

[Press release: Foreign Secretary in Ireland for high-level talks](#)

The Foreign Secretary met his Irish counterpart for talks today during an official visit to Ireland.

Boris Johnson and Simon Coveney discussed the strong, unique and enduring relationship between the UK and Ireland, as well as key foreign policy issues such as Africa and the Middle East, and the protection of human rights.

The Ministers also discussed the UK's exit from the European Union, and our aims for the future relationship.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

There are no closer friends than the UK and Ireland. Our two nations share a special, unique and enduring bond, which will not change when the UK leaves the European Union.

I am proud to have visited Dublin today to play my part, as the British Foreign Secretary, in that bond, celebrating the contribution British and Irish people make to each other's nations.

The Foreign Secretary also met Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin TD, and visited the National Gallery of Ireland where he saw the Sir William Orpen exhibition of First World War paintings.

The final stop on the visit was to Dublin's Trinity College, where the Foreign Secretary attended an event at the Science Gallery showcasing Science Week. He met members of the Irish science and innovation community and young scientists. The Foreign Secretary heard about the deep ties and collaboration between Irish and British academics and scientific institutions.

Further information

[News story: New Defence Secretary recognises Scots defence role](#)

Gavin Williamson heard how Scots personnel and units support UK and allied operations in Iraq, South Sudan, Cyprus and the Gulf, contribute to the UK counter terrorism effort, and stand by to assist the Scottish Government and

local authorities during civil emergencies, such as flooding.

Williamson met with Scotland's three most senior military officers – the Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland Rear Admiral John Weale; General Officer Scotland, Major General Bob Bruce; Air Officer Scotland, Air Vice-Marshal Ross Paterson – during a visit to Dreghorn Barracks, Edinburgh.

The Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

Scotland's military personnel and industrial base play a crucial role in keeping all of the people of the United Kingdom safe.

By 2020 Scotland will be home to the entire Submarine Service, an Army Infantry Brigade, the RAF's Quick Reaction Alert interceptors and submarine hunting Maritime Patrol Aircraft. Scotland is also the ideal base for crucial Defence operations and UK and Allied training requirements.

The MOD has around 10,000 sailors, soldiers and air personnel living permanently in Scotland, supported by 8,000 reservists and civilians.

Scottish industry benefits from Defence spending £1.5bn with it each year, supporting 9,750 private sector jobs in Scotland.

The Defence Board confirmed in February 2017, that £1.7 billion would be invested to upgrade Scottish military bases over the next decade.

[News story: 'Space Emergency Service' gains international award](#)

The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters received the 2017 William T. Pecora Award for providing satellite earth observations to help save lives worldwide.

The award, sponsored by the US Geological Survey and NASA, was presented yesterday (15 November) in South Dakota, United States.

The Charter is made up of 16 agencies, including the UK Space Agency, which led on the agreement between April and October this year, with Airbus responsible for coordination.

It provides images and other satellite information free of charge to emergency response agencies around the world, whenever major disasters strike.

Since the Charter was founded in 2000, response efforts include the tsunami in Indonesia and Thailand in 2004, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 and the earthquake in Nepal in 2015.

The project launched into action more recently, in September this year, as Hurricane Irma advanced across the Caribbean.

Speaking in the latest edition of Space UK, Remote Sensing Analyst Amalia Castro, who works at the Airbus offices in Guildford, explained:

“I was on call 24/7 for the whole week. I need to think which satellites will be best, what’s their resolution and prepare to task those satellites.”

“We had the potential for storms, floods, flash floods and landslides. I asked for data from 15 different satellites, from several different companies and agencies.”

Chris Lee, who leads the UK’s membership of the Charter for the UK Space Agency, added:

“I think that’s the great thing about the Charter. It’s the collection of all the available satellites from all around the world.”

The award comes as the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology highlights the use of satellite data for disaster risk reduction in its latest POST note: [Environmental Earth Observation](#)

You can find out more about the UK’s role in the Charter’s response to Hurricane Irma by reading the latest issue of [Space UK](#).

You can also sign up for updates when new issues are published, [subscribe now](#).

Speech: “Make no mistake, the JIM has succeeded; it is Russia that has failed”

Thank you Mr President.

Today we have reached the end of the road for the Joint Investigative Mechanism. It was a road that all members of this Council set out on together two years ago. We did so in the hope that those using chemical weapons in Syria would be identified and held to account. Thanks to today’s veto, that hope has suffered a serious blow.

The staff of the JIM, under the current and previous leadership panels,

worked patiently, diligently to uncover the truth. I pay tribute to them today. Thanks to their efforts, the world now knows what happened in Talamenas, in Sarmin, in Marea, in Qaminas, in Khan Sheikhoun and in Um Housh.

