

Labour is determined to ensure we can rebuild and transform Britain – Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, speaking ahead of the triggering of Article 50, said:

“Today, we embark on the country’s most important negotiations in modern times.

“The British people made the decision to leave the European Union and Labour respects that decision.

“Britain is going to change as a result. The question is how. The Conservatives want to use Brexit to turn our country into a low wage tax haven. Labour is determined to ensure we can rebuild and transform Britain, so no one and no community is left behind.

“It will be a national failure of historic proportions if the Prime Minister comes back from Brussels without having secured protection for jobs and living standards.

“That’s why Labour has set the clear priorities of full access to the European market, rights at work and environmental protection. And we will hold the Government to account every step of the way.”

Speech: “We will continue to pursue justice for survivors.”

The United Kingdom believes so firmly that preventing sexual violence in conflict is the right way to move forward. So in welcoming you, can I say that I am delighted to be welcomed by Madame Bangura who will co-host our session today and by Jineth Bedoya. And I am delighted to be joined by such a distinguished group of guests around the room today. All of you have played a key role in implementing and driving forward the initiative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

May I first just give an indication of how the agenda will flow today. First of all, I will just set out the progress that the UK has made and where we hope that there will be plans developed for the future and working with colleagues around the world. I will then invite Madame Bangura to speak, and I will give a more formal introduction to her at that point. And then I will turn to Jineth Bedoya and invite her to speak. Again, I will give an introduction about her more formally at that stage. After that, the session

is yours. It will be open to you for question and answer. Before you, you have as always the splendid United Nations system for interpretation and Jineth will be speaking in Spanish, so you will need to use the ear pieces on that occasion.

But for me this is a very special moment to be with you here today. Five years ago my colleague, and former Foreign Secretary, William Hague and the Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

As William Hague said then, PSVI reflects our conviction that “tackling sexual violence is central to conflict prevention and peace-building worldwide. It must be as prominent in foreign policy as it is in development policy, for the two cannot be separated. And also it cannot be separated from the wider issue of women’s rights.”

Now, those words remain as true today as they were then. In 2015 I had the great privilege of being able to take over the work from William Hague, when he resigned from his elected post in the House of Commons. The great thing is that he is still a colleague, because he became a member of the House of Lords so I am able to work alongside him still. And I was, at the stage in 2015, appointed as the Prime Ministers Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, and it is such an honour to be involved with such an important cause. And I am committed to driving it forward until and unless the whole international community is fully on board.

So, what is the UK is doing? Well back of course in 2012, when we launched the PSVI initiative, we committed to deploy a team of experts to conflict affected countries to help to gather evidence of crimes of sexual violence and support future prosecutions. But it was also the beginning of a diplomatic campaign to highlight the need for accountability and an end to impunity. Since then, it has grown into a global initiative supported by 157 countries and backed by practical action on the ground, and thats of course where it really does matter.

This was followed by G8 Foreign Ministers making an historic commitment less than a year later. And the commitment included a pledge that future peace agreements should not be amnesties for these crimes, they should not include any amnesties. And that pledge was shortly followed, in June 2013, by UN Security Council Resolution 2106. And 2106, stressed the responsibility of national governments themselves to take action.

We then took our campaign to the UN General Assembly in 2013, putting forward a Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and that was endorsed by more than two-thirds of all the members of the UN.

I am particularly proud of course, of the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which we held in London in 2014. That involved not only governments, militaries and UN agencies but also survivors, civil societies and of course thousands of members of the public who came to show their support. And they continue to support. It was the largest international meeting ever convened on this issue, and it left an indelible impression on

everyone who attended. In this development, the UK leadership was important but it could only be important because of the support of everybody else.

Over the last 5 years, working together, we have been able to secure the international political attention that the whole work in preventing sexual violence in conflict really does deserve.

Crucially, this political and democratic drive has enabled ground-breaking work to take place in those countries that are affected. The launch of the first edition of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict has seen countries as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, and Uganda use the protocol to bring perpetrators to account. And it has been my privilege to visit all those countries and see on the ground the practical work being done and using the protocol.

We have also seen our team of PSVI experts deployed more than 80 times to provide support and training on a range of issues from documenting crimes to rehabilitating survivors. Since the initiative was launched, the UK has provided over £35 million to fund more than 70 projects around the world. And of course, it is those projects that give access to justice and legal support to help to bring the perpetrators to account. They provide vital psychological, psychosocial and physical support to survivors and they challenge the stigma. They challenge the negative attitudes associated with sexual violence. We know that this support and assistance has had a real impact on survivors, their families and their communities. It is delivering real change on the ground. However we aren't complacent and none of us ever could be. We know that, of course, a lot of progress has been made, but more importantly we know from you that much, much more needs to be done.

Our ambitious plans for the future reiterate the UK's support and determination in tackling Sexual Violence in Conflict. We will continue to pursue justice for survivors, and I am delighted to inform you that just last week we launched the second edition of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. The second edition has been updated in the light of the feedback we received on the first edition. In other words, we listened to you, we made the changes that you suggested.

