**United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland**

**Statement**

**41st Universal Periodic Review – United Kingdom – Opening Statement**

**Thursday 10 November 2022**

**INTRODUCTION**

* **THANK YOU MR PRESIDENT AND GOOD MORNING YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**
* **I AM MIKE FREER, I’M A JUSTICE MINISTER IN THE UK GOVERNMENT AND IT’S A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY LEADING THE UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION FOR THIS UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW.**
* **ON A PERSONAL NOTE, THIS ISN’T FOR ME JUST A FUNCTION OF BEING A MINISTER, THIS IS A PERSONAL COMMITMENT HAVING BEEN INVOLVED IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR MANY YEARS PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE LIFE. SO THIS IS A TOPIC WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME PERSONALLY AND IT IS A REAL PRIVILEDGE TO BE ADDRESSING YOU TODAY.**
* **I AM SUPPORTED HERE TODAY BY OUR PERMANENT MISSION, AND OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE, AND THE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS OF SCOTLAND AND WALES.**
* **I’LL SET OUT THE PROGRESS THE UK HAS MADE ON HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE MY ESTEEMED PREDECESSOR SIR OLIVER HEALD APPEARED BEFORE YOU IN 2017.**

**UNITED NATIONS COMMITMENTS**

* **AND IF I MAY MR. PRESDIENT, I’D LIKE TO BEGIN BY REITERATING THAT THE UK IS ABSOLUTELY COMMITTED TO PROTECTING AND RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AT HOME AND ABROAD. THAT COMMITMENT HAS NOT CHANGED**.
* **OUR STRENGTH AS A NATION IS ROOTED IN FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY.**
* **WE BELIEVE THAT DEMOCRACY GIVES PEOPLE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN PATH. IT UNLEASHES ENTERPRISE AND ASPIRATION, AND OPPORTUNITY. IT PROTECTS THE FREEDOMS AT THE VERY CORE OF OUR HUMANITY. IN CONTRAST, AUTOCRACIES SUPPRESS THEIR CITIZENS AND, BY EXTENSION, REAL HUMAN PROGRESS.**
* **AND WE CONTINUE TO STAND UP FOR THE RULES-BASED INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM, AND THE RULE OF LAW BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD.**
* **THAT’S WHY WE ARE A STRONG ADVOCATE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND THE MECHANISMS IT HAS TO STRENGTHEN HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION GLOBALLY.**
* **PARTICULARLY NOW, WITH GLOBAL SECURITY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY DESTABILISED BY COVID-19 AND PUTIN’S ILLEGAL WAR IN UKRAINE, AND OF COURSE THE GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS WE ARE EXPERIENCING.**
* **IT’S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO PROMOTE THESE FUNDAMENTAL SHARED PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW... WHICH IN TURN LAYS SOLID FOUNDATIONS FOR BUSINESS, TRADE, INVESTMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY.**
* **AND IT’S AN HONOUR TO SERVE AS A MEMBER OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL … AND WE MAINTAIN THE PLEDGES WE MADE UPON OUR ELECTION.**

**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW COMMITMENTS**

* **IF COULD TURN TO SOME OF THE PERIODIC REVIEW COMMITMENTS, IN TERMS OF THE UK’S 4TH CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE UPR – IT IS A CONSTRUCTIVE TOOL TO SHARE BEST PRACTICE AND IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND.**
* **AND I’M PLEASED TO SAY THAT WE ARE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS.**

**DOMESTIC HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK**

* **ON THE UK’S DOMESTIC HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK, THE UNITED KINGDOM’S DOMESTIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AND PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOR COMBATING DISCRIMINATION REMAINS AS SET OUT IN PREVIOUS UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS.**

***HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998 / BILL OF RIGHTS BILL***

* **I’D LIKE TO TOUCH ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT OF 1998 AND OUR BILL OF RIGHTS BILL.**
* **THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998 GIVES FURTHER EFFECT TO THE RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ALLOWING MOST CONVENTION RIGHTS TO BE DIRECTLY ENFORCEABLE IN UK COURTS.**
* **BUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT WAS ALWAYS INTENDED AS A STARTING POINT, TO BE FOLLOWED BY FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF HOW TO PROTECT RIGHTS MOST EFFECTIVELY IN UK LAW AND THE PRESENT UK GOVERNMENT WAS ELECTED ON** **A MANIFESTO COMMITMENT TO UPDATE IT.**
* **THE BILL OF RIGHTS BILL, WHICH WOULD REPLACE THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT, IS CURRENTLY BEING SCRUTINISED BY OUR NATIONAL PARLIAMENT…**
* **AND IT WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERED BY THE DEVOLVED LEGISLATURES OF WALES, SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND WHERE IT AFFECTS DEVOLVED INTERESTS.**
* **IT WILL PROTECT FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS WHILST SAFEGUARDING THE BROADER PUBLIC INTEREST AND RESPECTING THE WILL OF OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN PARLIAMENT.**
* **OUR BILL OF RIGHTS WILL ALLOW US TO REMAIN A STATE PARTY TO THE ECHR AND FULLY AVAIL OURSELVES OF THE MARGIN OF APPRECIATION TO RESTORE SOME COMMON SENSE TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS.**
* **WE CAN ALSO BE CLEAR THAT THE RIGHTS PROTECTED BY THE BILL OF RIGHTS BILL WILL BE THE SAME RIGHTS FOUND IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT.**
* **INDIVIDUALS WILL BE ABLE TO ENFORCE THOSE RIGHTS IN DOMESTIC COURTS, AND WHERE NECESSARY, VIA THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS.**
* **IN THE BELFAST (GOOD FRIDAY) AGREEMENT, THE UK COMMITTED TO COMPLETING INCORPORATION OF THE ECHR INTO THE LAW OF NORTHERN IRELAND. THE BILL OF RIGHTS CONTINUES TO DO THIS.**
* **THE BILL OF RIGHTS IS COMPATIBLE WITH OUR COMMITMENTS UNDER OUR WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT FROM THE EU, THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL AND THE UK-EU TRADE AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT.**

***EQUALITY ACT 2010***

* **IF I MAY, I’D LIKE TO ADDRESS SOME POINTS ON THE EQUALITY ACT OF 2010. AS A GAY MAN, AND A FORMER EQUALITIES MINISTER, THE RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS OF THE EQUALITY ACT ARE SOMETHING THAT I AND COLLEAGUES IN PARLIAMENT ARE KEEN TO PROTECT.**
* **THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 REMAINS THE BASIS OF EQUALITY LAW IN THE UK, AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS WOULD NOT AFFECT IT. THE EQUALITY ACT PROTECTS PEOPLE FROM DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE AND IN WIDER SOCIETY.**
* **IT PROTECTS PEOPLE FROM DISCRIMINATION UNDER NINE “PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS”: AGE; DISABILITY; GENDER REASSIGNMENT; MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP; PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY; RACE; RELIGION OR BELIEF; SEX AND; SEXUAL ORIENTATION.**
* **THIS IS IN ADDITION TO ARTICLE 14 OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION ON ANY GROUND IN RESPECT OF PEOPLE’S ENJOYMENT OF THEIR RIGHTS UNDER THE CONVENTION.**
* **THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998 CONTAINS A STATUTORY DUTY ON PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY BETWEEN: PERSONS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS BELIEF; POLITICAL OPINION; RACIAL GROUP; AGE; MARITAL STATUS OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION; MEN AND WOMEN GENERALLY; PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY AND PERSONS WITHOUT ARE PROTECTED; AND PERSONS WITH DEPENDANTS AND PERSONS WITHOUT ARE PROTECTED.**

**IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM**

* **TOUCHING ON OUR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM SYSTEM, THE UNITED KINGDOM HAS A LONG, PROUD TRADITION OF PROVIDING A HOME FOR PEOPLE FLEEING PERSECUTION AND OPPRESSION.**
* **HOWEVER, OUR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO SIGNIFICANT STRAIN OVER THE LAST DECADE AND CONTINUE TO FACE ENORMOUS CHALLENGES.**
* **THAT IS WHY WE ARE MAKING LANDMARK REFORMS TO OUR ASYLUM AND MIGRATION SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONALITY AND BORDERS ACT 2022, WHICH HAS THREE KEY OBJECTIVES:**
  + **IT AIMS TO MAKE THE SYSTEM FAIRER AND MORE EFFECTIVE SO THAT WE CAN BETTER PROTECT AND SUPPORT THOSE IN GENUINE NEED OF ASYLUM.**
  + **IT AIMS TO DETER ILLEGAL ENTRY INTO THE UK BREAKING THE BUSINESS MODEL OF CRIMINAL TRAFFICKING NETWORKS AND SAVING LIVES.**
  + **IT AIMS TO REMOVE FROM THE UK THOSE WITH NO RIGHT TO BE THERE.**
* **THE POLICIES UNDER THE NATIONALITY AND BORDERS ACT WILL PRIORITISE THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE CURRENTLY LIVING IN REFUGEE CAMPS AROUND THE WORLD THROUGH SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES**
* **WE WILL DETER ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND CREATE AN EFFECTIVE SANCTION WITH NO RELEVANT MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES – TO BREAK THE BUSINESS MODEL OF PEOPLE-SMUGGLING NETWORKS AND TO STRIKE A MUCH NEEDED BLOW AGAINST THE CRIMINAL GANGS WHO TRADE IN HUMAN MISERY.**

