

# Press release: Joint Statement following the second UK-Bangladesh Strategic Dialogue

The dialogue involved a fruitful exchange of views on political and bilateral issues, economic and development cooperation, security and defence cooperation, and exchanges on current global issues, including the Rohingya crisis. The UK commended Bangladesh for hosting over one million forcibly displaced Burmese nationals. Bangladesh welcomed the UK's assurance that it remains committed to keeping the international spotlight on the Rohingya crisis, and to supporting Bangladesh in its humanitarian response and the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of the Rohingya to Burma.

The Strategic Dialogue was led by Permanent Under-Secretary of the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Simon McDonald, and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque of the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting began with both sides noting the success of the inaugural Strategic Dialogue in Dhaka last year, and welcoming the progress made in bilateral relations. Both sides underscored the importance of an exchange of visits and interactions at the highest political level, including the visit of the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Bangladesh in February 2018. Both sides briefed on their countries' political developments domestically and internationally.

The UK restated its commitment to maintain a high quality service for Bangladeshi nationals at the visa application centres in Dhaka and Sylhet. The UK looked forward to early implementation of the Cross-Border Higher Education Rules which will allow UK universities to operate in Bangladesh.

Both countries agreed on the importance of education for women and girls. The UK welcomed the significant progress Bangladesh has made in this area.

The UK welcomed Bangladesh's continued commitment to take back its citizens who no longer have the right to remain in the UK, and welcomed significant progress in this regard.

The UK congratulated Bangladesh for being on course to graduating to middle income country status. It welcomed Bangladesh's efforts and commitment to improving performance against the World Bank's "Doing Business Index". Both sides agreed that trade was an important tool in tackling poverty, and that increasing bilateral trade could bring significant benefits to both countries.

The UK encouraged Bangladesh to continue addressing human and labour rights issues, in the garment industries.

Both sides affirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” including Sustainable Development Goals. The UK and Bangladesh reiterated the importance of coordinated global action on climate change and reaffirmed their strong support for early and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement of 2015.

Both sides agreed to work closely in support of Prime Minister May’s goal to cultivate a new, global and co-ordinated approach to eliminate forced, labour, modern forms of slavery and human trafficking.

The UK and Bangladesh reaffirmed their support for the Commonwealth and looked forward to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held in London in April 2018.

Both sides agreed to arrange appropriate celebrations in London and Dhaka in 2022 to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the UK and Bangladesh.

Commenting on the Strategic Dialogue, Sir Simon McDonald said:

I was glad to host the second Strategic Dialogue with my Bangladesh counterpart Md. Shahidul Haque in London. We held good discussions across a range of high priority areas for both the UK and Bangladesh.

The Strategic Dialogue was held at an important juncture for both countries as the UK prepares to leave the European Union and Bangladesh advances to middle income country status. I repeated the UK’s commitment to continue tariff-free market access for Bangladeshi goods entering the UK market after the UK leaves the European Union.

The UK looks forward to welcoming Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit which takes place in London next month.

Commenting on the Strategic Dialogue, Md. Shahidul Haque said:

The second Strategic Dialogue provided us an important opportunity to discuss how both sides can encourage transition to a broader relationship between the UK and Bangladesh in the post-Brexit and post-LDC context. We agreed to planning now for a future development partnership focussed on innovation, knowledge, skills development and employment while continuing to ensure that no-one is left behind, especially women, girls, and people with disabilities.

We appreciated the UK Government's firm commitment to continue to provide duty-free, quota-free market access to Bangladeshi goods to the UK market after it left the European Union. We highlighted the valuable contribution that the British-Bangladeshi community continues to contribute to British society and prosperity.

## **Notes to Editors:**

1. This was the second Strategic Dialogue between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh. The first Strategic Dialogue was hosted by Bangladesh in March 2017. The second Strategic Dialogue took place at the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The third Strategic Dialogue will be held in Dhaka in 2019.
2. The UK is Bangladesh's largest bilateral development partner.
3. The UK will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit in London from 16-20 April.

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## **[News story: BEIS pays tribute to Stephen Hawking](#)**

BEIS, as the department responsible for research within the UK, would like to acknowledge Professor Hawking's impact upon the world of science and its public perception. His discovery that black holes have a temperature and produce radiation, now known as Hawking radiation, has enhanced our sense of the universe in a profound way.

