

Press release: New £10 million fund to restore peatland

A £10 million grant scheme to restore England's iconic peatlands has been launched by the Government today.

Peatlands cover 11 per cent of England's landscape and provide a fantastic habitat for a wide range of birds such as the merlin, dunlin and golden plover.

They also provide 70 per cent of our drinking water and reduce greenhouse gases by locking away at least 3.2 billion tonnes of CO₂.

The £10 million will be available for wildlife trust and charity projects to re-wet mosses, bring back missing plants and restore a thriving habitat to our peatlands across the country. This is in addition to the £4 million Defra has already allocated to existing Natural England peatland restoration schemes in England.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Peatlands are an iconic aspect of the English landscape which are not only a haven for wildlife but also provide us with clean water and help reduce greenhouse emissions.

This funding will help restore thousands of hectares of this precious habitat to its natural state and is a key part of our ambition to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than we found it.

Natural England Chairman Andrew Sells said:

Peatlands are one of the most important resources in England for wildlife and people. They are our answer to tropical rainforests, storing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carbon a year, providing clean drinking water, beautiful landscapes and valuable wildlife habitats, as well as reducing the risk of flooding.

This investment will support practical restoration initiatives such as rewetting and seeding with Sphagnum mosses, an essential ingredient in restoring our peatlands for future generations.

In addition to this, plants and animals unique to this habitat, including the white-faced darter dragonfly and round-leaved sundew,

will be better protected for years to come.

The funding will be available for projects that restore upland and lowland peatlands to their natural state, increasing their capacity to prevent carbon entering the atmosphere, reduce flood risk by slowing the flow of rain water and create habitats for vulnerable wildlife.

The scheme will open in May and funding will target sites with the greatest potential for greenhouse gas reduction. Projects that deliver better value for money and maximise environmental benefits will be favoured for funding.

Funding will be available for three years from April 2018 as part of Defra's £100 million of capital funding for direct investment in projects that support the natural environment. More details, including how to bid for grants, will be provided when the scheme opens for bids.

Speech: "Al Shabaab remains a vicious threat to security in Somalia, and indeed to the region."

Thank you Madam President for convening this session and for maintaining the Security Council's focus on preventing conflict in Africa.

I also thank Kairat for his comprehensive briefing, as Chair of the Committee, and for his tireless efforts to advance the work of the Committee since he took on the role.

And as he has reminded us, Al Shabaab remains a vicious threat to security in Somalia, and indeed to the region.

The sanctions regime remains in place to reduce that threat from Al Shabaab and to tackle threats to peace and security.

It does so firstly through the arms embargo. The regime makes it harder for illicit weapons to flow into Somalia, and it supports the Federal Government of Somalia to establish robust arms and ammunition management, accountability and transparency. These are key elements in wider security sector reform, which is both essential and urgent.

To help make progress on this vital issue, in May the United Kingdom will host the London Somalia Conference, co-chaired with the Secretary-General and the Federal Government of Somalia. We will accelerate progress on security and agree the new international partnership needed to keep Somalia on track towards increased peace and prosperity by 2020. Central to this is continuing

the battle against Al Shabaab.

But as several Security Council members said during the peacekeeping debate convened by the United States Presidency last week, we cannot defeat armed groups through military means alone. The political progress made by Somalia in 2017 has laid the essential foundations for peace, stability and growth which will be so vital to ensuring that Al Shabaab's support is choked off at the political and economic level, as well as through the restrictions of the sanctions regime which denies Al Shabaab its revenue streams.

This sanctions regime cuts off Al Shabaab's funding, it preserves Somalia's natural resources for the benefit of its people and Somalia's economic empowerment, it tackles spoilers to Somalia's political progress, and it helps to support the development of Somalia's security forces. In this way this regime supports the Federal Government of Somalia's fight against Al Shabaab, alongside the bravery and sacrifice of the troops of AMISOM.

And now more than ever Somalia needs our continued support. The consequences of the drought in Somalia are far reaching and we must all take action now to address the humanitarian crisis, and preserve the political and security gains that have been made since 2012.

Turning to Eritrea, Madam President, I would like to commend the Chair for his great efforts, and those of his team for their work to engage with the Government of Eritrea since assuming the role.

The UK continues to urge the Government of Eritrea to comply with its international obligations, including compliance with the Chapter VII resolutions of this Council. We welcome the increased engagement by Eritrea with UN human rights mechanisms. And we continue to urge Eritrea to engage with the Committee, its Monitoring Group and this Council.

We should also recall that some serious outstanding issues remain. Firstly, the ongoing mediation by Qatar is vital to ensure that all Djiboutian combatants missing as a result of the 2008 conflict, including the bodies of any who have died, are accounted for, and their families given all the information available.

And secondly, the ongoing refusal by the Government of Eritrea to cooperate with the Monitoring Group, including by allowing them to visit Eritrea, means that we have no way of verifying the Group's lack of evidence for Eritrea's support for Al Shabaab, and of understanding the concerns about support for other regional armed groups.