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

* **I’D LIKE TO TURN TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. THIS IS ANOTHER AREA OF PROGRESS; TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. SUCH VIOLENCE IS WHOLLY PREVENTABLE, AND I’M IMMENSELY PROUD OF OUR RECORD HERE, BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD.**
* **THE UK IS, OF COURSE, HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT INITIATIVE IN LONDON, LATER THIS MONTH.**

***ISTANBUL CONVENTION***

* **IF I MAY TOUCH ON THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION, THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE’S ISTANBUL CONVENTION – WHICH THE UK SIGNED IN 2012 - IS THE GOLD STANDARD FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. SINCE THEN, WE HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED OUR LAWS IN THIS AREA.**
* **THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMMITTED TO RATIFYING THE CONVENTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, A COMMITMENT REITERATED IN OUR *TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS* STRATEGY, PUBLISHED IN JULY OF 2021.**
* **AND I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT ON 21ST JULY THIS YEAR, WE RATIFIED THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION, AND IT FINALLY CAME INTO FORCE IN THE UK NINE DAYS AGO….**
* **THIS SENDS A STRONG MESSAGE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS ACROSS THE UK, AND AROUND THE WORLD, THAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.**

***DOMESTIC ABUSE***

* **ALONGSIDE THAT, ON THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, THE UK GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT ALL VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE – OFTEN WOMEN - GET THE RIGHT SUPPORT AT THE RIGHT TIME.**
* **AS PART OF OUR *VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS* STRATEGY *AND TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE* PLAN, WE INTRODUCED CHANGES TO LEGAL AID IN OCTOBER THIS YEAR…**
* **THIS ALLOWS THOUSANDS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS TO ACCESS FREE LEGAL ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION.**
* **WE’RE INVESTING AN ADDITIONAL £10 MILLION A YEAR IN HOUSING LEGAL AID FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, SO THAT THOUSANDS FACING EVICTION CAN GET THE LEGAL ADVICE THEY NEED.**
* **OUR LANDMARK DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021 WILL BRING IN NEW DOMESTIC ABUSE PROTECTION NOTICES AND DOMESTIC ABUSE PROTECTION ORDERS.**

**HATE CRIME**

* **ALONGSIDE THIS WORK, I’D LIKE TO TOUCH ON HATE. HAVING BEEN A VICTIM OF HOMOPHOBIC CRIME MYSELF, COMBATTING HATE CRIME IS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO ME AND THE UK CONTINUES TO MAKE PROGRESS ON HATE CRIME.**
* **IT’S AN ISSUE THE GOVERNMENT TAKES VERY SERIOUSLY. ALL FORMS OF HATE CRIME ARE COMPLETELY ABHORRENT AND WE HAVE ROBUST LAWS IN PLACE TO TACKLE THEM.**

**SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS**

* **FIRST AND FOREMOST - WE ARE CLEAR THAT VICTIMS OF CRIME SHOULD BE SUPPORTED AND THAT THOSE WHO COMMIT THESE ATTACKS SHOULD FEEL THE FULL FORCE OF THE LAW.**
* **OUR VICTIMS FUNDING STRATEGY, PUBLISHED IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, COMMITS TO MULTI-YEAR FUNDING FOR CORE SUPPORT SERVICES, AND INTRODUCES NATIONAL COMMISSIONING STANDARDS... TO MAKE SURE ALL VICTIMS GET THE SERVICE THEY DESERVE.**
* **AND AS PROMISED IN OUR LAST ELECTION MANIFESTO, THE UK GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLISHED A VICTIMS BILL, WHICH WILL** **MAKE SURE VICTIMS GET THE SUPPORT THEY NEED.**
* **IN SCOTLAND, HATE CRIME LEGISLATION IS BEING UPDATED** **TO CREATE ADDITIONAL OFFENCES**... **SUCH AS THE OFFENCE OF ‘STIRRING UP OF HATRED’. AND PROVIDE FURTHER PROTECTIONS FOR ALL OF THE PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS.**
* **IN WALES, THREE DISTINCT UNITS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES CITIZENS IN WALES FACE AND TO ADDRESS THE OFTEN-DEEP-ROOTED ISSUES WHICH ADVERSELY IMPACT THOSE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS.**
* **THE THREE UNITS, EACH WITH THEIR OWN EVIDENCE PROGRAMME AND LEAD ARE THE:**
  + **EQUALITY EVIDENCE UNIT**
  + **THE RACE DISPARITY EVIDENCE UNIT**
  + **AND THE DISABILITY DISPARITY EVIDENCE UNIT**

***LGBT+***

* **AND IF I MAY, MR PRESIDENT, I’D LIKE TO TOUCH ON OUR WORK ON LGBT+ RIGHTS. THE UK HAS A PROUD HISTORY OF LGBT+ RIGHTS, AND ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND ROBUST LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS FOR LGBT+ PEOPLE.**
* **LGBT+ RIGHTS ARE AN ISSUE THAT THE UK PRIORITISES INTERNATIONALLY. WE CONTINUE TO ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENTS AROUND THE WORLD TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS.**
* **THE UK GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO LIVE THEIR LIVES FREELY AND WITHOUT FEAR OF DISCRIMINATION.**
* **WE HAVE FUNDED MULTIPLE PROJECTS AIMED AT TACKLING HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC HATE CRIME – WHAT WE WOULD CALL HBT HATE CRIME - AND TO TACKLE BROADER DISCRIMINATION…**
  + **WE ARE PRODUCING RESOURCES TO RAISE AWARENESS OF HBT ABUSE IN FOOTBALL STADIUMS.**
  + **WE ARE PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF LGBT+ LIVES TO PREVENT HBT HATE CRIME.**
  + **WE ARE HELPING TO PRODUCE AND DISTRIBUTE OF FACTSHEETS AND RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND AND TACKLE ONLINE HBT ABUSE.**
  + **AND WE ARE PROVIDING £2.7 MILLION IN FUNDING TO SUPPORT GRASSROOTS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING TO REFORM OUTDATED LAWS AND POLICIES THAT FAIL TO PROTECT LGBT+ PEOPLE ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH FROM VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION**
* **HOWEVER, WE KNOW THERE IS MORE TO DO, WHICH IS WHY WE ASKED THE LAW COMMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF CURRENT HATE CRIME LEGISLATION, WHICH THEY COMPLETED IN DECEMBER 2021.**
* **AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER THE COMMISSION’S PROPOSALS CAREFULLY AND RESPOND TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN DUE COURSE.**

***RELIGIOUS HATRED***

* **IF I MAY ADDRESS RELIGIOUS HATRED, I AM PROUD OF THE FACT THAT WE ALSO HAVE LAWS WHICH PROTECT NOT ONLY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OR BELIEF, BUT ALSO ALLOW VICTIMS OF CRIMES WHO HAVE BEEN TARGETED BECAUSE OF THEIR RELIGION OR BELIEF TO REPORT THEM AS SUCH.**
* **AND WE CONTINUE TO BOLSTER OUR EFFORTS DOMESTICALLY TO COMBAT HATRED AT HOME, WE ALSO PLEDGE TO CLAMP DOWN ON RACIST ABUSE ONLINE. THIS IS A REAL CHALLENGE WE ARE NOW FACING, AND WE ARE DOING THIS THROUGH OUR ONLINE SAFETY BILL.**

**ONLINE SAFETY BILL**

* **REGARDING THE ONLINE SAFETY BILL, THE UK’S ONLINE SAFETY BILL HAS THREE CORE OBJECTIVES: TO TACKLE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM HARMFUL OR INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT AND TO HOLD THE LARGEST PLATFORMS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR PROMISES TO ADULT USERS.**
* **THIS GROUND-BREAKING PIECE OF LEGISLATION WILL DELIVER THE COMMITMENT OF MAKING THE UK THE SAFEST PLACE IN THE WORLD TO BE ONLINE.**
* **AND PLATFORMS THAT FAIL TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC WILL NEED TO ANSWER TO OFCOM, OUR NATIONAL INDEPENDENT REGULATOR. OFCOM WILL HAVE THE POWER TO FINE COMPANIES FAILING IN THEIR DUTY OF CARE UP TO TEN PERCENT OF THEIR ANNUAL GLOBAL TURNOVER.**

**WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS**

* **AND WE ARE WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS. THEY HAVE A KEY ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OF OUR UPR PROCESS. AHEAD OF OUR REVIEW AND SUBMISSION OF OUR STATE REPORT, VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT EVENTS TOOK PLACE IN ALL NATIONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.**
* **I RECENTLY MET BARONESS FALKNER, THE CHAIR OF THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, MARCIAL BOO, THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE; IAN DUDDY, CHAIR OF THE SCOTTISH HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION; AND ALYSON KILPATRICK, CHIEF COMMISSIONER AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND I PAY TRIBUTE TO THE WORK THEY DO IN THIS FIELD.**
* **IN DEVELOPING THE UK NATIONAL REPORT, THE UK GOVERNMENT REVIEWED ALL PREVIOUS UN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2017.**
* **THE UKGOVERNMENT “SUPPORTS” 105 RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE POINT OF THE MID-TERM REPORT; WHILST IT IS “NOTING” 112 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2017.**

**RESPONSE TO ADVANCE QUESTIONS**

* **IF I MAY, MR. PRESIDENT, I’D LIKE TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE. SOME OF THE MEMBER STATES HAVE RAISED SOME VERY PERTINENT QUESTIONS.**
* **LIECHTENSTEIN RAISED TWO QUESTIONS: ON THE STEPS TAKEN TO RATIFY THE KAMPALA AMENDMENTS TO THE ROME STATUTE ON THE CRIME OF AGGRESSION…**
* **…AND ON THE STEPS TAKEN TO RATIFY THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON A COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE. THE LATTER WAS ALSO RAISED BY PANAMA AND BELGIUM.**
* **THE UK HAS ALWAYS BEEN, AND REMAINS, A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT. WE HAVE INCORPORATED THE ROME STATUTE INTO UK LAW THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT ACT 2001.**
* **HOWEVER, WE DO NOT PLAN TO RATIFY THE CRIME OF AGGRESSION AMENDMENTS. WE BELIEVE THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL HAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY – IT IS FOR THEM TO DETERMINE WHEN AN ACT OF AGGRESSION HAS OCCURRED, AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE UN CHARTER.**
* **ON THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON A COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE, THE UK HAS NEITHER SIGNED NOR RATIFIED THIS.**
* **WE HAVE NONETHELESS CAREFULLY CONSIDERED THE EFFECT OF THIS OPTIONAL PROTOCOL AND CONCLUDED THAT OUR DOMESTIC LEGISLATION ENABLES CHILDREN TO CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT DECISIONS IN THE DOMESTIC COURTS, SUCH AS THROUGH JUDICIAL REVIEW AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY TRIBUNALS.**
* **SWITZERLAND RAISED A QUESTION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF A TIME LIMIT ON IMMIGRATION DETENTION. OUR POSITION IS THAT A TIME LIMIT ON IMMIGRATION DETENTION WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE IN ENSURING THAT THOSE WITH NO RIGHT TO BE IN THE UK, LEAVE THE UK.**
* **THE LAW IS CLEAR THAT WE ONLY HAVE THE POWERS TO DETAIN PERSONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXAMINATION, OR FOR REMOVAL WHERE THERE IS A REALISTIC PROSECT OF THAT REMOVAL TAKING PLACE WITHIN A REASONABLE TIMEFRAME – OTHERWISE PEOPLE ARE RELEASED. THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO USING DETENTION ONLY WHERE NECESSARY.**
* **GERMANY AND URUGUAY RAISED QUESTIONS ON OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ECHR, ADHERENCE TO INTERIM MEASURES AND JUDGMENTS ISSUED BY THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE DOMESTIC IMPLEMENTATION OF CONVENTION RIGHTS AND THE LEGISLATIVE CHANGES OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS. MY EARLIER REMARKS HAVE ADDRESSED THESE CONCERNS, BUT I WOULD ADD THAT IT HAS BEEN THE LONGSTANDING PRACTICE OF THE UK GOVERNMENT TO OBSERVE INTERIM MEASURES.**
* **PANAMA RAISED ADDITIONAL POINTS REGARDING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE; AND THE PARTICIPATION AND PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AT THE CENTRE OF THE NET ZERO STRATEGY. THEY ALSO REQUESTED AN UPDATE ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE:**
