

# Press release: Descendants invited to Battle of Amiens centenary commemoration

600 tickets are available for descendants to attend an event on 8 August at Amiens Cathedral, France. The event, held in partnership with the Australian, Canadian, French and U.S. governments, will tell the story of the Battle of Amiens which heralded the Hundred Days Offensive and the path to the Armistice in November 1918.

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

The Battle of Amiens marked a turning point in the First World War and this anniversary gives us a chance to reflect on how the war in Europe moved from entrenched conflict to the signing of the Armistice in 1918.

We have a duty to tell the stories of those who lived and fought in the First World War and to keep their memories alive. I encourage all those with a connection to the Battle of Amiens or the war on the Western Front during the summer of 1918 to apply for tickets to the commemorations this summer.

Dan Snow, Historian and Broadcaster said:

Amiens might not be the most famous battle of the First World War, but it might be the most important. In the summer of 1918 at Amiens British, French, Commonwealth and American troops decisively defeated the mighty German Army by using a combination of new tactics and weapons that finally broke the stalemate of the trenches. This was the beginning of the end of the First World War and it the beginning of modern warfare. It is one of the most remarkable battles in British history, on the centenary we have a unique chance to commemorate it and place it where it belongs, at the heart of our national story.

Glyn Prysor, CWGC Chief Historian said:

8 August 1918 was among the most dramatic days of the First World War. The Battle of Amiens was a remarkable Allied success and a horrific ordeal for German soldiers. For the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, this anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on

the cost of victory. Our cemeteries and memorials eloquently reflect the combined efforts of people from across the world who served: whether at the sharp end of the fighting or working behind the lines to support a campaign which would eventually lead to the Armistice.

Described by German General, Erich Ludendorff as the black day of the German Army, Amiens started 8 August 1918 and lasted three days. It marked the beginning of the Hundred Days offensive that eventually won the war. The Allied forces, made up of British, Australian, Canadian, French and U.S. soldiers, advanced over seven miles on the first day of the battle, one of the greatest advances of the war.

Less known than the Battle of Passchendaele or the Battle of the Somme, Amiens marked a distinct change compared to the huge loss of life and devastation of previous battles. This is reflected in the stories of Allied troops who were there, which can be found on Lives of the First World War.

Captain Edwin Francis Trundle of the Australian Imperial Force, one of three brothers who fought and survived the war, wrote to his wife Louisa in Australia:

During the last few days we have advanced over twelve miles ... up to the present everything has gone excellently and everyone is in high spirits... I followed the attacking infantry with a team of thirty-six pack mules carrying ammunition forward ... Ever since then we have kept continually moving forward until now we are over twelve miles ahead of our starting position.

The government's four year programme of centenary events will culminate on 11 November 2018 with a series of events across the UK to mark the centenary of the Armistice. The National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph will follow traditional lines to respect its wider purpose in remembering the fallen of all conflicts. The traditional veterans' parade will be followed by a civilian procession made up of 10,000 members of the public who wish to show their thanks to a generation who gave so much for the freedoms we enjoy today.

During the day, church and other bells will ring out as they did in 1918 to mark the end of the war. The government is supporting the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers to recruit 1,400 bell ringers – the number that were lost during the war – to create a national peal that will echo the impromptu outpouring of relief and joy that took place 100 years ago.

The commemorations will conclude with a national service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in London. Similar services will also take place in Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast. The services will reflect on the four years of war and will give thanks for the soldiers who returned and remember those who did not.

Those with an emotional connection to the Battle of Amiens or the war on the Western Front during the summer of 1918 can:

- Apply for tickets to attend the ceremony inside Amiens Cathedral on 8 August
- Research and remember their ancestors who fought in the First World War on Imperial War Museums' [Lives of the First World War](#)

## **ENDS**

To apply for tickets to the ballot visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/amiens100](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/amiens100)

The ballot closes at 12 noon on 9 April 2018.

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# **Speech: United Kingdom's support for the OSCE and its efforts to achieve stability, peace and democracy for the people of Europe**

Thank you Mr President,

And thank you Foreign Minister Alfano for your briefing.

The United Kingdom fully supports the OSCE and its efforts to achieve stability, peace and democracy for the people of Europe, including through dialogue. Like the United Nations, the OSCE is a pillar of the international rules based system and respect for its fundamental principles must be restored.

Nowhere in Europe is this more important than in Ukraine. Let me reaffirm the United Kingdom's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, including in Crimea. These are words by which we open so many of our Council's resolutions. They are fundamental to all Member States of the United Nations. Yet last month we marked the fourth anniversary of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. That act, by a permanent member of this Council, showed complete disregard for our UN Charter and trampled all over international law. In addition to annexing Crimea, Russia has destabilised Eastern Ukraine and continues to fuel the conflict at enormous human and material cost to the Ukrainians people.

As always, it is civilians that suffer most. Since the conflict began, over 10,300 people have lost their lives, almost 25,000 have been injured and 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly along the line of contact. And we have seen reports that over 1000 Russian military

personnel and mercenaries have lost their lives, so the Russian people are also mourning their children. It is only through a truly sustainable ceasefire and genuine political will, through the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, that this conflict will be brought to an end. We welcome the latest recommitment to the ceasefire by the Trilateral Contact Group, but ceasefires have been broken in the past, and have not resulted in sustained improvements to the security situation.

