

Statement to the twenty-seventh session of the conference of the States Parties

Director-General, Mr Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to thank Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for all their work in preparing for this Conference. Many thanks as well to our Chairperson, Ambassador Madonsela.

I am very sorry not to be with you in person, but I am required to be in London for important business in Parliament.

In April, we marked the 25th anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention coming into force. During its first quarter century, the OPCW has made enormous strides in ridding the world of chemical weapons.

There is more to come. The UK is a proud contributor to the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology and we are looking forward to its inauguration next year.

With the completion of destruction of declared stockpiles in sight, next year's Review Conference is particularly timely. And there is much still to discuss in order to prepare the ground for the Review Conference.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom is not complacent about the challenges ahead. This Organisation remains as relevant as ever and there is much still to do.

The OPCW has an important role to play in helping States Parties build capacity to implement the Convention. The UK is proud to provide a further voluntary contribution of seven hundred thousand pounds this year in support of this aim.

And we call on all States Parties to support the proposed modest budget revision. Whilst recognising the global economic headwinds, we encourage all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions on time and in full. Late payments have a direct and material impact on whether the Technical Secretariat can deliver its planned activities.

Mr Chair,

Despite progress on destruction, serious verification challenges remain.

Unfortunately, a small number of States Parties have broken the rules of the Convention in a blatant and outrageous manner.

Russia's use of Novichok in the United Kingdom in 2018 was horrific. A public

inquiry is on-going into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' tragic death. Three Russian nationals have been charged with chemical weapons offences.

The Russian state has also used chemical weapons within their own borders. Alexey Navalny's poisoning with a nerve agent in 2020 was appalling, as was Russia's subsequent attempted cover-up. I call on Russia to provide substantive answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties under Article IX of the Convention. Russia must account for and give up its chemical weapons programme.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom condemns Russia's unjustifiable and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

We have all heard Russian-linked separatist figures making disturbing remarks in Ukraine about supporting chemical weapons use to support war aims. We have all seen Russia's irresponsible attacks near Ukraine's civil chemical facilities. And we have all experienced Russia's malicious disinformation campaigns about chemical weapons. We have seen this pattern of deceitful behaviour in Syria and now we are seeing it in Ukraine. In this context, Russia's war is not something we can ignore here in the OPCW.

Mr Chair,

Syria is another State Party showing disregard for the rules.

The Syrian authorities have undeniably used chemical weapons against their own people on multiple occasions.

The Syrian authorities have not resolved all the glaring omissions in its initial declaration. Thousands of munitions are missing. Hundreds of tonnes of agent are missing.

In 2021, OPCW States signalled their concern and the Syrian regime's response was to limit its cooperation with the OPCW even further. It is a lamentable situation.

Syria must comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2118. Syria must live up to its obligations. Syria must immediately give up its chemical weapons programme in full.

Mr Chair,

In 1997 the convention came into force with the vow to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

25 years on and much has been achieved.

But we know we still have a long way to go.

And that is why we must continue to offer the OPCW our full support and make sure it has the resources it needs to deliver on the goal of a world free of

chemical weapons.

Thank you Mr Chair.

West Kent flood storage area expansion scheme

The Environment Agency scheme to build a flood embankment and pumping station in Hildenborough has received planning permission from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

The works planned at Hildenborough include a new embankment, pumping station, kiosk and flood defence wall. This will form part of the larger flood protection scheme involving increasing the capacity of the Leigh flood storage area (Leigh FSA) by approximately 25 per cent. Once completed, the overall scheme will reduce the risk of flooding for 1,430 properties.

At a cost of around £21.5m, construction is due to start at the Leigh FSA in spring 2023, and is expected to begin at Hildenborough in 2024. The full scheme is expected to be completed in autumn 2025.

Sally Harvey, Environment Agency area director for Kent, South London and East Sussex, said:

Securing planning approval for the Hildenborough embankment element of the scheme enables us to press ahead with construction works that will improve flood protection to more than 1,400 properties in Tonbridge and Hildenborough.

Tom Tugendhat, MP for Tonbridge and Malling, said:

Expansion of the Leigh flood storage area and the Hildenborough expansion scheme will help defend thousands of residents from flooding. I am pleased this crucial landmark has been passed and construction can start next year.

This project will help protect us from flooding caused on the River Medway and its tributaries, and I look forward to the works starting.

