

Speech: Penny Mordaunt: Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region

Thank you. And I would like to thank the European Union and the United Nations for hosting today's conference and for being here at this crucial time for the Syrian people.

This time last year my colleague, the Foreign Secretary, began his address by condemning a horrific chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians in Syria.

Today, I must once again begin by condemning another barbaric chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians, including young children, in Douma.

It is clear the Syrian Regime has the capability and the intent to use chemical weapons against own people.

It is also clear the Syrian Regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, will attempt to block every diplomatic effort to hold the Regime accountable for these reprehensible and illegal tactics.

That is why the United Kingdom, together with our US and French allies took co-ordinated, limited and targeted action against the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons' capabilities to alleviate humanitarian suffering.

Britain is clear that we must defend the global rules based system that keeps all of us safe. And I welcome the broad support we have had from the international community and at today's conference.

Russia's disregard for international norms and laws poses a grave threat to the global order we all rely on for our collective security.

In wielding its UN veto twelve times on Syria, Russia has given a green flag to Assad to perpetrate human rights atrocities against his own people.

This is a Regime that has deliberately bombed schools and hospitals.

A Regime that has used nearly seventy thousand barrel bombs, many on civilian targets.

This is a Regime that tries to starve its people into submission and targets aid workers and emergency responders racing to the scene to help.

And let us not forget. This is a Regime that deploys rape as a weapon of war.

Nearly eight out of ten people detained by the Regime have reported suffering sexual violence.

We are here to address the urgent humanitarian needs in Syria and the wider region, but the only solution to end the suffering is a political settlement that brings peace.

And that is why the UK will continue to support the UN-mediated process as the surest path to peace.

We commend the opposition Syrian Negotiations Commission for signalling their readiness for peace and direct talks with the Regime – without pre-conditions.

We call on Russia and Iran to use their influence to bring the Syrian Regime to the negotiating table.

The longer the delay, the more people are going to die, and the more misery and destruction will be inflicted on Syria.

Until that happens, we must keep pushing for greater humanitarian support to help civilians in Syria and Syrian refugees in the region.

I am pleased to see our partners, in particular the US, Germany, France, Norway and the European Union, building on the commitments we made at the London Syria conference.

And I must pay tribute to the sacrifice and contribution of our friends in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as the heroic efforts of ordinary Syrians to save lives in the most horrific circumstances imaginable.

As the trajectory of the Syrian war has worsened – our collective interests in a stable and prosperous region has increased. Jordan's resilience and prosperity are critical to the long-run interests of the region.

And that is why the UK will host an international conference with Jordan in London later this year: to showcase Jordan's economic reform plans, its aspiration to build and enable a thriving private sector, and to mobilise support from international investors and donors.

We have seen great generosity over the past seven years, but now is not the time to turn our backs. The humanitarian needs of the Syrian people are as grave now as they have ever been.

The UK has already committed two point four six billion (pounds) to the Syria crisis.

And today we will commit to spend four hundred and fifty million (pounds) in 2018 and three hundred million (pounds) in 2019. This will be in addition to our support for the second EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

However, the UK has been clear that we will not provide reconstruction assistance until a credible transition is underway. To do otherwise would run the risk of bolstering the Regime and its barbarity.

But today can't only be about pledges of money, we must see concrete actions, which will lead to greater protection for civilians and aid workers.

Because, as we speak, starving people are being denied aid by a Regime, which refuses to recognise international humanitarian law and because civilians,

including aid workers and frontline responders, are under attack.

Syria is now one of the most dangerous places on earth for aid workers and medical staff. Not only are their supplies and equipment blocked, but they face being targeted themselves in “double tap” bomb attacks by a Regime, which defies every rule of war.

The Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisations reported that five hospitals were bombed, and put out of service, in the space of twenty-four hours in Eastern Ghouta in February.

The victims were patients and medics.

We must support these innocent victims.

And that is why the British Government is demanding that all warring parties comply with the Geneva Conventions on the protected status of civilians and other non-combatants.

We’re calling for an immediate ceasefire and immediate safe access so that brave aid workers and medical staff can do their jobs and help the most vulnerable and the most desperate without fear of attack.

