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**Wednesday**  
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
<b>Baroness Stowell of Beeston</b>	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
<b>Earl Howe</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Anelay of St Johns</b>	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>Baroness Altmann</b>	Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Bates</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Lord Bridges of Headley</b>	Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office
<b>Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change, Wales Office and Whip
<b>Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen</b>	Whip
<b>Earl of Courtown</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Dunlop</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office
<b>Baroness Evans of Bowes Park</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Faulks</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
<b>Lord Freud</b>	Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Lord Gardiner of Kimble</b>	Deputy Chief Whip and Spokesman for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Lord Keen of Elie</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Lord Maude of Horsham</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>Lord Nash</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
<b>Baroness Neville-Rolfe</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport
<b>Lord O'Neill of Gatley</b>	Commercial Secretary to the Treasury
<b>Lord Prior of Brampton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
<b>Baroness Shields</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport
<b>Lord Taylor of Holbeach</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Baroness Verma</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

*Wednesday, 17 June 2015*

## EPSCO

[HLWS33]

**Lord Freud:** My Right Honourable Friend The Minister for Employment (Priti Patel) has made the following Written Statement.

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council will take place on 18 June 2015 in Luxembourg. The UK will be represented by the Minister for Welfare Reform, Lord Freud.

There will be a Policy debate on the European Semester 2015. As part of the discussion, the Council will seek approval of draft Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes 2015 to each Member State; seek endorsement of the opinions of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC) for the Assessment of the 2015 Country-specific Recommendations (CSRs) and implementation of the 2014 CSRs and endorsement of the EMCO report on Employment Performance Monitor and Benchmarks.

The Council will seek a General approach on the Proposals for a Council Decision on Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States.

The Council will also seek to Adopt draft Council Conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 3/2015 "EU Youth Guarantee: first steps taken, but implementation risk ahead"; and Draft Council Conclusions on equal income opportunities for women and men: Closing the gender gap on pensions.

The Council will receive Progress reports on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among

non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures; and the Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Under any other business, the Latvian Presidency will inform on current legislative proposals, and outcomes of the conferences organised by the Latvian Presidency. The Commission will provide information on the National Roma Integration Strategy – Annual Implementation Report; and the Report on the Functioning of the Transitional Arrangements on Free Movement of Workers from Croatia and accompanying Commission Staff Working Document. The Luxembourg delegation will provide information on the Work Programme of the incoming Presidency.

## Oil and Gas Authority

[HLWS34]

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** My Hon Friend the Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change (Andrea Leadsom) has today made the following statement.

I wish to inform the House that on 1 April 2015, whilst Parliament was prorogued, the Department of Energy and Climate Change ("DECC") established the United Kingdom's new arms'-length oil and gas regulator, the Oil and Gas Authority ("OGA"). Founding the OGA as an Executive Agency of DECC, represents a critical step in implementing the recommendations contained in Sir Ian Wood's 2014 report ("Wood Review") into maximising economic recovery from the United Kingdom's Continental Shelf ("UKCS").

Subject to the passage of legislation in this Session of Parliament, I expect the OGA to transition from an Executive Agency of DECC to a Government-owned company.

# Written Answers

Wednesday, 17 June 2015

## A1: Nottinghamshire

Asked by *Lord Jopling*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 8 June (HL105), what "significant problems" caused the cost of the A1 roadworks near Gamston Airfield almost to double; and whether the contractor will be deleted from the list of approved contractors. [HL349]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The significant problems encountered by Highways England and their contractors were:-

- the removal and treatment of a previously unidentified old contaminated landfill site which was buried in woodland and unknown at the tender stage,
- the need to excavate old concrete/tarmac within the central grassed reservation which was not identified by site surveys at the tender stage,
- the need for an additional infiltration pond,
- a change to the central pier design which while increasing short term costs will save long term maintenance costs.

Discussions with the contractors are ongoing. Highways England does not hold lists of contractors but is able to take into account past performance as part of their procurement process.