We hope that by the time of the review of the sanctions on Eritrea, due following the mid-term report of the Monitoring Group, the Council will have some positive momentum to reflect on. To that end, we encourage Eritrea to take the opportunity for engagement, which this Council is once again offering.

Thank you Madam President.

News story: Joint statement: India-UK Defence Partnership

Minister of Defence Shri Arun Jaitley and Secretary of State for Defence Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon MP set out a shared vision for the India-UK Defence Partnership.

At the invitation of Minister of Defence Shri Arun Jaitley, the Secretary of State for Defence Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon MP visited India for the India-UK Strategic Defence Dialogue during 11-14 April 2017. The visit reaffirmed and consolidated UK-India defence cooperation in the framework of the Defence and International Security Partnership, agreed in November 2015, and the subsequent Joint Statement between the governments of India and the UK in November 2016.

This enduring defence partnership will encompass not only cooperation in defence industry but also stronger military to military engagement, including training and advanced joint exercises.

The renewed engagement will place capability and technology development at its core and seek to harness the complementary strengths of both nations in defence manufacturing and use the combined strengths of their respective private and public sectors to develop defence solutions for use in both home and shared export markets.

The Defence Ministers will also continue to consult and co-ordinate policies across a range of global security challenges, especially those intended to eliminate the scourge of international terrorism, in pursuit of their shared goal of a more secure world.

An Enhanced Defence Partnership

Based on the Defence and International Security Partnership (DISP) and building on existing Defence Consultative Group (DCG) mechanisms, both sides will explore additional areas for institutional engagement.

The Ministers agreed to further strengthen their naval and maritime interactions, including enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) through the bilateral technical agreement to exchange information to track terrorist and pirate vessels, a key deliverable of the DISP. The two Ministers also agreed to further develop cooperation between the UK Hydrographic Office and the Indian Navy Hydrographic Office.

India and the UK will endeavour to build a range of Capability Partnerships focussing on varied aspects of military effectiveness such as specialised training interactions and exchange of best practices in the following areas: Counter Terrorism (CT), Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (CIED), Air

Force Training, Air Total Safety, Aircraft Carriers, Maritime Safety, Shipbuilding and UN Peacekeeping. Efforts are already underway with exchanges of subject matter experts to discuss air safety collaboration and future CT requirements. The Ministers tasked the relevant Executive Steering Groups (ESGs) to finalise proposals for consideration at the next DCG meeting scheduled later this year. As India and UK continue to transform and modernise their defence structures with a shared desire to maximise the efficiencies and operational benefits of establishing joint force structures, the two Ministers agreed to sharing relevant experience in this domain.

Defence Industry

Whilst acknowledging the progress being made, the two Ministers recognised the potential for further cooperation in defence manufacturing between UK and Indian companies under the 'Make in India' framework.

Minister Jaitley welcomed the UK's interest in manufacturing in India as evidenced through recent announcements including the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Bharat Dynamics Ltd and Thales UK on technology transfer opportunities for missile systems and efforts to develop an Advanced Hawk jet trainer jointly by the BAE Systems and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

To further encourage and facilitate cooperation between UK and Indian companies, the two Ministers agreed to extend the current Defence Equipment Cooperation MOU and work towards early completion of an expanded MOU that will provide a platform for UK and Indian industries to collaborate on and support transfer of technology on projects in areas of mutual interest.

The two Ministers welcomed measures to ensure life cycle support and sustenance of UK-origin defence platforms used by India, which may include setting up joint ventures and other collaborative arrangements.

The UK and India will encourage interactions between the Indian Army Design Bureau and Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S)/Army Capability Branch through their Defence Equipment Sub-Group.

The UK and India will explore establishing a secure communications method in order to share classified material. The two countries will also consider upgrading their bilateral General Security Arrangement.

Science and Technology

The two Ministers recognised the need for stronger R&D cooperation, including access to defence R&D training, to enable new and vibrant technology partnerships across the defence domain.

They noted recent progress made on Defence Science and Technology collaboration with the signing of the Phase 2 follow-on research Collaborative Project agreement on Human Sciences, signed at Aero India 2017.

Conclusion

The above commitments will better enable the UK and India to meet the evolving threats and challenges that face democracies in the 21st century. Both countries recognised their shared perspectives on the regional and international security situation and agreed to maintain their close interaction in this regard.

Secretary of State for Defence Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon MP thanked Minister of Defence Shri Arun Jaitley for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation and looked forward to a return visit by the Minister of Defence to the UK.

Speech: “Fear of the worst outcome should not restrain us from pursuing the best, which is a peaceful, just and stable Haiti.”

The United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2350 today.

It is a good demonstration of how the UN should be sustaining peace through selecting the right tools at the right time for the right ends. As we argued on Tuesday, the Haiti of today is not the Haiti of 2004. It is a country on a trajectory towards greater stability. Peacekeeping troops performing a stabilisation role are no longer the right tool in Haiti. This resolution brings MINUSTAH to a close, and I welcome that. And we thank all of the troops, and all of the troop-contributing countries, for their service to MINUSTAH.

