Press release: International Women's Day: Penny Mordaunt pays tribute to Jo Cox and calls for gender equality to be made a reality

Jo Cox pictured working as a humanitarian aid worker. Photo: Oxfam

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has paid tribute to MP Jo Cox's humanitarian work and called for everyone to "raise their game" to make gender equality a reality, ahead of this year's International Women's Day.

Speaking today (7 March) at the headquarters of mobile technology industry association the GSMA, in the City of London, Ms Mordaunt will announce new UK aid support to help grassroots organisations working on issues that were close to Jo's heart.

Ms Mordaunt will also call for everyone to step up and make gender equality a reality, as part of the Department for International Development's (DFID) new vision to make sure the voices of women and girls in the world's poorest countries are heard.

The International Development Secretary will say that if progress on gender equality is not sped up, the Global Goals will not be met by 2030.

Ahead of her speech, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

> Jo was a dedicated humanitarian who fought for gender equality at home and in developing countries and her passion and commitment will continue to support the world's most disadvantaged and disenfranchised women through these new UK aid grants.
>
> The MeToo movement has sent shockwaves around the world and given a voice to millions of women, but the majority of women and girls in the poorest countries are still not heard.
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> We all have the power to change this injustice and that's why UK aid is keeping girls in school, stamping out violence and giving a voice to women both at home and in shaping the future of their countries.
>
> It is only by everyone raising their game and making gender equality a reality that we will build a more peaceful, safe and prosperous world for us all.

The Jo Cox Memorial Grants will be given to projects in developing countries that are working to get the voices of girls and women heard when holding power-holders to account, helping them find jobs and become financially independent and making access to family planning services easier. The fund will also help strengthen grassroots organisations' capacity for predicting identity-based violence earlier.

Jo Cox's sister Kim Leadbeater said:

> It's wonderful to have the Jo Cox Memorial Grants being launched today – for every life that is touched by these grants, they will make a real difference and they will be money well spent.
>
> It's so fitting to have these grants created in Jo's name, which will reach a range of different countries and projects that encompass Jo's passion for both women's empowerment and bringing local communities together.
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> Jo spent 20 years working in the voluntary sector and working overseas. These grants are a reminder of that and a reminder of her passion and her determination to hopefully inspire others with similar desires. Jo would be over the moon.

In her speech, Ms Mordaunt will set out that DFID has taken the lead in tackling sexual abuse and exploitation within the aid sector and acknowledge that these incidents would not be so widespread if women and girls had an equal place at the table.

There are three areas in Ms Mordaunt's call to action that DFID will focus on through the new Strategic Vision for Gender Equality:

- Reaching those women and girls most at risk of being left behind, whether that is because of their ethnicity, their disability or simply because of where they are.

- Stepping-up for women and girls caught-up in conflict or crisis. To ensure that as well as protecting them, women and girls are also empowered, so they have a seat at the table when it comes to finding the solutions to a lasting peace. Studies show that when women are at the negotiating table, peace treaties are a third more likely to work.

- Doing more to increase women and girls' political participation so their voices are heard, and they're able to influence decisions that affect their lives, whether that's at home or in government.

Ms Mordaunt will deliver her speech at GSMA to highlight that technology will be vital in making sure the voices of women and girls in the world's poorest

countries are heard.

DFID is supporting the GSMA to narrow the gender gap on mobile phone ownership in order to unlock the benefits that mobile and internet can bring, for example giving women access to financial services, educational resources and digital health services.

Jo Cox Memorial Grants:

Gender data:

- Ms Mordaunt will also today announce funding for the UN Women-led flagship programme initiative on gender data, to improve the quality of gender data so the global goals can be effectively monitored. UK aid support will be up to £6 million over 4 years.

New Strategic Vision for Women and Girls:

- The new Strategic Vision re-affirms the UK's position as a world leader on gender equality. Focuses of the vision include strengthening work on gender equality in conflict and crisis contexts, women's political empowerment, and ensuring that no women or girls are left behind. It is an update of DFID's 2011 Strategic Vision for Girls and Women. DFID has compiled the new vision after a process of wide consultation with NGOs and civil society, both in the UK and abroad.

GSMA:

- Specifically DFID is supporting women and girls through the GSMA by working with the mobile industry to ensure their services are designed with women and girls in mind. For example in Rwanda the local mobile operator is training and employing female Mobile Money agents, who are better able to reach women with financial services, allowing them to save money and support their families.

Press release: UK charities commit to strengthening safeguarding culture and capability

UK charities have today committed to strengthening their leadership, culture and capacity around safeguarding.

The pledge was made at a summit in London this morning (Tuesday), hosted by the Charity Commission and the Office for Civil Society at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The summit brought charities working in the UK together with their regulators and other agencies, as well as

independent safeguarding experts, and focused on setting out the specific safeguarding challenges facing charities working in the UK. It followed a summit on Monday, focused on charities working internationally.

Attendees acknowledged the impact on public trust in charities from the recent revelations around sexual exploitation by individuals involved in international aid agencies. They committed to working together to lead a meaningful response to safeguarding concerns facing the domestic charitable sector, and to achieve the highest standards of safeguarding.

Themes agreed for priority action were:

- leadership, culture and values
- law, regulation and the statutory framework
- capacity and capability in charities around safeguarding and
- responsibilities and reporting, accountability and transparency.

Helen Stephenson, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said:

> Keeping people safe must be the top priority for all charities, wherever they work and whatever they do – the public, rightly, expect all charities to be safe places for those who come into contact with them. Sadly, concerns about safeguarding in charities are not limited to international aid organisations. Charities working in the UK have their own safeguarding challenges that must be addressed. I am encouraged by the commitment shown today by UK charities to lead and drive improvements around safeguarding. That commitment must be followed by firm action, and we as regulator will work with and support charities in developing practical, workable changes.