* **IN 2017 SCOTLAND ESTABLISHED THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS TO PROVIDE INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC ADVICE ABOUT THE ADDITIONAL MEASURES NEEDED TO END GENDER INEQUALITY, INCLUDING WOMEN’S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION.** 
  + **…THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT HAS LEGISLATED IN RELATION TO GENDER REPRESENTATION ON PUBLIC BOARDS.**
  + **FUNDING IS ALSO PROVIDED TO A NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS WORKING TO IMPROVE WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN ELECTED OFFICE. CURRENTLY THERE ARE A RECORD NUMBER OF WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, AND THIS YEAR SAW A RECORD NUMBER OF WOMEN ELECTED AS LOCAL COUNCILLORS IN SCOTLAND.**
  + **AND WE ARE FULLY BEHIND OUR COMMITMENT TO REACH NET ZERO BY 2050, WHICH WE BELIEVE IS THE SOLUTION TO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE, INCREASING ENERGY SECURITY, HALTING THE DECLINE OF NATURE, AND REVERSING SLOWING ECONOMIC GROWTH.**
  + **IN SCOTLAND, THERE IS A NATIONAL JUST TRANSITION PLANNING FRAMEWORK, WHICH ENSURES THAT THOSE WHO STAND TO BE MOST IMPACTED BY THE TRANSITION TO NET ZERO ARE GIVEN A VOICE IN DETERMINING THEIR FUTURE, AND THAT INCLUDES CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.**
  + **THE UK STRONGLY BELIEVES THAT TO BE TRULY EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE, OUR COUNTER TERRORISM AND COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM EFFORTS MUST RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS AND THE RULE OF LAW. OTHERWISE, WE RISK EXACERBATING THE CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO TERRORISM, AND UNDERMINING THE VERY VALUES THAT THE UN WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE.**
* **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA RAISED A QUESTION ON ENSURING THAT ASYLUM SEEKERS HAVE ACCESS TO PROTECTION IN A THIRD COUNTRY – THAT IS, UNDER OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP WITH RWANDA.**
* **UNDER THIS PARTNERSHIP, THOSE WHO TRAVEL TO THE UK BY ILLEGAL, DANGEROUS AND UNNECESSARY METHODS, WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR RELOCATION TO RWANDA, WHERE THEY WILL HAVE THEIR ASYLUM CLAIM PROCESSED.**
* **RWANDA IS A FUNDAMENTALLY SAFE AND SECURE COUNTRY WITH A TRACK RECORD OF SUPPORTING OVER 130,000 REFUGEES, INCLUDING THROUGH THE UNHCR.**
* **WE WOULD ONLY EVER WORK WITH COUNTRIES THAT WE KNOW ARE SAFE AND WILL TREAT ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS.**
* **BELGIUM RAISED ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO:**
  + **THE RATIFICATION OF THE FIRST OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, (NAMELY THE RIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL PETITION) AND THE ILO DOMESTIC WORKERS CONVENTION (N° 189);**
  + **THEY RAISED QUESTIONS RELATED TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK;**
  + **THE TRAINING OF** **JUSTICE OFFICIALS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL FOLLOWING OUR RATIFICATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION;**
  + **AND ACCESS TO ABORTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND INCLUDING SUFFICIENT STAFFING AND FUNDING;**
  + **AND RAISED THE MINIMUM AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY.**
* **WE HAVE CONSIDERED OUR POSITION ON ACCEPTING THE RIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL PETITION AND BEYOND CEDAW AND THE DISABILITY CONVENTION.**
* **WE CONCLUDED THAT THE BENEFITS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCEDURE REMAIN TOO UNCLEAR, ESPECIALLY FOR THE APPLICANT.**
* **IN PARTICULAR, THE UN PROCESS IS NOT AN APPEAL MECHANISM – IT CANNOT REVERSE DECISIONS OF THE DOMESTIC COURTS, AND IT CANNOT RESULT IN AN ENFORCEABLE AWARD OF COMPENSATION FOR THE APPLICANT.**
* **PEOPLE IN THE UK ALREADY HAVE A ROUTE TO APPEAL AGAINST DECISIONS THAT IMPACT THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS, EITHER THROUGH THE DOMESTIC COURTS, OR TO THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAVING EXHAUSTED THE VARIOUS DOMESTIC REMEDIES WITHIN THE UK.**