This revised version contains a number of additions, including guidance on children and male victims; further guidance on trauma; and a focus on analysing evidence and establishing patterns of violations. So its with thanks and gratitude to over 200 contributors, many of whom are in this room today, who gave their knowledge and expertise to make this happen. The protocol will help many thousands of survivors seek the justice they rightly deserve. When I launched that updated version in London a couple of weeks ago, alongside William Hague and the Special Envoy Angelina Jolie, I had with me the very heavy, huge folder in hard copy which is not something that any practitioner would want to carry around. So, as you have seen today, we do have the modern version, we do have the memory stick which makes life a lot easier and there is one available for all attending today. And if you have missed out, let us know and you will have one. In addition to that, there is

an interactive online version too and there are translations into 10 languages, all of which will be ready in early summer. We are working with international organisations and NGOs to ensure that they are trained in the protocol, and of course its use is integral to their work.

Last year, we gathered here just in the room next door, and I set out our plans for future action including those for our new campaign to tackle the stigma associated with sexual violence. I spoke about the ostracisation that survivors face, not just from their communities but from their families, from those who are closest to them. We know that every day survivors have to face their attackers in the street, in their communities, and in their cities and villages. The survivors though are the ones made to feel the shame and the blame. I find that appalling.

That's why I have committed to tackling the stigma that so many survivors endure. Over the last year we have held workshops in many countries bringing together survivors, experts, and civil society, media and faith leaders to look at the root causes of stigma and how it affects each country differently. These workshops have been monumental in helping us to understand why survivors are shunned and blamed. Each and every affected country has different cultures, practices and social attitudes which then reinforce of course, the importance of bringing together our international community as we do today to join forces and tackle the stigma together.

Last November we had a major conference at Wilton Park, which brought together practitioners and survivors from sixteen conflict affected countries in addition to International NGOs, UN Agencies and academics to develop a set of Principles for Global Action to tackle the stigma associated with sexual violence. And this guiding document is designed to help policy makers from governments in donor countries, those in conflict affected countries and international organisations understand how they can incorporate tackling the stigma associated with SVC into their own work. To date, over 80 experts have contributed to the development of those guiding principles, and one is sitting next to me here today Jineth who attended the conference at Wilton Park. The assistance is to make sure that we have overarching and thematic recommendations, and those are now being commented on by over 20 donor countries. We have gone out to consultation.

Work is about to start on a second round of in-country workshops with stakeholders in conflict affected countries, International NGOs and donors about how we use the principles of this globally owned document to identify action which can already be taken forward in a number of conflict affected countries. So, later this year, when the General Assembly meets here in New York, I will officially launch the Principles for Global Action. That is when we all need to work together to ensure our efforts are collaborative and focused to maximise the impact and delivery on the ground which we can have.

And I am delighted to announce today, that in addition to that, looking forward the UK Government will host a follow up meeting to the Global Summit in 2019 in London. This international meeting will assess progress made against the 2014 Global Summit, encourage governments to live up to their commitments, and to galvanise further action. And I hope that we can count on

your support as we start preparations for this event.

Because the real story here today, is about how the world works together. So, although we held a conference, although we have produced the principles for global action, these really are yours. It is your property, not the UK's. It is for shared use around the world. Which is why for me today is so important. Not only to present the UK's update, but to be able to hear from Madame Bangura and from Jineth and then from you about how we continue to work together.

News story: PM calls with European Leaders: 28 March 2017

The Prime Minister called the German Chancellor, the President of the European Council, and the President of the European Commission earlier this evening to update them ahead of the letter giving notification of the UK's intention to withdraw from the European Union being delivered tomorrow.

In separate calls, they agreed that a strong EU was in everyone's interests and that the UK would remain a close and committed ally.

They also agreed on the importance of entering into negotiations in a constructive and positive spirit, and of ensuring a smooth and orderly exit process.

The Chancellor, the European Council President, and the European Commission President thanked the Prime Minister for her calls.

Speech: PM speech to the UK-Qatar Business and Investment Forum

I am delighted to be able to join you here in Birmingham for this prestigious conference which comes on the eve of one of the most significant moments that the United Kingdom has faced for many years.

Tomorrow we begin the negotiations to secure a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union.

As we do so, I am determined that we should also seize this historic opportunity to get out into the world and to shape an even bigger role for a

global Britain.

This means not just building new alliances, but going even further in working with old friends who have stood alongside us for centuries.

That is the spirit in which I welcome you all here today.

When I had the privilege of addressing the Gulf Co-operation Council in December, I said that the relationship between the United Kingdom and our allies in the Gulf is not just of great historic value – but also fundamental to our shared future.

It is fundamental to our shared security because Gulf security is our security, and together we face the same global threats from terrorism and extremism, [as we saw again so tragically in London](#) just last week.

And it is fundamental to our shared prosperity – for Gulf prosperity is our prosperity – and by growing our trade and investment we can create new jobs and new opportunities for all our people.