## Advertising: Children

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the Impact Report 2015 by Bye Buy Childhood, what plans they have to work with the regulators to strengthen penalties against companies who repeatedly have complaints about their advertising upheld. [HL159]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** Advertising in the UK is controlled through a system of co-regulation and self-regulation, enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The Government supports the ASA's aim to take action against all misleading, harmful or offensive advertising and ensure compliance across all sectors. ASA has a range of sanctions it can take against non-compliant advertisers, including Ad Alerts to the media, withdrawal of trading privileges, mandatory pre-vetting and ultimately referral to Trading Standards. There are no current plans to strengthen these sanctions, but they are kept under review.

## Africa: Refugees

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the willingness of their African

development partners to address at source the underlying causes of the increase in the number of their citizens seeking to enter the European Union through irregular migration. [HL214]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The EU-African Union (AU) Summit Declaration in 2014 reiterated a shared commitment to tackling irregular migration in a comprehensive manner, including by addressing the root causes. Since then EU and African countries have worked together closely through the Khartoum and Rabat Processes, which include commitments to promote sustainable development in countries of origin. The EU and AU will hold a Summit on migration in Malta later this year to drive this work forward. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (Mr Duddridge), will also discuss tackling irregular migration with African partners at the upcoming AU Summit in Johannesburg.

## Burma: Ethnic Groups

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to prevent the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar; and when they last held discussions with the government of Myanmar on this subject. [HL354]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We have raised our serious concern at the situation of the Rohingya community in all of our recent Ministerial contacts with the Burmese government. On 18 May, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right Hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), called the Burmese Ambassador in London to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to express our concern at the situation of Rohingya and the related migrant crisis in the Bay of Bengal. He made clear the need for Burma to work towards a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation and ensures the civil and human rights of all communities within Rakhine State. The UK is one of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors in Rakhine State. We have invested over £18m in humanitarian support there since 2012.

## Channel Tunnel Railway Line: High Speed 2 Railway Line

Asked by *Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to building a rail link between the terminus of High Speed 2 at Euston station and the terminus of High Speed 1 at St Pancras International station. [HL396]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The High Speed 2 Phase One hybrid Bill includes a link to High Speed 1. It has been decided not to take forward this rail link. However, a study has been commissioned into better connectivity to

the Continent which is due to report later this year. Whilst there are currently no plans to provide a rail link between Euston and St Pancras, we are looking at how connectivity between the two stations can be improved.

### **Cycling: Accidents**

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps, if any, they have taken since 1 May to reduce fatalities to cyclists caused by heavy goods vehicles. [HL262]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Since 1 May 2015, the Department for Transport has not taken any specific, additional steps to directly reduce the number of fatalities to cyclists caused by heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

However, improving road safety including the reduction of cyclists killed or seriously injured on the roads, particularly by HGVs is a subject that we take extremely seriously. The Department continues to work to improve the safety of cyclists and the reduction of cyclist fatalities, through actions including regulations impacting on the design of vehicles, and education campaigns aimed at both drivers and cyclists, for example the THINK! "tips" campaign.

This THINK! campaign uses a series of practical tips to advise and remind both groups of the rules of the road and the positive actions they can take to help reduce cyclist casualties.

The campaign previously ran in Autumn 2013 and Spring 2014 using paid-for roadside advertising in five cities where cycling KSIs are over represented - Cambridge, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham.

THINK! repeated the campaign in these five cities in March 2015, to build on awareness and knowledge of the tips amongst drivers and cyclists. In addition, the campaign was also extended to seven additional cities - Southampton, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Bradford, Kingston upon Hull, Brighton and Hove and Liverpool, these were selected as they also have high levels cyclists being killed or seriously injured (KSIs).

Later this year, the Department will be commencing Section 21 of the Infrastructure Act 2015, and consulting on a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). The safety of cyclists and our plans to tackle cyclist fatalities caused by all vehicle types, including HGVs will form a key part of the CWIS document.

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have issued any guidance on performance and evaluation criteria for equipment designed to reduce collisions between heavy goods vehicles and cyclists. [HL263]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Department for Transport has not issued guidance on additional equipment fitted to heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), although officials are actively participating in work commissioned by Transport for London (TfL) to develop an independent methodology for performance and

evaluation criteria for the effectiveness of such equipment. TfL is aiming for the methodology to be validated and available in the Autumn.

Prior to entry into service, new heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) already require approval of mirrors, including their field of view and correct attachment to the vehicle. Information on these requirements is publicly available.

