

Press release: Foreign Secretary Statement at the UNSC briefing on South Sudan

As we sit safely in this Council Chamber, villages in South Sudan are being raided and plundered and set ablaze. Thousands of men, women and children are being driven from their homes, separated from their families and forced to endure terror and hunger as they seek safety in squalid camps.

The toll of suffering in South Sudan has grown inexorably. At the close of 2015, some 2 million people had been displaced. Today, that figure has risen to 3 million, almost half of whom are refugees in neighbouring countries, including up to a million in Uganda. Last month alone, the brutal cycle of raiding, retaliation and counter-retaliation compelled another 80,000 people to flee. And, most tellingly of all, famine has been declared in areas of Former Unity State – the first famine in the world for six years.

Any visitor to that region of South Sudan will know that its green and fertile plains are watered by the tributaries of the White Nile. Nature and geography therefore cannot explain why famine has struck; only the avarice and folly of human beings are to blame. And I'm reminded of the hymn of Bishop Heber: "Though every prospect pleases, only man is vile." And we should be in no doubt that famine could blight other areas if the fighting does not stop. Against this background, no member of the Security Council can escape our responsibility to renew our efforts to restore peace in South Sudan. Today and each day afterwards, we must demonstrate the unity of this Council over what needs to be done.

The Peace Accord of 2015 must be revived in order to deliver a genuine political process, embracing all the people of South Sudan, and beginning the task of reconciliation and healing. There are three key steps to achieve this. First, there can be no real dialogue for as long as South Sudan is ravaged by fighting. All parties must respect an immediate cessation of hostilities. As President, Salva Kiir is responsible for taking the first step – and others must follow. Second, there must be impartial leadership of the effort to revive the political process.

Finally, any talks will only bring long-term peace if all South Sudanese are represented. That means including not only the opposing forces, but also other armed groups, political parties, displaced people, refugees, youth and women. President Konaré, the AU High Representative for South Sudan, Prime Minister Hailemariam, the Chair of IGAD, and António Guterres, the Secretary General, have resolved to drive this forward together. I also welcome President Mogae, the Chair of the Joint Management and Evaluation Commission, who is responsible for enforcing implementation of the peace agreement.

We, as the Security Council, must demonstrate our wholehearted support for their efforts. And those responsible for atrocities must be brought to

account through the establishment of a Hybrid Court. Given the scale of the suffering, all of the opposing forces have special responsibility to allow the delivery of aid wherever required, anywhere in the country. I am deeply concerned by reports that the Government of South Sudan has denied its own citizens the help they so desperately need by blocking humanitarian deliveries – including in Unity State, where famine has struck. We should all make clear that denying food to the starving is simply unconscionable. Nor can we accept a situation whereby the Government or any armed group obstructs the efforts of aid agencies to deliver emergency supplies or of UNMISS to protect civilians.

We should also spell out, with unity, clarity and conviction, what progress we expect from the Government. And we need to back this up by resolving that this Council will consider alternative measures – including an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on individuals – if this progress fails to materialise. The UK remains convinced that an arms embargo would serve to protect ordinary South Sudanese from the worst excesses of military power and on a future occasion we will ask the Council to reconsider this measure.

Our strength of feeling arises, partly from Britain's profound ties of history and friendship with the people of South Sudan. We were a guarantor of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 which paved the way for South Sudan to achieve independence. The UK was a witness to the Peace Accord of 2015 that sought – unavailingly – to end the current conflict. We are now the second biggest bilateral donor to South Sudan. And we are strengthening UNMISS peacekeeping by deploying almost 400 British military engineers, medics and a field hospital.

The Council will know that over 200,000 civilians are sheltering inside UN sites across South Sudan, unable to leave these barbed wire confines in case they are murdered for no other reason than their ethnicity. Day after day, UNMISS tries to protect these civilians – and I know that British peacekeepers will help UNMISS fulfil this task. But South Sudan's people should not have to rely on outside protection. And if our efforts falter, the Council should be in no doubt that South Sudan's tragedy could become yet worse. There is an urgent need for collective action, particularly by neighbouring countries who already host 1.4 million refugees. As Ms Sunday has just told the Council today, the innocent and the most vulnerable are enduring the greatest suffering in this war.

We're all here today because we have an obligation to act and we cannot leave this meeting believing that our work is done. And we should acknowledge that a terrible failure of political leadership lies behind the bloodshed. At every level we must therefore place pressure on the leaders of South Sudan – both in Government and in opposition – to act in the best interests of their people. We – the Security Council, the UN, IGAD and the AU – must help the South Sudanese to come together to agree on a common vision of their country's future. And we should all stand ready to make that vision a reality.

Press release: Political talks update by Secretary of State

James Brokenshire delivered a short statement to reporters outside Stormont House, Belfast on Friday 24 March

Good morning everyone.

We're now entering the final few days available to the political parties here in Northern Ireland to form an Executive. I've had constructive discussions over the last two and a bit weeks with the Irish government and with political parties.

There are a number of issues where I see common ground and where I firmly believe that resolution can be achieved.

But there are other issues that still remain to be resolved in order for an Executive to be formed on Monday. We also have a duty to survivors and victims to come forward with proposals to deal with the past.

I believe that a deal is still achievable – with good will, good spirit and that positive intent.

But time is short.

And we must firmly focus on those key issues to enable an Executive to be formed on Monday. It is that task of work that we are firmly engaged in.