As well as being one of the leading researchers in the field of theoretical physics, Professor Hawking also sought to explain many of these complex scientific ideas to a wider audience through popular books, most notably his bestseller *A Brief History of Time*, and through popular culture.

Sam Gyimah, Minister for Universities, Science, Research, and Innovation, captured the sentiments of many when, reflecting on Professor Hawking's death, he spoke of his respect for:

A brilliant scientist. An extraordinary life. A triumph of the human spirit.

Gian Guidice, Head of Theoretical Physics at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) said:

Hawking's results are a constant source of inspiration for theoretical research done at CERN.

Hawking has been an inspiration to generations of young people across the world. Many have developed a passion for science because of him and his work.

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## **Speech: Minister for Africa urges action to tackle illegal wildlife trade**

### **Introduction**

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson sends his congratulations to everyone involved in the incredible work here. It is a great job to be here with you in beautiful Botswana.

President Khama has been a towering force in what is appropriately named the Giants Club. Botswana's abundance of diverse wildlife is testament to the fantastic job that President Khama, Space for Giants, and many other committed people and organisations are doing to protect these wonders and their natural habitat. I'd like to pay tribute to the founding members of this Club – the Presidents of Botswana, Gabon, Kenya, and Uganda. We've heard the strength of their ongoing commitment today, and they are an inspiration to Africa and the rest of the world.

I want to hear more from the Giants Club, and from the other African delegates here today, about the action you think needs to be taken to realise African ambitions for a type of conservation that brings economic benefit to African communities. I want to say that the UK stands ready to help.

### **The Illegal Wildlife Trade**

We are all here because we understand just how tragically short-sighted the illegal wildlife trade is and because we know that if we don't act now, it will be too late, as many species could be approaching extinction. In 1979 there were 1.3 million African elephants, today there are only 415,000. And their populations are declining at an alarming rate, which is why we need action now.

The illegal wildlife trade is threatening not only elephants, but many of the world's endangered species – species that define national identities, and heavily influence economic development. We are all here because we know we need to preserve these riches, not destroy them. We also know that tragically, the curse of this trade is two-fold; as poaching and the illegal wildlife trade also has a deeply corrosive effect on human society.

Poachers are now coming armed to the teeth, endangering not only animals' lives, but human lives too. They undermine state institutions and governance, they illegally exploit your countries' natural resources, often to benefit people and networks beyond your borders, and they foster the corruption which feeds discontent and insecurity.

This insecurity can damage livelihoods and hold back development as well as robbing people of their economic potential. The criminals responsible must not be allowed to fracture your societies and plunder your children's futures.

These are the reasons that I and the Foreign Secretary are so passionate about tackling this illegal trade head-on. We believe the work you are doing. We believe in the cooperation between your countries through the Giants Club, and we believe that that is the key to achieving real change.

### **The Foreign Secretary's commitment**

The Foreign Secretary has made the illegal wildlife trade a personal priority, and is dedicated to ending the illegal ivory trade. He wants 2018 to be the year that real changes are made. He is particularly excited by your proposals to create a cross border safe space for wildlife.

Ambitious ideas like this are what is needed if real change is going to be achieved. Which is why Britain is supporting the awareness-raising work being done by Space for Giants, and I know the digital march of the elephants last week really set the tone for the summit.

### **Tackling poaching**

Operations to tackle poaching will be discussed today, and they are another critical part of the Space for Giants programmes. The UK is funding practical action around the world to reduce demand, strengthen enforcement and develop sustainable livelihoods for communities affected by the illegal wildlife trade. Since the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund was launched in 2013 we have funded 47 such projects.

One recent example involves the British military delivering anti-poaching activities with rangers in Gabon, and a follow-up project in Malawi. The project aims to reduce poaching, working with African park rangers for more effective and safer counter-poaching techniques.

### **London Conference**

The UK is hosting an important conference to tackle the illegal wildlife

trade in October; and I know many of you will be attending. The conference will enable us to build on the work being done by the Giants Club and others groups. It will focus on three challenges:

Firstly, how to tackle the illegal wildlife trade as a serious organised crime. This will consider how we strengthen law enforcement, and how we snuff out the associated corruption.

Secondly, we are going to build coalitions to help us in this fight. We will harness technology, and share and scale up successful and innovative solutions.