Minister for Civil Society, Tracey Crouch, said:

> Safeguarding must be at the heart of every charity's culture and a central priority for its leadership. I have been clear to the sector that they must make safeguarding a key priority. It is crucial that the sector addresses this issue urgently to protect vulnerable people and rebuild the public's trust.

The summit was chaired by Professor John Drew CBE, former chief executive of the Youth Justice Board, and author of a review into South Yorkshire Police's handling of child sexual exploitation.

Attendees agreed to develop action plans for each of the themes and reconvene in two months' time, to commit to implementation and discuss early progress in delivering change. Charity regulators in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be leading their own action plans. This work will feed into a wider safeguarding conference planned for later in the year.

The Charity Commission this week confirmed that reports of serious incidents on safeguarding have nearly doubled since revelations of sexual exploitation by Oxfam staff in Haiti emerged at the beginning of February. The regulator has established a new taskforce to deal with increased serious incident reports, and to undertake proactive work to ensure prompt and full reporting of serious safeguarding incidents by charities. That taskforce is also undertaking a 'deep dive' of existing serious incident reporting records to ensure any gaps in full and frank disclosure are identified and responded to.

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales; charities in Scotland are regulated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and charities in Northern Ireland are regulated by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. All three regulators took part in the summit.
2. Among the charities and organisations attending the UK safeguarding summit were NCVO, ACEVO, SCVO, Association of Chairs, Small Charities Coalition, Scouts Association, Alzheimer's Society, Barnado's, Scouts Association, The Children's Society, Children in Need, NSPCC, Age UK, Big Lottery Fund, Managing Together Ltd, Bond, Children England, the Charity Retail Association.
3. On 17 February, the Commission set out a range of new measures on safeguarding.

News story: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia's visit, March 2018

Britain's relationship with one of our oldest friends in the Middle East will begin a new chapter with the visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman is visiting the UK for the first time

since he became Crown Prince in June 2017 and since Saudi Arabia started a major programme of domestic reforms. Saudi Arabia is amongst the largest political, diplomatic and economic power in the Middle East, and the visit will usher in a new era in our bilateral relations with one of our oldest friends in the region.

The Crown Prince's visit builds on the Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia in November 2017. It will help to enhance our co-operation in tackling international challenges such as terrorism, extremism, the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen and other regional issues such as Iraq and Syria.

Saudi Arabia has also set out Vision 2030, a roadmap to open up the country's economy over the next 15 years. This will provide opportunities for British businesses in sectors including education, entertainment and healthcare where they have world-class expertise. It also includes plans for Saudi Arabia to become a global investment powerhouse and the Crown Prince's visit will help explore ways in which Saudi Arabia can build on its investment in the UK in sectors such as infrastructure.

British Ambassador Simon Collis talks about the ties between our two countries

Saudi Crown Prince Visit

Find out more about the Crown Prince's visit

Published 6 March 2018

News story: Penny Mordaunt's statement on Eastern Ghouta

I am appalled that yesterday's joint aid convoy into Eastern Ghouta was forced to halt its critical life-saving work because of continued airstrikes in civilian areas by the Asad regime.

Yesterday's incomprehensible actions by this brutal dictator, removing over 70% of everyday medical supplies for innocent families including vital insulin and dialysis equipment, serves purely to inflict as much misery as possible onto the Syrian people.

These actions have needlessly put thousands of lives at risk – some of those trapped and in need of urgent medical care will die unless all parties, including Russia, respect the 30-day ceasefire in Syria and allow

unrestricted humanitarian access and the evacuation of the critically sick and wounded.

Press release: UK Commonwealth Minister visits Scotland ahead of April's summit

The UK's Minister for the Commonwealth has visited Edinburgh today (Tuesday 6 March) to explore the historical and present-day links between Scotland and other Commonwealth nations ahead of the Commonwealth Summit.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister of State Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon met students from Kelvin College, Glasgow and heard about their textile design project, run in collaboration with students at a women's community college in Guntur, India. The project centred around the history of the famous Paisley Pattern, which originated in India, and culminated in joint fashion shows in both Paisley and Guntur.

Lord Ahmad visited the Scottish Youth Parliament to meet young people active in their communities, including individuals who will attend the Commonwealth Youth Forum during the summit. They discussed issues facing young people in Scotland, and how the summit can best capture the voices and interests of young people across the world.

He also attended a lunch with diaspora members and faith representatives to hear about how different communities will be involved with the Summit and to uncover more about the international relationships that act as living bridges between Scotland and other Commonwealth countries today.

In April, the UK will host the annual Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting with world leaders travelling in to take part in a week-long programme of activities.

Lord Ahmad said:

> My father arrived in Glasgow from the Indian subcontinent in the 1950s and made a home in the UK. For this and many other reasons, Scotland, and its Commonwealth ties, is very important to me.
>
> The Commonwealth is a unique family of nations and its members account for two and a half billion people. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April will focus on young people as we strive to meet the aspirations of the one billion people in Commonwealth countries under the age of 25. I want to see Scotland,

> especially its young people, involved in shaping decisions that affect their future.
>
> I am incredibly confident in the future of the Commonwealth and the role Scotland has to play in it.

Lord Ahmad met Fiona Hyslop, the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, to discuss the key role that the Scottish Government has in the run up to the Commonwealth Summit, including through hosting Commonwealth ‘Big Lunches’ and engaging young people.

Further information