

UN Human Rights Council 41: UK Closing Statement

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 41st session today, passing resolutions on Syria, DRC, Philippines, Eritrea, Ukraine and Belarus, a number of resolutions that seek to protect the rights of women and girls, LGBT people, and on a range of other important issues.

The Human Rights Council is a vitally important part of the rules-based international system and the UK's support for its work, and that of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office, remains steadfast.

I was pleased that during this session the UK was able to co-sponsor resolutions on Child, Early and Forced Marriage, Discrimination Against Women, Equal Pay and Violence Against Women and Girls. I am proud of the UK's strong leadership in the protection and promotion of gender equality and the rights of all women and girls. The UK also strongly supported the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; human rights are universal, and apply equally to all people, everywhere. The international community must work to address all forms of discrimination, be it on the basis of gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Syria

I welcome the adoption of the latest Syria resolution by the Council. As the regime continues its indiscriminate offensive in Idlib, it is right that the Council continues to draw attention to the immense human suffering there. All parties must return to the agreed ceasefire, act to protect civilians, and abide by international law. The Council has also rightly drawn attention to the plight of detained and missing Syrians and their families' search for the truth. I welcome the UN Special Envoy for Syria's focus on this vital issue, and call on the international community to cooperate with his efforts.

DRC

On DRC, I welcome the renewal of the UN Team of Experts' mandate. I encourage the DRC authorities to continue to cooperate with the UN Team of Experts to address the serious human rights situation in the DRC, to bring justice to the victims of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, and to fully engage in the reconciliation process in order to bring peace and stability to the Kasais.

Ukraine

I welcome the adoption of the resolution on Cooperation and Assistance to Ukraine in the field of human rights. The continued technical assistance and

monitoring mission, provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, enables the critical work of monitoring human rights and helps to promote and protect human rights in Ukraine, including illegally annexed Crimea.

Philippines

I urge the Government of Philippines to engage constructively with the issues raised in the resolution on the human rights situation there.

Sudan

The UK highlighted longstanding concern at the human rights situation in Sudan, and condemned recent violence against peaceful protestors. We welcome important political progress and the opportunity presented by the recent political agreement towards civilian rule. Human rights must be respected throughout this transition and beyond, including the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Those responsible for past violations and abuses must be held to account, and we welcome the commitment to a transparent investigation. The September session of the Council should consider what assistance Sudan needs to ensure human rights are protected.

Elsewhere, I welcome the renewal of the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on Belarus and Eritrea.

Finally, I want to reiterate my support for the work of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and thank her for her report into the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

The work of the Human Rights Council is vital in bringing states together to protect and promote universal human rights around the world. The UK government plays, and will continue to play, an active role at the Council and will continue to support its efforts to hold those who violate or abuse human rights to account.