### **Driving: Licensing**

*Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the difficulties caused by recent changes in policies relating to the issuing of driving licences to elderly motorists and other motorists who either do not use the internet or do not have easy access to the internet. [HL405]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has introduced a number of services for drivers and others to obtain the information that was previously held on the paper counterpart to the driving licence. These include an online service, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Drivers who cannot or do not wish to use the online service can telephone the DVLA to obtain a code which will allow them to share their driving licence details if they wish to do so. Drivers can also give permission to the DVLA for certain information from their record to be given verbally over the telephone to a nominated person or organisation.

*Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advance publicity was made to advertise recent driving licence policy changes at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. [HL408]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) utilised media, online and direct mail channels to inform customers and businesses about the abolition of the paper counterpart to the photocard driving licence. The DVLA also engaged directly with trade organisations and car hire companies who may need to check the status of drivers. Since March 2015, the DVLA has written directly to 640,000 professional bus and lorry drivers and sent information to around a million drivers each month with driving licence renewals. Information on GOV.UK about the change has been viewed more than 2.6 million times and DVLA representatives took part in 40 pre-planned broadcast interviews on 8 June, the day the change was introduced.

### **Egypt: Human Rights**

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Egypt about human rights violations, and in particular arbitrary and unlawful killings and the disappearances

of civilians, detentions without trial and arbitrary arrests of human rights lawyers, government pressure on the media and trades unions, and impunity for members of the army and police. [HL362]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We raise our human rights concerns regularly with representatives of the Egyptian government. On 17 May the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), raised our concerns over the sentencing to death of over one hundred individuals, including former President Morsi, with the Egyptian Ambassador in London. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) officials have also discussed this case and other human rights concerns with representatives of the Egyptian government.

We continue to believe that stability and prosperity in Egypt is dependent on open and inclusive politics and on full respect for the rights contained in the Egyptian constitution. That is why in recent months FCO Ministers have asked the Egyptian authorities to take action to release journalists and political detainees who remain imprisoned, to review mass judicial decisions, and to remove restrictions on civil society.

### Eritrea: Refugees

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they have about the safety of the Eritrean refugees abducted by ISIS in Libya on 3 June. [HL361]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK is aware of reports that 86 Eritrean nationals were abducted in Libya on 3 June by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. We have no further information at this time about what has happened to them. We have seen appalling acts of terror inside Libya, including the targeting of others because of their faith. This strengthens our determination to work with our international partners to counter the terrorist threat in Libya and the region, and to support UN efforts to find a lasting political solution.

### European Parliament Members: Allowances

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much each Member of the European Parliament is entitled to claim per year for staff costs; and whether the level of funding made available to MEPs forms part of their reform agenda. [HL310]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Members of the European Parliament (MEP) may choose their own staff, within a maximum budget set by the European Parliament of €21,379 per MEP per month. None of these funds are paid to the MEPs themselves. Since 2009, MEPs may no longer have close relatives among their staff.

The British Government has pushed hard for reform of MEPs' salary and allowances in order to introduce

transparency and accountability. There has been some progress. For example, MEPs must attend and vote at sessions of the European Parliament to receive their full allowances and may reclaim travel costs on presentation of receipts only.

In general, the Government is pushing for greater transparency and budgetary restraint in EU spending. The EU institutions have an important role to play and should be held to the same resource constraints as Member States.

The Government achieved the first ever reduction in the EU's budget in 2014 which shows that change is possible.

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Recruitment

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to recruit Russian experts to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and how many fluent Russian speakers have been recruited since March 2015. [HL353]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Since 2010 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has increased from 43 to 56 the number of Russian speakers posted to Russia and the former Soviet Union. Full language training is given to all FCO officers who require it for their postings.

We have also launched an Eastern Europe and Central Asia cadre of experts in March of this year – already counting 400 members – designed to pool experience and underpin a first class foreign policy towards Russia and the region.

We have also re-opened the FCO Language School that had been closed down in 2007.

Although we have recruited no Russian speakers since March 2015, we expect three Russian speakers to join the FCO later this year.