Let us protect the people of Syria, and the people there to help, as we work together to put Syria on a path towards peace.

[News story: Polish pair punished for operating fake online pharmacy](#)

Following a guilty plea, Mr Jakub Woźniak, 36, was sentenced to a total of 18 months immediate custody while Ms Izabela Wojciechowska, 37, received an eight-month sentence suspended for two years, in addition to 180 hours of unpaid work. The pair were also ordered to pay £3,000 in related costs.

During one raid MHRA enforcement officers seized large quantities of unlicensed and prescription-only medicines such as erectile dysfunction pills, steroids and illegal slimming tablets with a total value of more than £25,500. The slimming pills alone were valued at £7,900.

Additional investigations uncovered evidence of financial transactions for the sale of unauthorised medicines totalling more than £87,500 while a follow-up raid on Woźniak’s home revealed he had continued offending after the first raid and a further £10,752.4 worth of steroids were seized.

Despite neither being registered doctors nor pharmacists, the guilty pair were operating an illegal online pharmacy which provided a mail-order service with customers across the UK . They had different roles in the operation,

with Wojceichowska handling slimming pills and Woźniak dealing with all other medical products.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement said:

Selling potent unlicensed or prescription-only medicines is a serious criminal offence. If taken without medical supervision these medicines can be very dangerous.

We work relentlessly with regulatory and law enforcement colleagues to identify and prosecute all those involved.

Criminals only want your cash and don't have the slightest interest in your health.

MHRA is currently running the #FakeMeds campaign to warn people against buying potentially dangerous or useless unlicensed medicines sold by illegal online suppliers.

Visit www.gov.uk/fakemeds for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites.

Press release: Secondary ticketing sites pledge overhaul

StubHub, GETMEIN! and Seatwave have formally committed to ensuring better information will be given about tickets being resold through their platforms. This builds on changes they had already made during the course of the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation, and will help people to decide whether buying a ticket is worthwhile, as well as pick the best deal for them.

The sites will make clear:

- whether there is a risk a customer might be turned away at the door
- which seat in the venue the customer will get
- who is selling the ticket, so customers can benefit from enhanced legal rights when buying from a business

To ensure people can easily find this vital information, the 3 platforms will make significant changes to the way they gather and display it. They will make it mandatory for sellers to provide this information when listing a ticket, routinely carry out their own checks on primary ticket sellers' websites about resale restrictions, and act promptly if event organisers tell them information is missing.

The CMA also raised the same concerns about how information is provided to customers with a fourth platform, viagogo, along with other issues, including a historic failure to comply with a commitment given in 2015. However, this platform has not, currently, agreed to make changes the CMA considers necessary. Therefore, the CMA has notified them it will take action through the courts, unless they promptly commit to satisfactorily addressing its concerns.

Michael Grenfell, the CMA's Executive Director for Enforcement, said:

Thousands of people use secondary ticketing websites to buy tickets for concerts, theatre and other events. So it's crucial they are told what they are buying, from whom they are buying it, and whether their ticket might not actually get them into the event.

We welcome the changes already made and new commitments we've been given by StubHub, Seatwave and GETMEIN! to improve the information on offer, so that people can better judge whether they're getting a good deal.

But all secondary ticketing websites must play by the rules and treat their customers fairly if anything goes wrong. We take failure to comply with consumer protection law very seriously.

So far viagogo has failed to address our concerns, and we are determined to ensure they comply with the law. We are prepared to use the full range of our powers to protect customers – including action through the courts.