Cllr Robin Betts, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council cabinet member for environment and climate change, said:

Approval of these proposals is a crucial milestone in this major project, enabling work to start and the risk of flooding to homes and businesses to be significantly reduced. This is especially important as we confront the increase in extreme weather we are all experiencing due to climate change.

Tony Hills, Kent County Council deputy cabinet member for the environment, said:

Kent County Council is pleased that the Hildenborough embankment scheme has been approved. Together with the Leigh flood storage area, the two schemes will significantly reduce flood risk in Tonbridge and Hildenborough, helping the county to be resilient to climate change and reduce the disruption flooding causes to lives and livelihoods.

Christian Brodie, South East Local Enterprise Partnership chair, said:

We are delighted that work can begin to improve the Leigh flood storage area and local embankments in Hildenborough. This vitally important investment will help to further reduce the flood-risk for more than 1,400 homes and businesses.

It will also unlock new sites in the future, allowing Tonbridge and Hildenborough to attract new businesses and residents, creating a culture of growth that will benefit the whole local community.

The scheme is being delivered by the Environment Agency in partnership with:

- Kent County Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership

Funding is through the Government's Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid, with contributions from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Kent County Council and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

The investment is part of government plans to invest £5.2 billion in flood defence over the next 6 years.

More information – please visit GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankments-scheme/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankments-scheme>

You can find out more about how the flood storage area works by watching our [YouTube animation](#).

Kyrgyzstan: call for bids for climate change projects in 2022/23

World news story

The British Embassy Bishkek is looking to support a project that will contribute to UK's efforts to support Kyrgyzstan on climate change.



UK Government

Objective

We are looking for production of media content that will raise awareness, educate and inform a variety of audiences about the most critical climate change impacts. This content will also promote positive consumer behaviours that reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and encourage protection of natural resources. The maximum value of this opportunity is £30,000.

Bidding requirement

Following a fair and competitive selection process, a partner will be chosen to deliver and complete activities between January and March 2023.

Bids should address all of the following areas:

1. Confirmation of the ability to scope and facilitate production of media content by the selected media outlet(s) that will raise awareness of audiences and promote positive consumption behaviours that reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and encourage protection of natural resources.
2. Confirm that media outlets will continue climate change coverage once the project has concluded to ensure the narrative continues and that they will look for opportunities to amplify this work.
3. Provide data and metrics on the number of produced publications and reached audience assessed (by the selected media outlet(s) to measure the outcomes and impact.
4. Provide details of who are best placed to deliver this agenda. Selection and financial support decisions should demonstrate how they support Civil Society Organisations that have been chosen.
5. Confirm provision of grants will be undertaken to selected media outlet(s) to support climate change related reporting as per above.
6. Show how your proposal will focus on the following topics: recycling, re-use, minimal waste, climate friendly products, carbon footprints, ease of changing habits etc. and link directly to GHG emission reduction and positive outcomes for people and nature.

Application process

Applicants should complete [project proposal form](#) (ODT, 73.7 KB) and [Activity Based Budget template](#) (ODS, 10.4 KB) in English.

Responses should be sent electronically to the British Embassy in Bishkek at: UKin.KyrgyzRepublic@fcdo.gov.uk with the subject line 'IP: Project bid and name of your organisation'.

Please ensure we have a clear point of contact for your bid (name, email, telephone contact).

Incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

Note that bidding is competitive and only selected projects will receive funding. The Embassy reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without the obligation to inform the affected applicant/s of the grounds of such acceptance or rejection. Due to the volume of bids expected we will not

be able to provide feedback on unsuccessful bids.

Timelines

You must submit a completed application no later than 5pm Kyrgyzstan time, 8 December 2022.

Project proposals must have a clear purpose in line with our objective supported by achievable and measurable outputs (e.g., events and reports) and outcomes (i.e., what the project aims to help address through its activity).

You can provide project costs in US dollars, however you must also provide the equivalent value in pounds sterling.

Please do not produce budgets in Kyrgyz Som.

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[£15 million funding boost for women who are victims of violence](#)

Measures announced include:

- £8.4 million to support victims of violence against women and girls
- targeted funding for the most vulnerable communities
- up to £7.5 million for domestic abuse interventions in healthcare settings
- funding for rapid spiking tests to build police intelligence

£8.4 million is being awarded to funding specialist support services for the most vulnerable. The majority of the money will go to services which are led, designed and delivered by the users and communities they serve, such as services for victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and survivors, and LGBT victims and survivors. Victims will benefit from trauma-informed support which could range from counselling to refuge accommodation.

