for new homes in Coventry, we are keen to work collaboratively with partners to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the local community and this is an excellent example of how we are unlocking sites to meet those needs."

Planning permission for the new homes, including affordable housing will be submitted in 2019, with start on site to commence within the following 12 months.

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