

Belarus: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office summons Belarusian ambassador

Press release

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office has summoned the Belarusian ambassador, Maxim Yermalovich, to protest Belarus' assistance to Russia with its military invasion of Ukraine.



Minister for Europe and North America, James Cleverly said:

The UK condemns the role Belarus is playing in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Belarus must stop supporting Russia's illegal and unprovoked actions.

We must be united against Russian aggression.

At today's summons, Minister for Europe James Cleverly reaffirmed the UK's unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Minister Cleverly made clear that the military incursion into Ukraine would come at a severe cost to Russia's economy, and pointed to the extensive and severe package of coordinated sanctions announced by the UK and its allies yesterday. The UK's sanctions will also apply to those Belarusian individuals, entities and organisations who have aided and abetted this reckless aggression.

Belarus needs to desist from its support to Russia and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty in line with its international obligations.

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UK government to assess whether Online Sales Tax could address tax imbalance reported by retail sector

- As committed to at Autumn Budget, the UK government has published a consultation to explore arguments for and against an Online Sales Tax (OST)
- Consultation follows concerns reported by businesses of a potential tax imbalance between in-store retailers and online
- • Whilst no decisions have been made on whether to go ahead with an Online Sales Tax, consultation will look at potential designs and impacts on consumers and businesses of implementing such a tax.

The consultation was committed to at Autumn Budget as part of the government's conclusion to its review of business rates, where stakeholders, including some of the UK's most well-known high street businesses, called for an Online Sales Tax to help rebalance the tax system through funding a reduction in business rates for the retail sector. Given the significant changes in the retail market and shift online, it is right that the government reassesses the taxation of this sector, although no decision have been made yet as whether to implement such a tax.

Today the government has delivered on that commitment.

Lucy Frazer, Financial Secretary to the Treasury said:

We want to see thriving high streets and a fair economy as we move forward from the pandemic, which is why our business rates review cut the burden by £7 billion for businesses, and committed to look at an Online Sales Tax – given the imbalance identified by some between online and in-store retailers

Whilst we've made no decision on whether to introduce such a tax, it's right that, given the growing consumer trend to shop online, we work with stakeholders to assess the appropriate taxation of the retail sector.

As part of the three-month consultation stakeholders will be asked for their views on the challenges on the design of an Online Sales Tax, including which

products and services would be in scope and whether it would be a flat-fee tax based on the number of transactions or deliveries, or a revenue-based tax.

The consultation delves into what effect an Online Sales Tax would have on consumers and businesses alike, which will also be a key determining factor in policy decisions.

The UK government has supported retailers over the entirety of the pandemic through our economic support plan worth around £400 billion, including through tax cuts such as business rates and VAT relief, funding via business grants and loans, and wage support through our world-leading furlough scheme.

The Autumn Business Rates Review further supported the high street, reducing the rates burden by over £7 billion, and making the system fairer, including through more frequent revaluations, freezing the multiplier and cutting business rates in half for the retail, hospitality and leisure sector for 2022-23.

Further information

- The consultation will run from 25 February to 20 May 2022
- The government recognises that an array of business models operate in UK retail, which is a mark of the vibrant and innovative sector. It also recognises the value of lively high streets and town centres to the local communities as places to live, work, and visit.
- Whilst no decisions have been made yet as to whether to proceed, if implemented, revenue from such a tax would be used to fund reductions in business rates for retailers with properties in England and fund the block grants of the devolved administrations in the usual way.
- Should the government proceed with an Online Sales Tax, the precise nature of associated business rate reductions will be considered at a later date.
- This is a complex issue, and therefore it is right that the government looks in detail at the policy options before making a decision.
- [Read the online sales consultation](#)
- [Read the business rates review final report](#)

Embajadas en Argentina expresan solidaridad con Ucrania

Comunicado de las embajadas de la Unión Europea y sus estados miembros presentes en Argentina (Alemania, Austria, Bélgica, Bulgaria, República Checa, Croacia, Dinamarca, Eslovenia, Eslovaquia, España, Finlandia, Francia, Grecia, Hungría, Irlanda, Italia, Países Bajos, Polonia, Portugal, Rumania y Suecia), y de las embajadas de Australia, Canadá, Estados Unidos, Japón y Reino Unido.