### General Practitioners

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the results of a survey on behalf of Monitor, which found that one in ten people are dissatisfied with their general practitioner surgery. [HL235]

**Lord Prior of Brampton:** On 1 June 2015, Monitor published *Improving GP Services: Commissioners and Patient Choice*, which included the findings of a nationally representative survey conducted by Ipsos Mori.

The report noted a high level of satisfaction with general practice overall. It found that 81% of patients were satisfied with their general practitioner (GP) practice, while only 10% were dissatisfied.

Monitor's report found that, after location, patients most value the ease of getting an appointment when choosing a GP practice. In order to improve access for

patients, the Government has invested £175 million over two years through the Prime Minister's GP Access Fund. This is testing improved and innovative access to GP services through longer opening hours, such as at evenings and weekends, but also different ways of accessing services, for example the use of Skype consultations. Altogether, there are now 57 schemes covering over 2,500 practices, meaning that over 18 million patients are expected to benefit from improved access and transformational change at local level by March 2016.

Additionally, the Primary Care Infrastructure Fund is investing £1 billion and £25 million as part of the Prime Minister's GP Access Fund, over four years to improve premises and information technology, which will also improve access.

### Homelessness: Young People

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that 16 and 17 year-olds presenting as homeless receive a seamless joint assessment from Children's Services and Housing Services. [HL238]

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to legislate to prevent under-18s from being considered intentionally homeless and therefore having state support withdrawn. [HL239]

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by The Children's Society Getting the house in order, which found that few 16 and 17 year-olds are being properly assessed and supported when they present as homeless. [HL240]

**Lord Nash:** The Department for Education is clear about how local authorities should support 16 and 17 year-olds presenting as homeless. The report from the Children's Society, 'Getting the house in order' reminds local authorities to ensure that under-18s who are homeless receive the help they need. The government has no current plans to legislate on this issue, but we are taking action to ensure that all homeless people have access to the help that they need: we have invested £500 million in homelessness services, including funding for the development of the 'Youth accommodation pathway' service model. This is designed to support all young people remain in the family home where it is safe to do so, and offer tailored support options for those that cannot remain in the family home, including supported accommodation as a starting point for 16- to 17-year-olds.

With regard to 16- to 17-year-old care leavers, revised statutory guidance was issued to local authorities in 2010, setting out how they can better meet the needs of this group. It makes clear that local authorities should work pro-actively with young people and their families to identify and resolve issues which have led them to become homeless. The guidance also underlines the

importance of effective agency collaboration between Children's Services and Housing Services.

The guidance reminds Housing Services that applicants cannot be considered to have become homeless intentionally if they fail to take up an offer of accommodation; the guidance says that homelessness can only be deemed to be 'intentional' where the applicant has ceased to occupy accommodation that it would have been reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy. Local authorities that do not follow these procedures are open to legal challenge. The full statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16- to 17-year-olds who may be homeless or require accommodation can be accessed on GOV.UK.

Since 2013, Ofsted inspections of local authorities' children's social care services have included a separate sub-judgement on care leavers, which includes an assessment of whether the local authority is ensuring that care leavers have access to suitable accommodation. Where Ofsted judges that a local authority's social care services are inadequate, the department may intervene to secure necessary improvements in the quality of care that is provided.

### Housing: Construction

*Asked by Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the regional distribution of the public sector land in England that they expect to release for the building of new homes; and how much of this land they expect to be brownfield. [HL299]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government is committed to releasing surplus public sector land with capacity for up to 150,000 homes by 2020. It is important that we prioritise the release of land where there is housing need. We are clear that brownfield land that is suitable for housing has a vital role to play in meeting the need for new homes, and ensuring that the Green Belt is protected.

Government Departments are reviewing their land holdings in order to identify suitable surplus public sector land to meet the commitment. We also expect local authorities to consider how they can release their surplus land.

### Ilois: Resettlement

*Asked by Lord Avebury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking on the possible resettlement of the Chagos Islands; which departments are conducting this work; and whether they will publish any further conclusions they reach on the feasibility and costs of resettlement by those exiles and their descendants who wish to return. [HL280]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** I refer the noble Lord to the Written Ministerial Statement of 24 March 2015 made

by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (James Duddridge), which I repeated the same day in the House of Lords, (HLWS440).