* **WITH REGARD TO ILO 189, THE UK ALREADY HAS IN PLACE COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES TO PROTECT WORKERS’ RIGHTS, INCLUDING ON: COMBATING DISCRIMINATION, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT AT WORK; RETIREMENT AGE; EMPLOYEES’ PERSONAL DATA; PREGNANT EMPLOYEES’ RIGHTS; AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR (AND RECRUITMENT OF) DISABLED PEOPLE.**
* **THE UK GOVERNMENT REMAINS CONCERNED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ILO 189 WOULD IMPOSE DISPROPORTIONATE BURDENS ON BUSINESSES AND RAISE ISSUES OF PRIVACY; THIS COULD HAVE SERIOUS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES.**
* **I BELIEVE MY EARLIER REMARKS HAVE ADDRESSED THE POINT RAISED ABOUT THE UK’S DOMESTIC HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION. SO, I WILL LIMIT MY RESPONSE TO THE TRAINING OF JUSTICE OFFICIALS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL.**
* **IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE RESPECTIVE HEADS OF JUDICIARY OF THE THREE LEGAL JURISDICTIONS – THAT IS, ENGLAND AND WALES, SCOTLAND, AND NORTHERN IRELAND – HAVE THE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR JUDICIAL TRAINING, SO AS TO UPHOLD THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY. THE JUDICIARY WILL CONSIDER WHICH MEASURES IN THE CONVENTION REQUIRE INCLUSION IN JUDICIAL TRAINING.**
* **ON THE MATTER OF TRAINING OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, IN ENGLAND, THE COLLEGE OF POLICING PUBLISHES ADVICE COVERING A RANGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS’ AREAS, FOR EXAMPLE ON DOMESTIC ABUSE AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION. IN 2019 THE COLLEGE PUBLISHED A SERIES OF ADVICE FOR THE POLICE ON STALKING AND HARASSMENT, AND IN 2021, IT PUBLISHED NEW ADVICE RELATING TO SO-CALLED ‘HONOUR’-BASED ABUSE AND PUBLIC SEXUAL HARASSMENT.**
* **IN ADDITION, TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2018, THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PROVIDED FUNDING FOR THE TRAINING OF 14,000 POLICE OFFICERS AND STAFF, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF 700 DOMESTIC ABUSE CHAMPIONS TO EMBED TRAINING AND SUSTAIN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE.**
* **WITH REGARD TO ACCESS TO ABORTION SERVICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND, ON THE 24TH OCTOBER, IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT WILL STEP IN – TO COMMISSION ABORTION SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND WILL MEET THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUSTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE COMING WEEKS TO ENSURE THESE SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED.**
* **THIS WILL ENABLE THE UK TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE 2018 COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN REPORT WHICH HIGHLIGHTED EQUALITY ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND.**
* **THE UK GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT APPROPRIATE FUNDING IS AVAILABLE TO ENSURE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TO GET ESSENTIAL TRAINING AND THAT RECRUITMENT OF STAFF CAN PROGRESS – SO THAT SERVICES CAN BE IMPLEMENTED.**
* **ULTIMATELY, IT REMAINS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE TO FUND ABORTION SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND.**
* **AS TO THE MINIMUM AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY, SETTING THE AGE AT 10 FOR ENGLAND AND WALES PROVIDES APPROPRIATE FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO COMMIT SERIOUS OFFENCES, ALLOWING FOR EARLY INTERVENTION IN A CHILD’S LIFE, WITH THE AIM OF PREVENTING SUBSEQUENT OFFENDING.**
* **IN SCOTLAND HOWEVER, THE AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY (SCOTLAND)** [**ACT 2019**](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/7/contents/enacted) **INCREASED THE AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY FROM 8 TO 12 YEARS.**

**CONCLUSION**

* **IN CONCLUSION, MR PRESIDENT AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER THESE OPENING REMARKS RE-CONFIRMING THE IMPORTANCE THE UK ATTACHES TO OUR INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS. AND I NOW LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOUR VIEWS.**

**THANK YOU.**