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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Lord True	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Bellamy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Lord Benyon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Caine	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office, Whip
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton	Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Cameron of Lochiel	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office
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Lord Evans of Rainow	Whip
Lord Gascoigne	Whip
Lord Harlech	Whip
Lord Johnson of Lainston	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade
Lord Markham	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Earl of Minto	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Lord Offord of Garvel	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade and Scotland Office
Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Lord Roborough	Whip
Baroness Scott of Bybrook	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Lord Sharpe of Epsom	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Lord Stewart of Dirleton	Advocate-General for Scotland
Baroness Swinburne	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Chief Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 15 May 2024

Conflict in Sudan: El Fasher

[HLWS463]

Lord Benyon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Deputy Foreign Secretary and Minister of State for Development and Africa (Andrew Mitchell MP), has today made the following written statement:

A year ago, the Sudanese people were plunged into a brutal and needless conflict. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continue to inflict terrible violence and harrowing suffering on their people.

The conflict in Sudan has resulted in a country-wide humanitarian catastrophe. 24.8 million people, 51% of the population, are in desperate need of assistance. Nearly five million people are at risk of famine with estimates that we could see half a million to one million excess deaths. The crushing food insecurity that millions of Sudanese people are facing continues to be exacerbated by access constraints imposed by the warring parties.

Nearly nine million people have been displaced. In a visit to Chad at the end of March, I saw first-hand the harrowing consequences of the conflict, not only for those who have fled to escape violence and hunger, but also on neighbouring states who have so admirably stepped up to help those in desperation, feeling across the border seeking a safe haven.

El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, is currently the centre of escalating tensions between the RSF, SAF and armed groups. Whilst the RSF have not yet launched their widely expected offensive against the city, there have already been devastating violence and dire humanitarian impacts. As highlighted in a recent report by Human Rights Watch, we have already seen from events in El Geneina last year the terrible violence that the RSF and their allies inflict.

Villages surrounding the city have been razed to the ground and continued airstrikes have resulted in civilian areas being caught in the crossfire. Last weekend, two children and a number of caregivers were killed after a bomb fell near the Medecins Sans Frontieres-supported Babiker Nahar Paediatric Hospital, in El Fasher. Reports have suggested that ethnically motivated attacks by the RSF and allied militia against non-Arab communities are taking place in villages west of El Fasher. The UK-funded Centre for Information Resilience has also verified fire damage to 32 settlements around El Fasher in April. Humanitarian partners have raised serious concerns about the imminent threat to the civilian population in El Fasher, which includes more than 1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); consisting of civilians displaced by the conflict in Darfur 20 years ago, and those who have fled their homes in the last nine months from

other parts of Darfur. The city is now entirely cut off from water, food and fuel supplies.

In April, the UK led negotiations at the UN Security Council (UNSC) to deliver a press statement, urging the warring parties to de-escalate in El Fasher and comply with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. We also called for a closed UNSC consultation on the situation. On 2 May, I publicly called upon the RSF and SAF to protect civilians and spare Sudan from their wilful destruction and carnage. The UK will continue to do all we can to bring a sustainable end to the conflict. This is the only way that the abhorrent violence currently taking place in El Fasher, as well as across Sudan, will stop.

Indeed, we continue to pursue all diplomatic avenues to achieve a permanent ceasefire, and we welcome plans to restart talks in Jeddah, jointly led by the US and Saudi Arabia. We urge the region to refrain from actions that prolong the conflict, and to engage positively with peace talks.

As part of our diplomatic efforts to achieve peace in Sudan, we speak to all parties. We have used our exchanges with the warring parties strongly to condemn atrocities they have perpetrated and to demand that their leadership makes every effort to prevent further atrocities in territories they have captured or threatened to capture; as well as to press the need for improved humanitarian access.

On 15 April, I announced a package of sanctions designations, freezing the assets of three commercial entities linked to the warring parties. We will continue to explore other levers to disrupt and constrain the sources of funding that both warring parties are using to sustain themselves.

At the Security Council in March, where the UK is penholder on Sudan, we used the opportunity of the OCHA White Note on the risk of conflict-induced famine to highlight its warning that the obstruction of humanitarian access is resulting in the starvation of the Sudanese people. Using starvation as a method of warfare is prohibited by international humanitarian law.

Our ongoing partnership with the Centre for Information Resilience is also vital in documenting reported atrocities, and preserving and sharing evidence, so that those who are alleged to have committed these horrific acts can be brought to justice. We are committed to ensuring there is no impunity for human rights abusers, no matter what it may take to hold them to account.

On 15 April, my Noble Friend Lord Benyon attended the international humanitarian conference for Sudan in Paris where donors pledged 2.03 billion euros to Sudan. To meet the growing need in Sudan, UK aid to the country, including Darfur, will nearly double to £89 million this financial year.

Finally, we will keep working to ensure that the voices of Sudanese civilians are heard: whether that is the survivors and witnesses of human rights abuses; the brave Sudanese NGOs, women's rights organisations and

activists helping their communities; or those trying to develop a political vision for Sudan's future. UK technical and diplomatic support has been instrumental in the establishment of the anti-war, pro-democracy Taqaddum coalition, led by former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, and we will continue to support Taqaddum's development.

One year on from the beginning of the conflict, we must maintain international pressure on the warring parties to stop this senseless war, for troops to return to their barracks and for civil society to have the space to pursue a political track to return peace and build security through all parts of Sudan.