Further work building on the independent KPMG Feasibility Study is now underway to seek to clarify fundamental uncertainties around the likely costs, ongoing liabilities and potential demand for resettlement. This is being led by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in close collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development, and we will explain our conclusions to interested parties in due course.

### Israel: Palestinians

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's changing policy towards Hamas, and (2) what support they will give to Hamas in policing the Salafist jihadist movement and ISIS in Gaza. [HL343]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The Government of Israel proscribes the whole of Hamas and the law in Israel therefore prohibits any discussion with the organisation. We are not aware of any change in this policy. While the British Government proscribes only the military wing of Hamas, we have no contacts with Hamas. Our policy on Hamas remains clear: they must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements.

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Israel concerning the number of children killed and injured in the West Bank and Gaza, in the light of the current UN debate on Israel's inclusion on the list of countries which violate children's rights. [HL344]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raise the issue of excessive use of force with the Israeli government and security figures including on cases of children injured and killed. Officials last raised issues surrounding the welfare of Palestinian children with the Israeli Ministry of Justice on 2 June.

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Israel concerning the 64 Palestinians, including nine children, who were injured by Israeli Forces in the West Bank during the week ending 1 June. [HL345]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** While officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have not raised these incidents with the Israeli authorities, we do regularly raise our concerns with representatives of the Israeli security forces on the use of lethal and non-lethal ammunition.

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Israel concerning the State Attorney's decision to file an indictment for only a minor offence in the case of 16 year-old Samir Awad. [HL346]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have not yet raised the latest update on the Samir Awad case with the Israeli authorities, but they are planning to do so at the next relevant meeting. We understand that the Israeli State Attorney's office made the decision to charge the respective soldiers in this case with reckless and negligent use of firearms. This decision came from the Israel Defence Forces' assessment that it was not clear which of the soldiers fired the firearms. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv is concerned about the high rate of criminal investigations into the fatal shootings of Palestinians that are closed without indictments. They regularly meet with senior Israeli authorities in the Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's Office, Military Advocate General's office, State Comptroller, National Security Council and other government bodies to lobby on this issue.

### Merlin Helicopters

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether all Merlin Mk2 helicopters will have been fitted with Nimrod MRA4 anti-submarine technology by October 2016. [HL335]

**Earl Howe:** The appropriate elements of the anti-submarine technology originally planned for Nimrod MRA4 are part of a modification programme to all of the Royal Navy's Merlin Mk2. This capability will be progressively delivered from March 2016. It is expected that all Merlin Mk2, subject to operational constraints, will be upgraded to this standard by October 2016.

### Middle East: Nuclear Weapons

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threat to stability in the Middle East of a nuclear-armed Israel; and what action they will take to discourage nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. [HL352]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK notes that Israel has neither confirmed nor denied that it possesses nuclear weapons. Israel is the only state in the region not to have acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The British Government continues to call on Israel to do so as a non nuclear weapon state. In that regard we also call on Israel to agree a full scope Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The UK will continue to discourage nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, including by working



with E3+3 (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the UK, and the US) partners and Iran to negotiate a comprehensive deal on Iran's nuclear programme, supporting efforts to tackle the deep seated regional tensions and genuine security concerns in the region, as well as working towards holding a conference on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

### Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

*Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what savings have been made at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency through not issuing tax badges for displaying on cars, and what assessment has been made of potential losses in tax revenue through increased difficulty in identifying non-payers. [HL407]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) collects £6 billion in vehicle excise duty every year. The changes to the administration of vehicle excise duty are expected to save the DVLA £13.8m each year. A breakdown of these savings is shown below:

No longer having to print or store tax discs.	£1.3m pa
No longer having to post tax discs to customers.	£7.9m pa
No longer having to process applications for vehicle excise duty refunds (which are now paid automatically without the need for an application) or handle enquiries about lost or missing tax discs.	£1.2m pa
Reduction in Post Office Ltd costs as they no longer issue paper tax discs, but offer an assisted digital service instead.	£3.4m pa

Businesses will also save an estimated £8.6m each year from not having to post tax discs to customers, apply for refunds of vehicle excise duty and pay to replace lost or stolen tax discs.