In addition, in recognition of the important role healthcare workers play in identifying domestic abuse and signposting victims to support, the government is also investing up to £7.5 million of funding for domestic abuse interventions in healthcare settings. This funding will aim to equip more healthcare professionals with the right tools to be able to better identify and respond to domestic abuse, and improve referral pathways for victims to access support services.

The announcement comes on the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, which the Home Secretary marked yesterday (24 November) with a visit to Refuge, to see first-hand the support needed for domestic abuse and sexual assault victims to rebuild their lives.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said:

It is paramount that victims of insidious crimes like domestic abuse and sexual assault receive the support they need to rebuild their lives, and we know that those with other vulnerabilities need dedicated support.

This funding comes in addition to an incredibly wide range of work across the board to ensure victims are supported and criminals are brought to justice.

After consulting the public in 2020 through the Government Call for Evidence on Violence Against Women and Girls, the government committed through the Tackling VAWG Strategy and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan to ensure the provision of tailored victim support. This highlighted the importance of 'by-and-for' services, as well as trauma-informed provision and other victim support which is tailored to specific forms of VAWG.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs said:

We know these services have been woefully underfunded, so I am delighted to see this additional money being made available for 'by-and-for' organisations. Domestic abuse survivors tell us that getting support from their own community is the most effective way to help them recover and rebuild their lives.

As part of its commitment to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls, the Home Office is also granting an additional £70,000 of funding for rapid forensic testing of samples from reported incidents of drink and needle spiking.

This is part of our support for the National Police Chiefs' Council's work to determine the nature and scale of spiking. The funding will cover testing of additional urine samples taken by the police, to allow us to build on our understanding of spiking, including improving geographical data on what substances are used and where.

These are some of the many measures the government has taken to support victims, bring perpetrators to justice and protect women and girls across the country. Last month the [‘Enough’ campaign](#) to tackle violence against women and girls, was launched. This gives bystanders safe ways to intervene if they witness an incident of violence against women and girls, ranging from sexual harassment on the street, public transport or at work, to unwanted touching, sharing intimate images of someone without their consent and coercive control in a relationship.

Changes to key stage 2 assessment dates in 2023

An additional bank holiday in honour of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III will take place on Monday 8 May 2023. As this date had previously been announced as the first day of the 2023 key stage 2 (KS2) test week in England, a change to the KS2 test schedule next year will be necessary.

Ministers have considered the situation carefully and have decided that KS2 tests will take place in the same week with tests following the usual order but each taking place one day later than originally planned. As such, the new schedule will be:

- Tuesday 9 May: English grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) papers 1 (questions) and 2 (spelling)
- Wednesday 10 May: English reading paper
- Thursday 11 May: mathematics papers 1 (arithmetic) and 2 (reasoning)
- Friday 12 May: mathematics paper 3 (reasoning)

The KS2 timetable variation (TTV) window for each assessment will also move back one day, in accordance with this change.

There will be no changes to arrangements for our other assessments, including KS2 teacher assessments, key stage 1 tests and teacher assessments, the phonics screening check and the multiplication tables check. Dates and deadlines for these assessments remain as previously announced.

In making their decision, ministers have considered the views of schools and stakeholders including trade unions and have sought to minimise disruption to schools arising from the change in plans.

We are aware that schools may have booked events or activities for their year 6 pupils on Friday 12 May. Where possible, schools should look to rearrange or delay the start of any such events or activities to accommodate mathematics paper 3.

Where it is not possible to change plans in this way then, exceptionally for

2023, we will approve applications for TTVs arising from booked residentials, trips or similar events scheduled for Friday 12 May only. Schools will need to reschedule the date of the test (mathematics paper 3) for the affected pupils to one of the following five school days.

Note that we will not approve TTVs for any such events that are scheduled on other test days, in line with existing rules. Other TTV rules will continue to apply as normal for Friday 12 May, including in relation to pupil absence or attendance at alternative provision.

Our guidance, including the KS2 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements, will be updated to reflect these decisions, including any changes to other aspects of test administration such as arrangements for the collection of test papers. We are aiming to keep changes as minimal as possible. We will inform schools via the [Assessment Updates](#) when the revised documentation is available.

Schools with urgent queries can contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or by email at assessments@education.gov.uk