Make no mistake, the JIM has succeeded; it is Russia that has failed.

They have failed in their duties as a permanent member of this Security Council, they have failed as a state party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, they have failed as a supposed supporter of peace in Syria.

We've been here before. This isn't the first time this year that we have attempted to renew the JIM's mandate. Less than a month ago, we all sat in this very chamber and watched as Russia vetoed a simple technical rollover of the mandate; a rollover that didn't judge any party, that didn't add any conditions.

We have worked tirelessly, through extensive consultations between Council members, to try to understand Russia's concerns and find a renewal on which we could all agree. The US draft, which we were proud to vote for, was balanced and reasonable.

Russia, on the other hand, has refused to engage constructively. Last month they quoted fantasy and fiction in this Chamber to justify their veto. But in negotiations their experts made abundantly clear why they wouldn't support the JIM's renewal. Put simply, they cannot, or rather, they will not accept any investigation that attributes blame to their Syrian allies, no matter how robust the investigation, no matter how clear and solid the evidence.

Russia will say that they engaged, that they put forward an alternative text. Yet their text only sought to undermine and discredit what has already been painstakingly demonstrated – that the Syrian regime is responsible for the blatant, repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people.

The 7th report of the JIM, as we heard last week from the head of the Leadership Panel, details the thorough methodology of the investigation, its consideration of alternative hypotheses, the careful corroboration of sources, and use of independent, internationally-recognised forensic experts for analysis of data.

Faced with this clear, careful consideration and conclusion, Russia made a string of entirely destructive demands in its text and attempted to weaken significantly the remit of the JIM. They demanded that the JIM take samples from a Syrian airbase when the JIM has been crystal clear as to why doing so would not advance the investigation. They demanded that the JIM visit Khan Sheikhoun, where they will face unacceptable risks of attack.

They maligned the impartiality, experience, and expertise of the JIM's staff, ignoring the thorough, professional report they have produced and Russia's own original support for the group. Russia demands the JIM listen only to Syrian-approved witnesses, and Syrian accounts of events.

Why should evidence from a party to the conflict, accused of war crimes,

carry more weight than the corroborated testimony of victims and observers, and cold laboratory analysis of physical evidence?

Thanks to Russia's veto today, Daesh fighters will be joining Assad in celebration. The OPCW is currently investigating other cases. This vote means the JIM will not investigate who was responsible for these atrocious crimes.

Russia's transparent use of its Security Council status to block this investigation again shows that, as a party to the conflict, it cannot credibly play a leading role in the political process, such as convening the Syrian parties in Sochi.

Mr President, most of us here are totally committed to upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons. We will not be stopped by what has happened today. We will keep working to identify and bring to account those who have used these vile weapons, and to deter those who might think of doing so in future.

Russia once played a responsible role in securing the destruction of much of Syria's chemical arsenal and in creating the JIM. Regrettably, today the world can see that Russian policy now is to protect the Syrian state, whatever the cost to Russia's reputation.

Thank you.

[News story: David Davis' update to the House of Commons on EU negotiations](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker, I will update the House on negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union in November, reflecting our actions since the October Council.

Both the United Kingdom and European Union recognised the new dynamic instilled in the talks by the Prime Minister's Florence speech.

At the October European Council, the 27 Member states responded by agreeing to start their preparations for moving the negotiations on to trade and the future relationship we want to see.

The Council conclusions also called for work to continue, with a view to being able to move to the second phase of the negotiations as soon as possible.

It is, of course, inevitable that discussions are now narrowing to the few outstanding, albeit important, issues that remain.

Last week, our focus was concentrated on finding solutions to those few

remaining issues.

As we move forward towards the December Council, we have been clear with the EU that we are willing to engage in discussions in a flexible and constructive way, in order to achieve the progress needed.

To this end, our teams are in continuous contact, even between formal rounds.

I will now turn to the three, key, ongoing areas of discussions, and outline progress made last week on each of these.

Northern Ireland

We have made solid progress in our ongoing discussions on Northern Ireland and Ireland. Key areas of achievement include:

- Continued progress in technical discussions on preserving North/ South co-operation
- Agreed joint principles on the continuation of the Common Travel Area and associated rights
- Drafting further joint principles on how best we preserve North/South cooperation under the Belfast Agreement to help guide the specific solutions to the unique circumstances in Northern Ireland

Both sides also remain firmly committed to avoiding a hard border, a point we have remained clear on throughout.

We also remain resolutely committed to upholding the Belfast, Good Friday Agreement, in all its parts. And to finding a solution that works for the people of Northern Ireland and Ireland.

We have continued to hold frank discussions with our Commission counterparts about all these issues.