The Tax Impact and Information Note published by Her Majesty's Treasury alongside the Finance Bill 2014 stated that abolition of the tax disc was not expected to have an Exchequer impact. The DVLA operates a comprehensive package of measures to tackle vehicle excise duty evasion. These range from the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition camera, reminder letters, and penalties through to court prosecutions and the wheelclamping and/or removal of unlicensed vehicles. This approach has not changed following abolition of the tax disc. The DVLA will continue to monitor vehicle excise duty evasion rates.

### Motor Vehicles: Hire Services

*Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will investigate the difficulties reported as having been caused by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

policies in relation to the hiring of motor vehicles. [HL404]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The paper counterpart to the photocard driving licence was abolished on 8 June 2015 as part of the Red Tape Challenge commitments. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) introduced a number of services for drivers and others to obtain the information that was previously held on the counterpart. These include an online service.

There was a slowdown in service on 8 June, when high demand led to some customers being unable to access the online service. During this period, the DVLA increased the number of available telephone lines in its contact centre. This meant that all customers who needed a code to be able to share their driving licence details with third parties, including car hire companies, could get one. In the week commencing 8 June, the DVLA answered all calls to the dedicated local rate telephone service to check driving licence details within one minute 55 seconds.

The issue with the DVLA's online service was fixed at around 1am on 9 June and the service has been working as it should since. More than 280,000 customers have successfully used the online service between Monday 8 June and Thursday 11 June and more than 83,000 check codes have been generated. Also, more than 18,000 check codes have been redeemed by third parties to check the details on the driving licences.

*Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what level of telephone service was available recently at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency for motorists who wished to prove their credentials in order to hire cars following recent changes in policy. [HL406]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** To prepare for the abolition of the paper counterpart to the photocard driving licence, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) increased the number of telephone lines by 50% and staffing levels by 28%.

This has successfully addressed the 18% increase in the number of calls received. In the week commencing 8 June, the DVLA answered all calls to the dedicated local rate telephone service to check driving licence details, within one minute 55 seconds.

### Navy: Vehicles

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Astor of Hever on 25 October 2013 (WA 203-4), whether the decision has now been made whether the Royal Navy should own and operate shore- and sea-based drones for maritime operation and wide area ocean surveillance. [HL333]

**Earl Howe:** Royal Navy plans include the use of ship launched and recovered Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). These plans do not currently include the operation

of land-based systems, but the ability for sea-based UAS to be used ashore may be considered in the future.

### Overseas Aid

*Asked by Lord Vinson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether part of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Union development aid budget should be counted in the calculation of the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overseas aid. [HL285]

**Baroness Verma:** The majority of the External Assistance Budget of the European Commission is deemed to be official development assistance eligible, and therefore is included in the calculation of the 0.7 per cent of gross national income.

### Russia: Propaganda

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what capacity they have immediately available to counter misleading propaganda by official and unofficial Russian sources; and what plans they have for using it. [HL311]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The British Government uses a range of tools to counter Russian propaganda: corrective statements, social media (as exemplified by our Embassy in Kyiv's Twitter feed @UKinUkraine), and regular contact with traditional media via Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers and our Embassies in Europe and the Former Soviet Union. We coordinate with like minded international partners such as the US on this work.

We have also funded £1.2m of projects in the last financial year to support strategic communications in Ukraine, and are increasing this spend by 50% this year. Additionally, the Good Governance Fund (£20m, covering Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina) will fund projects which support independent, pluralistic and reliable media in the region.

### Russia: Sanctions

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether all members of the Russian cabinet, together with senior officials in executive and military posts, are covered by existing sanctions and travel bans. [HL312]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** EU sanctions are designed to impose a cost on Russia for its illegal actions in Ukraine. So far the EU has listed 151 individuals in line with the designation criteria agreed by the Council. The EU has focused on listing Russians who have (amongst other things) been associated with, voiced support for, and been held responsible for destabilising eastern Ukraine and annexing Crimea.