So I am delighted to welcome His Excellency Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah – with whom I have worked on security co-operation for many years – and to see him here today with one of the broadest and most senior delegations that Qatar has sent anywhere in the world, including several Qatari ministers, leaders of industry and the Qatari Investment Authority.

The strength and seniority of the delegations here from both the UK and Qatar are a testament to the importance we both place on our bilateral relationship and the scale of our shared ambition to develop it.

Already the United Kingdom is Qatar's number 1 destination for foreign direct investment, with investments worth over £35 billion ranging from the iconic Shard to new housing in the Olympic Village in East London.

And Qatar is already the third largest market for UK exports across the Middle East and North Africa, with over 600 UK companies already benefitting from the opportunity to support your growing infrastructure and provide goods and services to your people.

But this week I hope that we can go further, by laying the foundations for a bold new chapter in this partnership between our nations.

Last night we signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding to support Qatar's 2030 National Vision.

This will deepen the co-operation between our governments and our businesses across a wide range of vital areas including education and healthcare, science, research and innovation, tourism and culture, transport, energy, financial services and the development of small businesses.

We will also deepen our co-operation on defence, where I hope the UK can be Qatar's partner of choice; on cyber, where the UK will support Qatar to shore up its cyber defences; and on sport, where the UK will continue to share our

expertise on managing major events as part of our support for Qatar as it prepares for the 2022 World Cup.

And as we support Qatar with British expertise, so today I am delighted that Qatar is pledging major new investment which will play a significant role in shaping a brighter future for Britain too.

For my [Plan for Britain](#) is not just a plan to leave the EU, but a plan to build a stronger economy and a fairer society, underpinned by genuine economic and social reform to make Britain a country that works for everyone, not just a privileged few.

And a critical part of this plan is developing a [modern industrial strategy](#) that can help secure my vision of a high-skilled, high-paid Britain where opportunity is spread across every community, not just the most prosperous areas like London and the South East.

Qatar's new investment today will help to make this a reality by providing new support for regeneration projects outside London, here in Birmingham and in other regions across the country.

It is a bold statement of continued confidence in the British economy from long-term investors committed to prosperity in every part of our United Kingdom.

So I look forward to sitting down with Qatari investors this afternoon to discuss some of the many attractive commercial opportunities that a global Britain has to offer.

These include those opportunities arising from our own long-term investment in infrastructure – such as High Speed 2, which will be transformative for this region and in turn create many exciting, new opportunities for investment in all the parts of the country that it travels through.

These investments will play an important role in helping us to shape the forces of globalisation so that everyone shares in the benefits of economic growth.

They will also provide the foundation from which we can take our trade and investment to the next level. So I am delighted that we are also establishing a new Joint Economic and Trade Committee. And as I said at the [Gulf Co-operation Council in December](#), I hope we can pave the way for an ambitious trade arrangement for when the UK has left the EU, including exploring whether we can forge a new trade arrangement for the whole of the Gulf area.

As a global Britain, I am determined that we will be the most committed and most passionate advocate of free trade in the world – and I look forward to continuing these vital discussions on growing our trade and investment as part of hosting the Gulf Co-operation Council in London later this year.

So thank you once again for your support today, for your investments in our country and for the continued partnership that we are building together.

Through this enduring commitment between our countries and our peoples, let us meet the shared challenges to our security; grasp the shared opportunities for our prosperity; and build a brighter future for the United Kingdom and Qatar, today and for generations to come.

Press release: Return of full democratic accountability to Tower Hamlets confirmed

This follows a 2-year intervention by central government after an independent inspection found the accountability issues at the council.

While the team of commissioners will leave, new directions will be put in place for 18 months that require the council to report progress to Mr Javid every quarter.

This will allow him to keep a close eye on the borough to ensure taxpayers' money is put to best use and improvements continue.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I'm confident that Tower Hamlets council is on the right track to provide the services their residents deserve and rightly expect. That's why I have decided to return all powers to the council.

I want to make sure that taxpayers' money is put to the best use, in an open and transparent way. So I will want to hear from Tower Hamlets every three months on the progress they're making.

Communities Secretary to continue 'close eye'

Since 2014, government-appointed commissioners have been overseeing key functions at Tower Hamlets.

This followed an independent inspection by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, which warned of a breakdown in democratic accountability and a significant misuse of public funds.

Since the commissioners were appointed, a new Mayor has been elected, a top officer team has been put in place, and an improvement plan is being implemented.

Following continued improvement by the council, particularly over the past

year, Mr Javid has confirmed that commissioners will leave the council from the end of March 2017.

However, directions will remain in place so that the Mayor and the council report progress directly to him every 3 months. A Best Value Improvement Board, including councillors and independent representatives, will oversee this work.

Further information

Three commissioners have been working with Tower Hamlets council. They are:

- Sir Ken Knight (lead commissioner)
- Max Caller CBE
- Chris Allison CBE

A fourth, Alan Wood, stepped down in January 2017.