The United Nations holds other tools that are required for today’s Haiti. UN police units are still needed to uphold the security achieved to date – though ensuring that Haiti’s national police are able to perform this role themselves must now be the UN’s primary focus. Support for Haiti’s security capacities will not, alone, sustain peace in the country. As history has told us time and time again, it is the rule of law and the protection of human rights – not the capacity to use force – that delivers long-term stability. It is welcome that this resolution launches a new peace operation, MINUJUSTH, with sufficient mandate and authorisation to work towards these very ends.

Ultimately, however, the new mission has one overarching objective, which should be to work tirelessly to establish the conditions for its own redundancy. MINUJUSTH should be working towards a careful exit through the phased handover of responsibilities to the Haitian government and greater reliance on the tools of the UN country team. I’m glad that an exit plan will

be developed from the very start of its deployment.

Haiti is still fragile. It needs the UN's support, through a new peace operation in the short-term and the use of other UN tools soon after that. We can never have an absolute guarantee of continued stability in any context. The experience of peacekeeping withdraws in Haiti's recent past loom large. But fear of the worst outcome should not restrain us from pursuing the best, which is a peaceful, just and stable Haiti standing proudly on her own two feet.

Thank you.

Speech: "The Great Lakes region continues to face many challenges."

Thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting, and also for maintaining this Council's focus on conflict prevention in Africa. I join others in thanking Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing. But also for the critical role that you play in making preventative diplomacy active. And also for the role that you play in including women in peace processes as Sweden and others have said.

Said, as you and others have made clear today, the Great Lakes region continues to face many challenges.

In response, it's clear that a structured approach to regional stability is needed. We support work to reform and reinvigorate the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It needs active engagement from its members and guarantors to have high impact. And that impact, as we've heard, is vital.

Today I personally want to focus on two countries in the region; the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. As we heard last month, the situation in DRC remains deeply troubling. I pay tribute to CENCO for their mediation efforts. But it is up to the government and the opposition to deliver the 31st of December Agreement in letter and in spirit, with purposeful speed.

What we've actually seen is stalling, and obfuscation, particularly by the government. This is not only hindering implementation of the agreement, but it is distracting attention from the real prize that is at stake; peaceful and credible elections to take place this year, enabling the first democratic transition of power in the country's history.

Sadly, the obstacles to this goal go beyond inertia. The appointment of a new Prime Minister by President Kabila last week was an active step, and I agree with France it is a worrying one. It went against both the spirit and the

letter of the Agreement. This appointment will not help to restore the broad national consensus that lies at the heart of the Agreement.

Until that consensus is built, the uncertainty of DRC's politics risks being mirrored in the security situation, which continues to deteriorate. We are particularly concerned about the increase in violence and reports of atrocities in the Kasai region. This underlines the importance of MINUSCO, and the joint human rights office, investigating violations and abuses of human rights and international law. Those who commit human rights violations will be held to account.

We are also concerned about the ongoing threat from armed groups, including the resurgence of the M23 in Eastern DRC and reiterate the need for dialogue, not just a military effort, in order to tackle armed groups. The resumption of talks between the Government of DRC and the M23 is vital, as is the implementation of the Nairobi declarations and repatriation of M23 and FLDR rebels. We support the Special Envoy in his efforts to make progress on these issues.

The presence of SPLA-IO elements in Eastern DRC is destabilising. We welcome efforts by SRSR Sidikou, as well as the SRSR, to find a solution and their engagement with regional partners. We need to find a regional solution urgently to avoid exacerbating tensions in fragile local communities. We ask that the Secretariat keep the Council updated.

Turning to the concerning situation in Burundi; the regime claims that normality is returning to the country. It is not. A climate of fear persists as disappearances, arbitrary arrests and killings continue almost daily. The government still shows no sign of acting in the interests of its people, and seems to be concerned only with clinging on to power. Moves by President Nkurunziza to enable him to remain in power for a fourth term, and possibly beyond, risk bringing the country to the brink once again. The government's refusal to engage with the international community is especially worrying. And some of the language and activity of the Imbonerakure, as others have said earlier in this session, is truly horrific.

Here, in this open session, I call on the government of Burundi to participate fully in the talks being led by former-President Mkapa. These talks, which must be open and sincere as France has said, remain the best hope of resolving the crisis peacefully. We urge the government to enable implementation of resolution 2303, that this Council passed, and to allow the OHCHR to conduct its work without hindrance and to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry, which was mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council. I agree with Egypt and Sweden that the Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in all of this.

Madam President,

We know how difficult it is to bring peace and stability to a country or a region after conflict. But we also know that it can be done, and that there is nothing inevitable about the future. The governments of DRC and Burundi can step back from their current course, they can take decisions in the

interests of their people, and they can avoid bloodshed and instability in this very fragile region.

It is the duty of all countries in this Council to support that course and to do all we can to implement our own resolutions. Given the significance that Ethiopia has already talked about in terms of the wider strategic posture of this region, it is really important that we all do our best right now.

Thank you.