### Saudi Arabia

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Saudi Arabia concerning the funding of extremist jihadi movements, such as ISIS, and its steps to propagate Wahhabism outside Saudi Arabia. [HL348]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), and his Saudi Arabian counterpart both attended the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Coalition Small Group Ministerial meeting in Paris on 2 June. In addition to the plenary meeting, the Foreign Secretary discussed ISIL with Ministers from across the Gulf Cooperation Council, including a separate bilateral meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al Jubeir. With ISIL on its doorstep in Iraq and Syria, and following the attacks on 22 and 29 May at two mosques in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom is a key part of international efforts to defeat ISIL. The King and the religious establishment continue to condemn ISIL clearly and publicly, and emphasise that they do not in any way represent the teachings of the Islamic faith. The Saudi Arabian government is working to reduce the threat that religious extremists pose in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, and has a comprehensive set of laws in place to prevent terrorist financing, which it enforces vigorously.

### Shaker Aamer

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the release of Mr Shaker Aamer following his clearance for release from Guantanamo Bay. [HL363]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Following the meeting on 16 January between the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), and President Obama, Mr Aamer's case has been prioritised for review through an interagency process which involves six government departments. The review is currently underway.

It is necessary for the British Government to keep the details of diplomatic discussions with the US Administration confidential. Any breach of the US Administration's expectation of confidentiality would be likely to hinder UK efforts to secure Mr Aamer's release and return.

However, Mr Aamer's case remains a high priority for the Government and we continue to make clear to the US that we want him released and returned to the UK as a matter of urgency. We are confident that the US government understands the seriousness of the UK's request for Mr Aamer's release.

## South Sudan: Armed Conflict

*Asked by **The Earl of Sandwich***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of how many newly displaced and malnourished people there are in South Sudan following the latest outbreak of fighting in Unity State. [HL282]

**Baroness Verma:** The exact numbers of newly displaced and malnourished people following the May outbreak of fighting in Unity State have yet to be confirmed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Due to the ongoing fighting, humanitarian access has been extremely limited, preventing assessment of the humanitarian impact. We expect an update in mid-June, following the launch of the mid-year review of the 2015 United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan in Geneva on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

*Asked by **The Earl of Sandwich***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the loss of food production this year owing to the conflict in South Sudan; and how they are assisting United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations to meet the food shortages in the affected areas. [HL283]

**Baroness Verma:** Since December 2013 over 2 million people have been displaced by the conflict in South Sudan with the majority now residing in refugee camps and reliant on humanitarian aid. While it is too early for assessments for crop production in 2015, widespread disruption to agriculture is predicted to continue across the country and internally displaced people will continue to be reliant on aid, particularly during the dry season.

Under the Humanitarian Response Plan, the United Nations has appealed for USD 1.7 billion for 2015. The UK is one of the top three donors to this plan.

*Asked by **The Earl of Sandwich***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to bring the parties to the conflict in South Sudan together; and what lessons have been learned from previous failures. [HL284]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We regularly engage with both parties to the conflict to press them to end the conflict and secure peace. Most recently the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), wrote to the South Sudanese Foreign Minister on 8 June calling on the Government of South Sudan to end the fighting and re-engage in peace talks. The failure of the parties to reach agreement in previous peace talks emphasises the need for consistent and united international pressure. We are in discussions with our partners on how the recently created UN sanctions mechanism can be best be used to force the parties to return to negotiations.

*Asked by **Baroness Cox***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of reports that the government of Sudan is supplying weapons to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition. [HL316]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We are concerned by recent reports claiming arms originating from Sudan have been used in the South Sudan conflict, and have raised this with the Government of Sudan, most recently with the new Sudanese Foreign Minister. We continue to call on all regional governments to focus their efforts on the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace process as the best means to resolve the current conflict in South Sudan and not to take any actions that could escalate the situation further.

## Syria

*Asked by **Lord Ahmed***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there is an international peace plan regarding Syria. [HL389]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** A negotiated political transition in Syria remains the only way to end the conflict and alleviate Syria's humanitarian crisis. The Geneva Communiqué, agreed in June 2012, set out steps that must be in place to establish a transitional governing body, leading to full, free and fair elections in Syria. UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, is in consultations with the parties to the Syria conflict as well as the key regional and international powers, including the UK, to establish a route back to political talks. We continue to exchange views with Mr de Mistura and his team.

