

UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the enhanced interactive dialogue on the Democratic Republic of Congo

World news story

The UK delivered this statement during the enhanced interactive dialogue on the Democratic Republic of Congo.



The United Kingdom thanks the High Commissioner and the Team of Independent Experts for this update.

We welcome President Tshisekedi's ongoing commitment to strengthening democracy and tackling insecurity; however, we remain deeply concerned by the ongoing human rights situation, and by continued reports of human rights violations and abuses, including acts of sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and extrajudicial killings. We are especially concerned about the significant risk to civilians posed by the ongoing activities of armed groups in eastern DRC, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and CODECO, who are threatening the safety and livelihoods of people living in these areas. They must be held accountable.

We strongly encourage DRC to re-double its efforts to improve the human rights situation. There needs to be a clear, time-limited exit strategy from the state of siege, improved coordination with partners to protect civilians, and a commitment to protecting political space while building institutional support and accountability for human rights.

We will continue to support the President's focus on stability, and efforts to build a lasting peace, and call on his government to do so while fully respecting the rights and freedoms of all Congolese people, particularly over the forthcoming electoral period.

High Commissioner,

How can the international community help to ensure the protection of civilians in Ituri and North Kivu, in response to the growing violence and instability in these regions?

Thank you.

Published 29 March 2022

[Accessible transport: reference wheelchair report](#)

The government is committed to ensuring disabled passengers have the same access to transport as everyone else, with assistance if physical infrastructure remains a barrier. We want disabled people to be able to travel confidently, easily and without extra cost.

Today (29 March 2022), the government is taking an important step to help fulfil its commitment in the [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#) to review its use of the reference wheelchair standard.

The ISO reference wheelchair standard is the reference point for a range of vehicle and infrastructure designs used across the transport sector and referred to directly and indirectly in accessibility standards for public transport vehicles and infrastructure.

In 2021, the government commissioned an assessment of the prevalence, dimensions, and uses of wheeled mobility-aids in the United Kingdom in relation to the use of the reference wheelchair standard on land-based transport modes.

The findings of this assessment estimate that the [current reference wheelchair standard accommodates 60% of wheelchairs and 54% of wheeled mobility aids](#).

However, this does not necessarily mean that the current standards are inadequate and there will be trade-offs between making transport more inclusive for all passengers by setting more stringent standards that accommodate larger wheelchairs and the practicalities for transport operators to accommodate larger and more diverse mobility aids within conventionally sized public transport vehicles.

However, these findings will be used to help form the broader evidence base to determine the design of future vehicles and transport infrastructure to meet mobility aid users' needs.

In particular, we intend to use these findings to inform the forthcoming review of the [Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000](#), which we expect to conclude by the end of 2023.

[The Chief Inspector holds the second of his new Migration Forums which focused on Strategic Migration Partnerships](#)

News story

The new forum joins the other ICIBI stakeholder groups that advise on specific areas such as maritime, aviation, adults at risk, and refugee and asylum issues.



Following the first Migration Forum which focussed on the education sector, the Chief Inspector held a second forum on 10 March with representatives from each of the UK Strategic Migration Partnerships. The forum provided an opportunity for the Chief Inspector to hear first-hand about their experience of the immigration system.

Following the forum the Chief Inspector said,

I am really grateful to those who attended the first meeting of this forum and provided helpful contributions to the discussions. The group have assisted me in understanding the challenges faced in supporting refugee resettlement and related migration topics and this has informed and influenced my future inspection programme.

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[Eryl Besse appointed as new Wales EHRC Commissioner](#)

Press release

Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, has appointed Eryl Besse as the Equality and Human Rights Commission's new Welsh Commissioner.



- Minister for Women and Equalities appoints Eryl Besse as the EHRC's Wales Commissioner
- Wales Commissioner will chair the Commission's Wales committee, forge good relationships with the Welsh government and develop knowledge of the equalities landscape specific to Wales
- Besse was previously a Senior Adviser to the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative on UK Victims of Qadhafi sponsored IRA Terrorism and a member of the Board of the Charity Commission.

Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, has today (Tuesday 29 March) appointed Eryl Besse as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)'s new Welsh Commissioner.