While the conflict continues, the Special Monitoring Mission, ably directed by Chief Monitor Apakan, must be permitted to carry out its mandate in full and be granted full, safe and unhindered access to all of Ukraine, including those parts of the border with Russia not under Ukraine's control, and Crimea. The increasingly aggressive behaviour and threats we are seeing towards OSCE monitors are deeply concerning and we remember the sacrifice of paramedic Joseph Stone on 23 April last year.

Mr President,

If, as Russia claims, it truly cares about the people of the Donbas, it should end the fighting that it started, withdraw its military personnel and weapons and cease its support for the separatists. Russia should also show a genuine political will to end the conflict and to abide by the Minsk Agreements that it signed. Until these steps are taken, we will work with our EU partners to ensure that sanctions remain fully in place.

Mr President,

We must retain the Council's focus of this Council on Ukraine. Next Thursday the UK will co-host an Arria-formula meeting to discuss this blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. The chaos, violence and ongoing loss of life resulting from Russia's military operations more than merit this Council's time. We must be ready to remain seized of this issue.

Foreign Minister Alfano, we welcome and strongly support Italy's intention to prioritise tackling Modern Slavery, and addressing the challenges associated with migration, including corruption and trafficking. In addition, we support your focus on the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan and on protracted conflicts, which continue to undermine security in the OSCE region. These are areas where the OSCE's cross-dimensional approach can really add value. We are keen to work with you to ensure that OSCE activities complement, rather than duplicate, the work of UN Agencies and other organisations.

Mr President,

The OSCE's autonomous institutions and network of Field Operations can and do make a significant contribution to the promotion of security, stability, democracy and the rule of law across the region. However, it is only able to do so when Member States stand up for the principles which guide it. This is the task of all of us on the Security Council. To stand up for those who suffer acts of aggression from their bigger neighbours. To stand up for the UN charter. To stand up for international law.

Thank you Mr President.

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## Speech: Call for the Need to Protect Women's Rights in Afghanistan

Thank you Madame President,

I would like to pay tribute to my Dutch colleagues for their tireless efforts to reach a consensus on this important resolution.

I would also like to thank all our briefers, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ambassador Yamamoto, for his briefing and for his and his team's continued efforts in challenging circumstances.

Madame President,

I am delighted to share the chamber with so many women on International Women's Day. I am especially pleased that we are discussing Afghanistan today, as I had the privilege to spend several years in Afghanistan, working to support education for Afghan girls, and a future in Parliament for Afghan women. As Ms Safi and Dr. Sarabi have demonstrated in their briefings, and their own impressive work, women have a vital role to play in securing Afghanistan's future and we should all stand beside them.

Afghanistan cannot find a lasting peace with only half its population. The UN must maintain a strong role in promoting and protecting the rights of women across Afghanistan, and continue to support the Afghan Government to implement its National Action Plan for women, peace and security. Ensuring accountability and equal access to justice for all are essential to long-term peace and stability. We welcome the adoption of Afghanistan's revised penal code and the clarity it brings. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to ensure its full implementation in line with the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women which we hope will continue to be used to guarantee Afghan women the protection and accountability they deserve.

Madame President,

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is an essential mechanism to support Afghanistan's recovery from conflict. The continued presence of UNAMA, and the resolve, resourcefulness and skill, with which its staff support the Afghan people, are a strong signal of the international community's commitment.

The United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary-General's decision to host a Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in Geneva on the 28th of November.

Implementing the findings of the strategic review and the Secretary General's report of August 2017 will allow UNAMA to be as efficient as possible and to adapt as circumstances change. I am pleased to see that this is reflected in the resolution before us today and I hope it will send a strong signal to the Mission's hardworking personnel that we fully support them.

Madame President,

UNAMA's mandate to support peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan remains at the core of the mission. This will only be delivered sustainably through a credible, inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process, where all Afghan citizens, whatever their background, can resolve grievances through dialogue.

Of course, for peace to be sustainable it must be inclusive. The strong focus on the involvement of women in peace and security in this Mandate renewal is particularly welcome. With inclusiveness in mind, we highly commend the bold offer laid out by President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and Afghanistan's National Unity Government at the recent Kabul Process for Peace and Security meeting. We welcome the credibility, flexibility and openness of this offer, which gives the Taliban the opportunity to be part of a political process towards peace. While the Council was not able to reflect these recent developments in the Mandate renewal, I hope that we will find another opportunity to endorse it and lend our full support to these Afghan-led efforts.

Finally, the UN must play a strong role in supporting free and fair elections. Elections, both this year and next, are an opportunity for the nation to communicate their aspirations to the political parties. These elections are a crucial point at which political trust can be renewed and stability forged. We commend the progress made by Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission towards electoral reform, and we encourage them to redouble their efforts to ensure that voter registration is completed according to an agreed timeline. We hope that UNAMA will support these efforts fully.