## Syria: Armed Conflict

*Asked by **Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to UNICEF's call for negotiations with Islamic State in Syria, with a view to persuading it to allow UNICEF into areas controlled by the militants. [HL338]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK continues to call on all sides to the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law and ensure free, unimpeded access for neutral and impartial humanitarian agencies to provide vital assistance to all those in need. The UK is providing £59.5 million to help over two million displaced Iraqis, and £800 million of humanitarian aid in response to the crisis in Syria, which is the largest ever UK response to a single humanitarian crisis. The UK continues to work to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict, and as part of a Global Coalition to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We do not have any communication with ISIL.

## Syria: Refugees

Asked by *Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the light of the refugee crisis resulting from the war in Syria, consideration will be given to increasing the United Kingdom's humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. [HL340]

**Baroness Verma:** The UK remains committed to alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable people in Syria and the region affected by the ongoing conflict. That is why our response in Syria and the region is our largest ever response to a humanitarian crisis. To date, the UK has allocated £422 million to support refugees in the region and vulnerable host communities. This is providing food, access to water, shelter, and other essential items and services to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees. We recognise the protracted nature of the crisis and are providing longer term funding to our partners to give them the certainty they need to plan ahead, and are calling on other donors to do the same. We encourage our partners to use UK funding flexibly in order to respond where needs are greatest.

## UK Membership of EU

Asked by *Lord Stoddart of Swindon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the joint statement by the German and French Ministers for the economy that "our common goal is to render it unthinkable for any country in pursuit of its national interest to consider a future without Europe - or within a lesser union". [HL302]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), has already started working with other leaders, including those of France and Germany, on how best to address the UK's concerns and believes that he can and will succeed in negotiating to reform the EU and Britain's relationship within it.

As he has said, the EU needs to be flexible enough to find solutions for the eurozone members, while also flexible enough for countries like Britain at the heart of the single market, but not wanting to be part of the ever closer union, to be comfortable with their membership, too.

Asked by *Lord Stoddart of Swindon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will make representations to foreign leaders and European Union officials to encourage them not to intervene in the campaign leading up to the proposed referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the EU. [HL307]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The decision in the Referendum will be one for British voters to make. The Government will make this clear as necessary in its discussions with foreign leaders and EU officials in the coming months.

## Ukraine: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the use by both sides of heavy weapons at Mariinka in Ukraine; and whether they plan to take steps to continue and to tighten existing sanctions against Russia in the light of such heavy weapons use. [HL308]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We have been concerned with the escalation in fighting in eastern Ukraine, particularly around the town of Maryinka on 3 June. Reports by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on the movement of a large amount of heavy weapons in separatist held areas, close to Maryinka, preceding and during the fighting, point clearly to this being a separatist provocation. At the G7 Summit on 7-8 June, all G7 leaders were clear that sanctions should be linked to Russia's complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty.

## UN Secretariat

Asked by *Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in advance of the retirement of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, how they propose to ensure that suitable female candidates to replace him are given serious consideration. [HL342]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UN Secretary General must command the greatest possible support from the international community, and authority to carry out the role effectively. The current system of selection, whereby the Security Council nominates a single candidate to the General Assembly, ensures the candidate receives maximum support. This process has produced good consensus candidates in the past and we would not want to see it significantly changed. That said, we believe that the process would benefit from more structure and transparency, which is why the UK is supporting moves to set clear deadlines for candidates to declare themselves and for the selection to take place; encourage greater scrutiny of candidates; and promote more applications from women.

## Veterans: Prisoners

Asked by *Lord Ramsbotham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Ministry of Defence has issued to prison governors any guidelines on meeting the needs of prisoners who are armed forces veterans. [HL437]

**Earl Howe:** The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not issue guidelines to prison governors. However, my officials work closely with their counterparts in the Ministry of Justice to address the issues facing veterans in the criminal justice system. We achieve effect through the

Ex-Service Offenders Working Group (ESOWG) which includes the Ministry of Justice, the National Offender Management Service and Service charities.

The ESOWG aims to ensure that the ex-Service prison and probation offender populations, their families and resettlement services are fully informed of the support available from Defence Business Services, Veterans UK and the voluntary and charitable sectors. This support and

assistance applies during imprisonment as well as pre- and post-discharge.

A key objective of the ESOWG is to ensure that the differing requirements of ex-Service prisoners are understood and communicated and that tailored support is available in those prison establishments with higher veteran populations.

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