I'll be working intensively in the coming days to achieve that positive outcome, to see inclusive devolved government restored here in Northern Ireland, that responsibility that we all feel in that regard.

And it is with that intent that we start meetings this morning and I will now head to Stormont Castle.

Thank you very much.

Welsh Government seeks innovative

ideas to tackle childhood obesity with healthier & cheaper food choices

By the age of 11, more than 40% of Welsh children are either obese or overweight. Research shows that the vast majority of obese children tend to grow up to become obese adults.

Obesity has a significant impact on the economy. In 2011, obesity alone was estimated to cost the NHS in Wales £73 million, with between £1.40 million and £1.65 million spent each week treating diseases resulting from obesity.

Companies are being invited to submit solutions which focus on reducing levels of salt, sugar and saturated fat as well as increasing the levels of vitamins, minerals and fibre provided in food and drink for children.

Schools have a key role to play in providing children with access to nutritious and healthy food and Welsh Government is also inviting applications which further improve the nutritional value of school meals, while reducing the cost to ensure families are able to afford this option.

The competition was launched at Wales' first major food event, Blas Cymru/Taste Wales. The Welsh Government organised event brought together representatives from across Wales' food and drink industry with influential buyers from all over the world.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“This programme is a call to our food innovators in Wales to help us improve the health of our children by providing good quality and nourishing food, whilst keeping costs down. The Welsh food and drink industry can be proud of its record in innovation, in launching new products and driving up standards, and I'm now appealing to you to use your skills, talents and creativity, to tackle one of the greatest challenges of all – improving the diets of our children today, to enable them to become the healthy young adults of tomorrow.”

Those who submit ideas for funding will come up with innovative solutions such as new processing technologies, reformulation techniques, enabling technologies, new engineering designs and flexible manufacturing processes, to drive down costs.

In addition to improving the diet of children it's expected that the programme will have wider benefits, including, providing financial savings for schools, boosting the food industry in Wales and further enhancing its reputation for research and innovation.

The funding is provided through the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI), from the Welsh Government and Innovative UK.

Press release: Change of British High Commissioner to South Africa

2014 – 2016 Private Secretary to the Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs 2011 – 2013 Sarajevo, Her Majesty's Ambassador 2009 – 2011 New Delhi, Deputy High Commissioner 2007 – 2009 New Delhi, Political Counsellor 2006 – 2007 FCO, Head, Iraq Policy Unit 2003 – 2006 Moscow, Head, External Section 2002 Full-time Russian language training 2001 FCO, Head, G8 & OECD Section, Economic Policy Department 1999 – 2000 FCO, Head, Nuclear & Missile Defence Section, Security Policy Department 1996 – 1998 Washington, Private Secretary to HM Ambassador 1993 – 1995 Johannesburg, Vice-Consul (Political/Aid/Press) 1991 – 1993 FCO, Desk Officer, Hungary and Bulgaria 1991 Joined Foreign and Commonwealth Office

News story: Civil news: replacement contract schedules begin 1 April 2017

We will soon be issuing new civil contract schedules beginning on 1 April 2017.

These will replace the following schedules which are ending on 31 March 2017:

1. 2010 Standard Civil Contract (mediation)
2. 2013 Standard Civil Contract (family, housing and debt, immigration and asylum)
3. 2013 Standard Civil Contract (welfare benefits)
4. 2015 Standard Civil Contract (actions against the police etc, public law and clinical negligence)
5. 2016 Standard Civil Contract (welfare benefits)
6. Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) exclusive schedules
7. Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) exclusive schedules

Most of these schedules will run for 12 months and end on 31 March 2018. The only exceptions are the HPCDS and IRC schedules, which will continue to be issued for 6 months. Where to find new schedules

You will be able to view schedules in Contracted Work and Administration (CWA) from 31 March 2017. But HPCDS and IRC schedules will be emailed to you

directly and will not be uploaded into CWA.

Reporting work

Work completed in April can be reported from 1 May 2017.

Matter start allocations

In most cases, matter starts will be allocated in accordance with paragraph 1.24-1.27 of the relevant contract specification.

This means matter start allocations will be calculated on the basis that providers receive 100% of the matters that they reported in the previous schedule period.

The only exception is where providers reported 80% or less of their previous allocation. In these circumstances, provider will receive 80% of their previous allocation.

Separate matter start allocations

There are a few instances where a separate allocation approaches will apply. These are outlined here:

Contract	Allocation
2010 Standard Civil Contract (mediation)	50 matter starts
2013 standard civil contract (welfare benefits)	The standard number of matter starts for the relevant procurement area
2016 standard civil contract (welfare benefits)	30 matter starts
HPCDS and IRC exclusive schedules	The same allocation as in the previous schedule, subject to any changes resulting from court closures affecting some HPCDS

Where providers have the power to self-grant a further 50% matter starts they may do so in addition to the amount specified in the schedule. Where a provider does not have the power to self-grant, they can request up to an additional 50% of matter starts from their contract manager.

2014 Standard Civil Contract (mental health and community care)

Current schedules under the 2014 Standard Civil Contract (mental health and community care) end on 31 July 2017. So, new schedules under this contract will be issued in July to cover the period 1 August 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Contract end date

Civil legal aid contracts will end on 31 March 2018. The procurement process for new civil legal aid contracts will begin in May 2017.