We will look at how we close global markets for illegally traded wildlife products, tackling the demand problem. And yes, the UK will lead by example. We will be shutting down our ivory trade. We will be working with the EU to do the same. That's something we can do irrespective of whether we are in the European Union or not.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion to my remarks – we do not currently have the answers to all these challenges; but, if the international community works together, I know we can find the solutions. Together we can halt the alarming disappearance of these unique animals.

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## **[Press release: HS2 workers discover ancient coastline in West London](#)**

The layer of black clay is thought to have been formed from densely wooded marshes on the edge of a sub-tropical sea.

The rare discovery was made at a site in Ruislip, West London, when HS2's ground investigation team unearthed a previously unknown material, located up to 33 metres below the surface.

The layer of black clay, which HS2 Ltd has named the 'Ruislip Bed,' is thought to have been formed from densely wooded marshes on the edge of a sub-tropical sea. HS2 Ltd made the surprising find while investigating ground conditions in the area, prior to the construction of the Northolt Tunnel, a 14 kilometre tunnel which will run from West Ruislip to Old Oak Common.

HS2 has been investigating the ground at around 8,000 locations along the first phase of HS2, from London to the West Midlands.

[Ruislip Bed Discovery Animation](#)

Dr Jacqueline Skipper, a geological expert from Geotechnical Consulting Group, said:

Although ground investigations regularly take place across the country, it's really exciting and very unusual to come across a material that no-one has ever seen before. The 'Ruislip Bed' discovery is particularly fascinating, as it is a window into our geological history.

It would have been formed during the Paleocene period, which was a time of intense change, with new animals evolving following the extinction of the dinosaurs. Most of Southern England was covered by a warm sea and this clay helps us to pinpoint where the coastline was.

Steve Reynolds, HS2's Ground Investigation Programme Manager, added:

Since 2015, we have been investigating ground conditions along the route of HS2, so we can design the railway in the safest and most efficient way.

We have been exploring the soil and rocks beneath the surface through various methods, ranging from drilling into the ground and taking samples to using radar technology. Our main investigations are almost complete, with over 1 million laboratory tests undertaken on the samples we have taken. It's the largest ground investigation programme that the UK has ever seen and an unparalleled opportunity to learn about the ground beneath our feet.

The initial ground investigation programme on Phase One of the railway, from London to the West Midlands, will be largely complete by the end of March 2018. This will be followed by supplementary, targeted investigations, led by HS2's main works contractors.

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## [News story: Successful workshop on allergen detection in spices organised by GC](#)

A joint Defra, FSA, FSS and Government Chemist workshop was held at LGC on 28 February 2018. The event focused on the detection of allergens in spices and herbs using a multi-discipline approach. The workshop was attended by over 20

delegates from Public Analyst laboratories, industry and regulating bodies.

The event was organised by the Government Chemist team as part of a cross government (BEIS, FSA, FSS and Defra) knowledge transfer project that will deliver knowledge from government programmes to stakeholders to help enforce current regulations and prevent future disputes. By pooling funds from each of the four government departments, knowledge transfer events can be planned and coordinated according to priorities received directly from the stakeholder community delivering greater impact.

The workshop was opened with a talk by Dr Chun-Han Chan from the FSA's Allergen team and followed by Greg Corbishley from Barts Spices, who gave the industry perspective into the challenges posed for manufactures by cross contamination. There were also three sessions covering the complementary techniques developed in response to the [cumin](#) and [paprika](#) cases in 2015. Malvinder Singh (LGC) talked about the immunoassay tests which initially detected allergenic contamination (initially believed to be almond) in cumin and the subsequent preparation of reference materials needed for further investigation. Christopher Hopley (LGC) gave an overview of mass spectrometry and expanded on methods developed for the detection of close species. Timothy Wilkes (LGC) talked about the real-time PCR and melting curve approaches used for these cases. These sessions provided practical information required to enable participants to carry out or commission similar analytical tests. Michael Walker, from the GC team, provided a final overview on result interpretation and reporting on allergen cases.

Dr Walker from the GC team presenting on interpretation and reporting

Feedback from participants was very positive:

First of all many thanks to you all for a very enjoyable course on Wednesday. The content was very useful and I feel the chance to network with such a diversity of people and disciplines that attend these courses is invaluable

Very informative and enjoyable. Always good to have access to a large pool of experts. Confident now to use melt curve analysis in future

If you would like to know more about the techniques covered in this workshop, or the work of the Government Chemist, contact