Madame President,

In conclusion, we fully support UNAMA and we welcome the renewal of its mandate today. As a Council, we have collectively endorsed the importance of inclusion, including of women, and of upholding and promoting human rights. We call on all parties to engage meaningfully in a political process to bring lasting peace and stability to the people of Afghanistan.

Thank you very much.

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# Speech: The Need for Free and Fair Elections in DRC

Thank you Mr President.

Let me begin by welcoming the presence today of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Okitundu, and thank you also to SRSZ Zerrougui for updating us on the intensifying instability, and the dire humanitarian consequences, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the proliferation of violence in the DRC, particularly in North and South Kivu, Tanganyika, Ituri and the Kasai and at significant increases in human rights abuses, with 744 violations in January, 60% of which were perpetrated by state agents.

As is too often the case, and as the civilian population of the DRC know all too well, the result of this instability has been devastating. 4.5 million Congolese have now fled their homes and communities; there are more internally displaced people in the DRC than anywhere else in Africa. 40,000 people have fled from Ituri to Uganda in this year alone, bringing the refugee population up to 670,000. This has caused a devastating humanitarian crisis – over 13.1 million are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. This number has doubled since 2017.

Mr President,

There is clearly a link between the ongoing political uncertainty and the increasing insecurity. The Congolese people cannot express their legitimate concerns with the political situation without risking their lives. On 21 January and 25 February, security forces once again violently repressed demonstrations leaving at least 9 people dead, dozens wounded and hundreds arrested. This must stop.

The holding of credible and constitutional elections by 23 December this year leading to a democratic and peaceful transition of power is essential to ending the political crisis. Without this, there is a significant risk of further violence destabilising not just the DRC, but the wider region also.

We welcome the progress made towards elections so far, including the completion of voter registration, the passing of electoral laws and the announcement of an electoral budget. However, this is no time for complacency. There is much more to do.

It is essential that the election calendar is honoured and that key dates set out in the electoral timetable are met, including the completion of the Voter Register List by 5 April, the Audit for the electoral list by 25 May, convocation of the electoral process in June and registration of Presidential candidates in July.

But, Mr President, holding credible elections is about more than complying

with timelines, it is also about creating the conditions than enable free and fair elections to take place. In order to do this, we call on the Government to implement the 31 December Agreement in full, including full implementation of the confidence-building measures set out in this agreement.

The Government must also respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of the DRC, opening political space and allowing peaceful demonstrations and freedom of expression. The UK is extremely concerned at the high numbers of violations of political rights and fundamental freedoms in January. And we were appalled by the disproportionate use of force against churchgoers and peaceful protesters on 31 December 2017, 21 January 2018, and 25 February 2018 and the subsequent loss of life.

We recognise that the onus is not only on the Government to deliver credible elections and in this context we call on the opposition to engage constructively in the process on the basis of the 31 December Agreement, which will demonstrate their credibility and potential to govern.

Mr President,

MONUSCO has a crucial role to play in this crucial year in the DRC in protecting civilians and supporting the implementation of the 31 December Agreement.

We welcome the efforts to improve MONUSCO's ability to carry out these tasks more efficiently and more effectively. In particular we welcome efforts to enhance the flexibility and mobility of MONUSCO's forces and to improve their performance. It is important that these reforms are implemented swiftly.

Mr President,

In conclusion, let me be clear: the violence and resulting dire humanitarian situation in the DRC are the result of continual disappointment of the people in the political process and the political leaders responsible for this process. The only way to avert further violence is for free and fair elections to take place in December and for the 31 December Agreement to be fully implemented. Further excuses and delays will only lead to more violence and despair. The Security Council cannot allow this to happen. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo cannot afford to wait any longer.

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## **Press release: European business Leaders' roundtable: 8 March 2018**

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

This afternoon the Prime Minister hosted key business leaders from across the EU at Downing Street to discuss progress in the UK's exit from the EU.

The Prime Minister opened the roundtable by welcoming the opportunity to discuss her vision for an ambitious future partnership with the EU following her speech at Mansion House last Friday.

Within this discussion she provided reassurance on the UK's commitment to maintain high regulatory standards and to seek arrangements which will support industries across the EU and the UK.

The roundtable attendees also discussed the implementation period, with the Prime Minister reaffirming the commitment on both sides of the negotiation for the terms to be agreed at the upcoming March European Council, which the business leaders welcomed.

The meeting was also attended by Robin Walker, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Exiting the European Union, and John Glen, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury.

#### **ATTENDEES:**

José María Álvarez-Pallete López, Chairman & CEO, Telefónica S.A.

Dr. Steffen Hoffmann, President of Bosch UK, Bosch

Daniel Křetínský, Chairman of the Board of Directors, EPH

Véronique Laury, Chief Executive Officer, Kingfisher

Angelique Magielse, Managing Director, Abellio

Francesca McDonagh, Group Chief Executive Officer, Bank of Ireland

Dr. Ian Robertson, Member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, Sales and Brand BMW, Aftersales BMW Group

Søren Skou, Chief Executive Officer, A.P. Møller Mærsk

József Váradi, Chief Executive Officer, Wizz Air