But in this area we have also had to be very clear with our counterparts that, whilst we respect their desire to protect the legal order of the single market and Customs Union, that cannot come at the cost of the constitutional or economic integrity of the United Kingdom.

As I've said, we cannot create a 'new border' within the United Kingdom.

This is an area where we believe we will only be able to conclude talks finally in the context of a future relationship.

Until such time as we do so, we need to approach the issues that arise with a high degree of political sensitivity, with pragmatism and with creativity.

Discussions on these areas will continue in the run-up to the December

Council.

Citizens' Rights

We have continued to make good progress on Citizens' Rights, both sides are working hard towards resolution of outstanding issues.

Last week, to respond to the request for reassurances by the European Union, we published a detailed description of our proposed administrative procedures for European Union citizens seeking settled status in the United Kingdom.

As our paper demonstrates, the new procedures will be as streamlined, straightforward and low-cost as possible.

They will be based on simple, transparent criteria, and these criteria will be laid out in the Withdrawal Agreement.

While there remain differences on the issues of family reunion and the export of benefits, we've been clear we are willing to consider what further reassurance we can provide to existing families of EU residents here – even if they are not currently living together in the United Kingdom.

I believe this paves the way to resolving the remaining issues in this area, and this was acknowledged by the Commission on Friday.

There remain some areas also where we are still seeking further movement from the European Union on issues such as voting rights, mutual recognition of qualifications, and onward movement for British citizens currently living in the EU27.

In all these three areas, the United Kingdom's offer goes beyond that of the European Union.

Finally, the Commission has not yet matched the UK's offer in relation to the right to stand and vote in local elections. Now, this is a core citizen's right that is nominally enshrined in the European Union treaties.

I have been disappointed that the European Union has been unwilling to include voting rights in the Withdrawal Agreement so far.

As a result, we will pursue this issue bilaterally with Member States.

The European Court

This week we have also sought to give further clarity on our commitment to incorporate the agreement we reach on Citizens' Rights into UK law.

This will ensure that European Union citizens in the UK can directly enforce their rights in UK courts, providing certainty and clarity for the long term.

We have made it clear that, over time, our courts can take account of rulings of the European Court of Justice in this area, to help to ensure consistent interpretation.

However, we remain clear that as we leave the European Union, it is a key priority for the United Kingdom to preserve the sovereignty of our courts and as such in leaving the European Union, we will bring an end to direct jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

Mr Speaker, it is not my intention to preempt the Committee stage of the EU Withdrawal Bill, but what I say next has some relevance for it.

It is clear that that we need to take further steps to provide clarity and certainty, both in the negotiations and at home, regarding the implementation of any agreement into United Kingdom law.

I can now confirm that, once we have reached an agreement, we will bring forward a specific piece of primary legislation to implement that agreement. This will be known as the Withdrawal Agreement and Implementation Bill.

This confirms that the major policies set out in the Withdrawal Agreement will be directly implemented into UK law by primary legislation – not by secondary legislation under the Withdrawal Bill.

This also means that Parliament will be given time to debate, scrutinise and vote on the final agreement we strike with the European Union. This agreement will hold only if Parliament approves it.

We expect this Bill to cover the contents of the Withdrawal Agreement, that includes issues such as, an agreement on citizens' rights, any financial settlement and the details of an implementation period agreed between both sides.

Of course, we do not yet know the exact details of this Bill and are unlikely to do so until the negotiations are near completion.

I should also tell the House, that this will be over and above the undertaking we have already made that will bring forward a motion on the final deal as soon as possible after the deal is agreed, and that we still intend and expect for such a vote on the final deal to happen before the European Parliament votes on it.

There cannot be any doubt that Parliament will be intimately involved at every stage.

Financial Settlement

Finally, on the financial settlement. I see laughter on the Opposition Benches, but actually this has been called for by Members on both sides of the House, so I hope that we get Labour party support for it for once.

Finally, on the financial settlement, the Prime Minister's commitment made in her Florence speech stands.

Our European Partners will not need to pay more or receive less over the remainder of the current budget plan as a result of our decision to leave.

The UK will honour its commitments we have made during the period of our membership, and this week we made substantial technical progress on the issues which underpin these commitments.

Conclusion

This has been a low-key, but important technical set of negotiations, falling as it has between two European Councils.

This is now about pinpointing further technical discussions that need to take place, and moving forward into the political discussions and political decisions.

We must now also look ahead to moving our discussions on to our future relationship.

For this to happen, both parties need to build confidence in both the process and indeed in the shared outcome.

The United Kingdom will continue to engage and negotiate constructively, as we have done since the start, but we need to see flexibility, imagination and willingness to make progress on both sides if these negotiations are to succeed and we are able to realise our new partnership.

I commend this statement to the House, Mr Speaker.