

PM meeting with President of Finland: 15 March 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosted the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, at Downing Street today.



The Prime Minister hosted the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, at Downing Street today to discuss the ruthless attack by Russia on innocent Ukrainian people.

Both leaders discussed the concerning developments in Ukraine, and said Putin's invasion had dramatically changed the landscape of European security.

The Prime Minister reiterated that sovereign countries should be able to choose their own future, without fear or threat from Russia.

He also set out the UK's longstanding and steadfast support of Finland and its security, and said he looked forward to deepening defence and cultural ties between our two nations.

The leaders agreed to stay in close touch in coming weeks.

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UK aid helps to reduce illegal wildlife trade in green corridor

between Guatemala and Mexico

The British Ambassador to Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, visited Peten on 8-10 March to check on progress of a UK funded project to tackle illegal wildlife trade in the Guatemala-Mexico border.

A [three-year project \(2020-2023\)](#) is addressing increased poaching of valuable hardwood species and fauna, which is affecting Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve (Peten), the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve and Balamku State Reserve in Mexico (Campeche).

Official reports show that it has been 22 months without the presence of illegal loggers in the border area. Additionally, 11 people have been arrested linked to activities damaging the environment in the area, and some goods used by traffickers were seized.

The project is also helping more than 100 people to develop sustainable livelihoods for communities in the Carmelita road. It consists of entrepreneurship that foster the production of chicken, beekeeping, ecologic restoration of landscapes and sustainable exploitation of xate.

Ambassador Whittingham visited the San Miguel La Palotada community, one of the focus areas where activities are carried out with communities benefiting from economic alternative projects for the population that is vulnerable and affected by wildlife trafficking.

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is implementing the project in collaboration with Asociación Balam, ACOFOP, CECON/USAC, Foro de Justicia Ambiental de Petén, FUNDAECO, CONAP and the Public Prosecutor's Office in Guatemala; and ProNatura Península Yucatán, CONANP, and SEMABICC in Mexico.

The UK is committed to protecting endangered animals and plants from poaching and illegal trade around the world. The Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (IWTCF) provides funding for practical projects around the world that help eradicate illegal wildlife trade and, in doing so, reduce poverty.

Joint Expeditionary Force Leaders' statement: 15 March 2022

We, the Leaders of the United Kingdom, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, united through our membership of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), met today to reaffirm our commitment to the restoration of peace and security in Europe in light of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression. We condemn in the

strongest possible terms Putin's brutal attack against Ukraine, its territorial integrity and people. This is a clear violation of the sovereignty, freedom and independence of a democratic European country and a flagrant breach of Russia's obligations under international law. We call upon Russia to implement and uphold an immediate ceasefire to halt the developing humanitarian crisis and allow rapid and unimpeded access for Ukraine's civilian population to food, water and medical aid. Russia must respect international humanitarian law. We support the investigations of the International Criminal Court into alleged war crimes. The world will hold Russia to account for its actions. Putin must fail. We are working in lockstep with Allies and international partners to impose unprecedented sanctions on Putin's regime in response to its illegal invasion, and to ensure that Belarus is also held to account for its involvement. We call on Putin to de-escalate, withdraw his forces and return Ukraine to its internationally recognised boundaries.

We are steadfast in our commitment to support Ukraine in the face of this unconscionable attack and pay tribute to the courage and resolve of the Ukrainian people, led by President Zelenskyy. JEF nations remain committed to supporting Ukraine at pace with military aid to ensure Ukraine is best able to defend itself. Directly, and through multilateral organisations, we are providing significant economic and humanitarian support in response to the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the region, to ensure that Ukrainians have access to basic necessities and medical supplies. Special attention must be paid to the security of women and girls who represent a majority of those fleeing the war. We welcome the international unity shown at the UN General Assembly and invite the international community to sustain and coordinate the political, humanitarian, and economic support that is so vital for a free and independent Ukraine.

Putin's actions are fundamentally challenging the security architecture of the Euro-Atlantic area. We need to ensure that such actions remain unacceptable and that no other nations can fall victim to attempts of violent expansionism. All sovereign nations have the right to choose their own security arrangements without the threat of external aggression. To that end, as a like-minded group of nations willing to demonstrate resolve, we will ensure that JEF continues to play a credible role in contributing to defence and deterrence in the region, keeping our countries and our continent safe. We commit to an enhanced programme of integrated JEF exercises and activities at sea, on land and in the air in the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea region. These activities, already being developed, demonstrate our solidarity, capability and resolve. We will work in complementarity to NATO and the EU to ensure that Russia cannot continue to threaten European security, including through recalibrating our approach to Russia, reducing our reliance on Russian hydrocarbons, taking part in forward defence in conjunction with our Allies, reinforcing our cooperation within and beyond the JEF, and playing an active part in restoring a safer and more peaceful world.

Quint statement on the eleventh anniversary of the Syrian uprising

A joint statement by France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America ('Quint'):

Today marks 11 years since the Syrian people courageously and peacefully took to the streets to demand freedom, political reform, and a government that respects and upholds human rights. The Assad regime met those demands with a brutal assault that continues today against the Syrian people. After 11 years of death and suffering, it is past time for the regime and its enablers, including Russia and Iran, to halt their ruthless attack on the Syrian people. The coincidence of this year's anniversary with the appalling Russian aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a breach of exceptional gravity to international law and the UN Charter, highlights Russia's brutal and destructive behavior in both conflicts. After more than a decade of conflict, the Syrian economic and humanitarian situation is bleak and millions of Syrian refugees hosted generously by Syria's neighbors, as well as those internally displaced, cannot yet return home in line with UN standards, and without fear of violence, arbitrary arrest, and torture. Continued conflict has also led to space for terrorists, particularly Daesh (ISIS), to exploit. Preventing Daesh's resurgence remains a priority.

We continue to support the UN-facilitated, Syrian-led process outlined within UN Security Council Resolution 2254. We will continue to call for a nationwide ceasefire, respect for international humanitarian law, and unhindered aid access through all modalities, including through the continued authorization of the cross-border mechanism by the UN Security Council. We additionally urge the immediate release of those arbitrarily detained and clarification of the fate and whereabouts of those who remain missing. We do not support efforts to normalize relations with the Assad regime and will not normalize relations ourselves, nor lift sanctions or fund reconstruction until there is irreversible progress towards a political solution. We encourage all parties, especially the Syrian regime, to participate in the March 21 meeting of the Constitutional Committee in good faith and call for the Committee to deliver on its mandate.

Impunity remains unacceptable. We will therefore continue to actively promote accountability, including through support to the Commission of Inquiry, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This also includes supporting organizations, many of which are Syrian-led, in collecting evidence and documenting the atrocities and serious violations of international law committed in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons. The OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team's (IIT) efforts continue to attribute

responsibility for the abhorrent use of chemical weapons in Syria. Despite Syria's lack of cooperation, the IIT has already confirmed the responsibility of the Assad regime in multiple chemical weapons attacks on the Syrian people. Those responsible for this disregard for the global norm against the use of chemical weapons must be held to account.

We welcome ongoing efforts by national courts to investigate and prosecute crimes within their jurisdiction committed in Syria and encourage increased support for these prosecutions. As their harrowing testimonies show, justice for victims and their families is long overdue. Pursuing accountability and justice is essential to building confidence in the political process called for in UNSCR 2254 and securing the stable, just, and enduring peace that Syrians need and deserve.

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