The CMA's enforcement action, launched late last year, followed a thorough investigation into the sector which identified concerns that consumers who used StubHub, GETMEIN!, Seatwave and viagogo were not being told:

- about restrictions on using a resold ticket, that had the potential to lead to a buyer being denied access to an event
- where exactly in a venue they would be seated
- the identity of the sellers they are buying from – for example whether the seller was a business and/or connected to an event organiser

As part of this investigation, the CMA also raised a number of other concerns with viagogo, including:

- a historic failure to fully comply with a formal commitment given to the CMA in 2015 to make its customers aware of the face value of tickets
- making statements about the availability and popularity of tickets on its website which had the potential to mislead consumers or rush them into making a buying decision
- problems encountered by its customers in getting their money back under the guarantee
- businesses advertising tickets for sale on the website that they do not yet own and therefore may not be able to supply

The CMA continues to work closely with partner agencies and enforcers working in this field, including:

- the Advertising Standards Authority – which recently took action against StubHub, GETMEIN!, Seatwave and viagogo – banning the misleading presentation of pricing information on their websites
- National Trading Standards (NTS) and Trading Standards Scotland – which are examining the practices of businesses that buy and sell tickets in bulk. In NTS's case this includes looking at how these businesses acquire tickets

Notes for editors

1. On 19 December 2016, [the CMA opened an investigation](#) into suspected breaches of consumer protection law in the online secondary ticketing market.
2. On 28 November 2017, [the CMA announced that it would take enforcement action](#) against a number of secondary ticketing websites suspected of breaking consumer protection law. The CMA raised its concerns with these websites and requested that they take action to address these. Ultimately, only a court can rule that a particular practice infringes the law.
3. Today's announcement follows on from this work. The three platforms – StubHub, GETMEIN! and Seatwave – had already made some changes to address concerns during the course of the CMA's investigation. Today's announcement details formal undertakings given to build on these changes. These will be made over the coming months.
4. With regards to the historic undertaking referenced, the CMA announced in March 2015, following an earlier investigation, that viagogo – along with the other 3 main secondary ticketing platforms – had provided an undertaking to improve its practices. This included a commitment to provide information to buyers on the face value of tickets (which may be different from the price the ticket is available for through the secondary ticketing platform).
5. The CMA plans to produce further materials that will be helpful to the primary market including information about steps that the primary market can take to ensure that key information about access to their events is disclosed, and steps that the primary market can take in order to prevent consumers losing out if they use resale restrictions. The CMA published its initial view on these issues in November 2017 and has received useful feedback from the industry on its proposed approach.
6. The CMA also plans to publish additional information that will explain,

in the light of our recent enforcement action, what all secondary ticket websites – including those not under investigation – need to do to comply with the law.

7. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).
8. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Rights Act 2015, the Consumer Contracts Regulations 2013, the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and the Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002.
9. As an enforcer under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA cannot impose fines on businesses but it can enforce the above legislation through the courts, and where appropriate, obtain additional measures to improve consumer choice, drive better compliance with the law, or obtain redress for consumers.
10. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460
11. Other (non-media) enquiries should be directed to general.enquiries@cma.gsi.gov.uk.

News story: Further new member appointed to the ACMD

The new appointee announced today is Dr Anne Campbell, a lecturer in social work, and co-director of the drug and alcohol research network at Queen's University Belfast. This appointment is in addition to the [8 new members](#) announced on 12 February 2018.

The Chair of the ACMD, Dr Owen Bowden-Jones said of these new appointments:

I am delighted to welcome the new members to the ACMD. They will add to the range and depth of expertise on Council and I very much

look forward to working with each of them.

The ACMD is an independent body which makes recommendations to government on the control of dangerous or otherwise harmful drugs, including classification and scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and its regulations. The 3-year appointments attract no remuneration and have been made in accordance with the code of practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA).

Dr Campbell takes up her post today.

News story: VMD announces the new Director of Authorisations: Abigail Seager

VMD announces the new Director of Authorisations: Abigail Seager – GOV.UK

The new Director of Authorisations will take up her position on 1 May 2018.



The VMD is pleased to announce that the new Director of the Authorisations Division is Abigail Seager who will take up her position on 1 May 2018.

Since 2016 Abigail has been Head of the EU Exit and International Office at the VMD. Before this, from 2006, she was Head of the General Assessment and Imports Team. Her previous roles include: Deputy Head of Fisheries Legislation (Defra), where she led on the establishment of the Marine Fisheries Agency (2004-6), and Senior Policy Officer in the Criminal Justice Fine Enforcement team, Ministry of Justice, where she took the new policy on fine enforcement through to primary legislation (Courts Act Bill) and implementation of the new legislation (2002-4).

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Thank you for your feedback