Hoy, día 24 de febrero de 2022, en el mismo día en el que las tropas de la Federación Rusa han lanzado una invasión no provocada de Ucrania, nos hemos reunido, a iniciativa de la Delegación de la Unión Europea (UE) en Argentina, los embajadores o encargados de las embajadas de los 21 estados miembros de la UE presentes en Argentina*, el embajador de la Unión Europea y los de Ucrania, Australia, Canadá, Estados Unidos, Japón y el Reino Unido. El objetivo de la reunión ha sido analizar la situación, escuchar de primera mano las últimas informaciones que nos proporcionó el encargado de negocios ucraniano y expresar nuestra total solidaridad con el pueblo ucraniano.

Hemos condenado con la máxima firmeza la invasión no provocada de Ucrania por parte de las fuerzas armadas de la Federación de Rusia, y hemos reiterado nuestro apoyo inquebrantable y nuestra adhesión a la independencia y la soberanía de Ucrania dentro de sus fronteras internacionalmente reconocidas. Hemos además coincidido en la necesidad de que el presidente Putin ponga fin a las operaciones militares rusas de forma inmediata y retire incondicionalmente todas las fuerzas militares del conjunto del territorio de Ucrania. Nuestros países han trabajado juntos para presentar una serie coordinada de sanciones internacionales con la capacidad de incrementarse en respuesta a nuevas acciones y agresiones rusas.

Consideramos que todos los países con voluntad democrática deben exigir a Rusia el cese de esta agresión, que supone una violación flagrante del derecho internacional y de los derechos humanos universalmente (DDHH) reconocidos.

Destacamos la importancia de que la Argentina, como presidencia del Consejo de Derechos Humanos, continúe defendiendo los DDHH y los principios consagrados en la carta de Naciones Unidas, en particular la defensa de la integridad territorial de Ucrania y el rechazo al uso de la fuerza.

*Alemania, Austria, Bélgica, Bulgaria, República Checa, Croacia, Dinamarca, Eslovenia, Eslovaquia, España, Finlandia, Francia, Grecia, Hungría, Irlanda, Italia, Países Bajos, Polonia, Portugal, Rumania y Suecia

PM call with JEF leaders: 25 February 2022

Press release

The Prime Minister spoke to the leaders of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) to discuss the unfolding catastrophe in Ukraine.



The Prime Minister spoke to the leaders of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) this morning to discuss the unfolding catastrophe in Ukraine.

The Prime Minister told representatives from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Latvia that the western world must keep the flame of freedom burning in Ukraine as Russian forces inflict horror on an innocent country and its people.

He reiterated that this was a defining moment in European history, with global implications. The Prime Minister said he believed the Ukrainian people would continue to fight and had done so gallantly in the recent hours and days.

The leaders agreed that more sanctions were needed, including focusing on President Putin's inner circle, building on the measures that had already been agreed.

More support must be given to Ukraine, as a matter of the greatest urgency, the Prime Minister urged. President Putin's damaging actions could never be normalised, or his aggression against Ukraine ever accepted as a fait accompli, he added.

The leaders agreed on the importance of doing more in the JEF format, bringing together partners inside and outside NATO and the EU, and agreed to meet soon.

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Statement from the leaders of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)

Press release

A joint statement from the leaders of the nations involved in the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).



We, the leaders of the JEF nations, condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's military attack on Ukraine. We are appalled by this brutal and unprovoked attack on a free and sovereign European country. It constitutes a serious violation of international law, a grave breach of the United Nations Charter as well as core commitments Russia entered in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and the Budapest Memorandum. We call on the Russian Federation to stop the bloodshed, to de-escalate immediately and to withdraw its forces to positions outside of the sovereign and internationally recognized borders of Ukraine.

We strongly support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We are united in our support for the people of Ukraine and its democratically elected government.

We reiterate the right of all sovereign states to choose their own path, and make their own security choices, free from external aggression and coercion, as a fundamental principle of the European security order. We are committed to uphold peace, stability and international law. JEF is an important contributor to regional security and stability. JEF nations are continuing with a series of planned exercises in Northern Europe to develop our cooperation by land, sea and air even further.

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