The appointment further boosts the skills and knowledge of the EHRC board

following the appointment of Akua Reindorf in December.

Besse is a native Welsh speaker. She recently worked as Senior Adviser to the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative on UK Victims of Qadhafi sponsored IRA Terrorism. Prior to this, Besse was a Board member (2013 to 2018) and Deputy Chairman (2016 to 2018) of the Charity Commission for England and Wales; during her term, she was the Board member for Wales and acted as an ambassador for the Charity Commission in Wales. Besse is a lawyer by training (1981 to 2012) and was a Partner at both Linklaters and Debevoise & Plimpton.

Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, said:

"I'm delighted that Eryl has accepted this important role, her expertise and passion will be a huge asset to the EHRC and Welsh equality."

The role of Wales Commissioner includes liaising between the EHRC and the Welsh government on all aspects of the Commission's work.

The appointment follows a full public recruitment process that was carried out in line with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. Besse will serve as a Commissioner for a term of 4 years.

Further Information

The appointment of the EHRC's Wales Commissioner is made with the consent of Welsh ministers.

The role of a Commissioner includes supporting the Chair by forging good relationships with the private, public and voluntary sectors, enabling a wide range of views to be taken into account in Board decisions. In addition, in partnership with the Chief Executive, the Chair and Commissioners set the overall direction, policy and plans of the EHRC.

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[Thousands of families can receive help with Easter childcare costs](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is reminding working parents in the UK to not miss out on the opportunity to get up to £2,000 a year to pay for regulated childcare, including holiday clubs and other out-of-school activities, during the Easter holidays.

Tax-Free Childcare provides thousands of eligible working families with up to £500 every three months (or £1,000 if their child is disabled) towards the

cost of holiday clubs, before and after-school clubs, childminders and nurseries, and other approved childcare schemes.

For every £8 deposited into a Tax-Free Childcare online account, families will receive an additional £2 in government top-up, and it is available for children aged up to 11, or 17 if the child has a disability.

About 328,000 working families used Tax-Free Childcare across the UK in December 2021, receiving a share of £34 million in government top-up payments towards their childcare costs.

This scheme can help working families including the self-employed and is one of many ways the government is supporting households to reduce their costs and keep more of what they earn to help pay for other bills.

Helen Whately, HM Treasury's Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, said:

There are lots of brilliant holiday clubs and childcare providers to help working parents during the Easter holidays, and Tax-Free Childcare is a great offer that can help cut the childcare bills.

I urge families across the UK to take advantage of this support and put extra pounds in their pocket – sign up now and save on your childcare costs.

By depositing money into their accounts, families can benefit from the 20% top-up and use the money to pay for childcare costs when they need it. Accounts can be opened at any time of the year and can be used straight away.

For example, if parents and carers have school-aged children and use holiday clubs during school holidays, they could deposit money into their accounts throughout the year. This means they could spread the cost of childcare while also benefitting from the 20% government top-up. Any unused money that is deposited can be simply withdrawn at any time.

Tax-Free Childcare is also available for pre-school aged children attending nurseries, childminders, or other childcare providers. Families with younger children will often have higher childcare costs than families with older children, so the tax-free savings can really make a difference.

Childcare providers can also sign up for a [childcare provider account via GOV.UK](#) to receive payments from parents and carers via the scheme.

For more information about [Tax-Free Childcare](#).

For more information about [government childcare offers](#).

Parents and carers could be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare if they:

- have a child or children aged up to 11. They stop being eligible on 1 September after their 11th birthday. If their child has a disability,

they may get up to £4,000 a year until they are 17

- earn, or expect to earn, at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week, on average
- each earn under £100,000 per annum
- do not receive tax credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers

Latest [Tax-Free Childcare statistics](#) were released on 16 February 2022. Data is available up to December 2021.

HMRC has produced a refreshed [Tax-Free Childcare guide](#) for parents, which explains the reasons and benefits for signing up to the scheme.

Each eligible child requires their own Tax-Free Childcare account. If families have more than one eligible child, they will need to register an account for each child. The 20% government top-up is then applied to deposits made for each child, not household.

Account holders must confirm their details are up to date every 3 months to continue receiving the government top-up.