Gamete Donation Regulations

[HLWS465]

Lord Markham: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Women) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) (Maria Caulfield MP) has made the following Written Statement:

In a parliamentary debate on 23 October 2023, I announced the Government's intention to update the UK's gamete donation regulations. The first change would allow people living with HIV with an undetectable viral load to donate their gametes. The second change would update the definition of partner donation to include female same-sex couples, therefore reducing costs for those undergoing reciprocal IVF.

Today, we will lay the necessary regulations to make these changes, which will benefit patients across the whole of the UK, supported by scientific advice from the Advisory Committee for the Safety of Blood Tissues & Organs.

Firstly, this will allow people living with HIV to donate their gametes to family, friends and known recipients provided that:

- They have a sustained viral load of less than 200 per millilitre ('undetectable viral load');
- They have been receiving antiretroviral treatment for at least 6 months prior to donation; and
- The recipient knows of their HIV diagnosis and provides informed consent.

These changes will benefit hundreds of couples, including same-sex male couples using a surrogate where one or both have HIV, and those seeking known donation from a friend or relative with HIV. This legislative update reflects the advances made in preventing HIV transmission through fertility treatments and is a significant step in further reducing stigma around HIV.

Prior to donation, people living with HIV will undergo a series of tests to ensure their gametes are safe to donate. There is currently a requirement for a post donation HIV test for sperm donations, which is not clinically necessary due to the pre-donation tests. We were unable to rectify this issue in this Statutory Instrument without causing significant delays. Our priority is enabling people living

with HIV to donate their gametes and start a family, and I will look to bring further legislative changes to remove this requirement in due course.

Secondly, the regulations will include an updated definition of partner donation. Under current rules, female same-sex couples hoping to conceive via reciprocal IVF must first go through screening for additional infectious diseases and genetic diseases, which can cost over £1,000. Heterosexual couples are not required to undergo this testing.

This legislation will seek to rectify this disparity in testing requirements and therefore lower costs for treatment. Reciprocal IVF is an increasingly popular way for female couples to have families and this change will help many more couples to afford this treatment.

We hope that these changes will help to create a fairer health system by removing barriers to accessing fertility care, in line with our commitments in the Women's Health Strategy.

Solar Energy and Food Security: Land Use

[HLWS464]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Claire Coutinho MP) has today made the following statement:

Food security is an essential part of national security. This Government is fully committed to delivering robust UK food security and recognises its paramount importance to our national security. This is reflected in our commitment to maintain the current level of food we produce domestically. Heightened geopolitical risk has brought this into sharper focus and we think it is more important than ever that our best agricultural land is protected and our food production prioritised.

Similarly, we have seen our energy security threatened following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine with the government spending over £40bn to pay up to a half of people's energy bills. We are combatting this by racing ahead with deployment of renewable energy; nearly half of our electricity today is produced from renewables which is up from only 7 percent in 2010. Solar power is a key part of the Government's strategy for energy security, net zero and clean growth. This position was reinforced in the new National Policy Statement (EN-3), published in January this year, which stated that "Solar also has an important role in delivering the government's goals for greater energy independence and the British Energy Security Strategy states that government expects a five-fold increase in combined ground and rooftop solar deployment by 2035 (up to 70GW)".

Government recognises that, in some instances, solar projects can affect local environments which may lead to unacceptable impacts for some local communities. The planning system is designed to balance these considerations against the need to deliver a secure, clean, green energy system for the future.

Protecting the Best Agricultural Land

The new National Policy Statement that we published in January makes clear that “applicants should, where possible, utilise suitable previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of “Best and Most Versatile” agricultural land where possible. The Government in *Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan* clarified that while “solar and farming can be complementary” developers must also have “consideration for ongoing food production”.

Nevertheless, in balancing both the need for energy security and food production, we are concerned that as large solar developments proceed at pace, more of our ‘Best and Most Versatile’ (BMV) land could be used for solar PV instead of food production. I am therefore setting out further detail about how our policy on balancing these competing priorities is intended to be applied.

As is outlined in the National Policy Statement, the starting position for solar PV developers in taking forward Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects is that applicants should seek to minimise impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality.

The National Policy Statement can also be a material consideration in determining applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is broadly consistent with the approach to agricultural land in the National Planning Policy Framework which states that “Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other policies in this Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development”.

This means that due weight needs to be given to the proposed use of Best and Most Versatile land when considering whether planning consent should be granted for solar developments. For all applicants the highest quality agricultural land is least appropriate for solar development and as the land grade increases, there is a greater onus on developers to show that the use of higher quality land is necessary. Applicants for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects should avoid the use of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land where possible.

For Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, including those already in the system, the National Policy Statement and from today this WMS are likely to be important and relevant considerations in the decision-making process. The Government will keep under review the evidence base underpinning the National Policy Statement published in January.

Addressing Cumulative Impacts

While the total area of agricultural land used for solar is very small, and even in the most ambitious scenarios would still occupy less than 1% of the UK’s agricultural land, we are increasingly seeing geographical clustering of proposed solar developments in some rural areas, such as in Lincolnshire. When considering whether planning consent should be granted for solar development it is important to consider not just the impacts of individual proposals, but also whether there are cumulative impacts where several proposals come forward in the same locality.

In parallel, my Department will be expanding the Renewable Energy Planning Database to include additional information on the types of agricultural land used by existing solar projects and those in the planning pipeline. This will enable us to carefully monitor the use of land by renewable projects in all regions of the UK.

Improving Soil Surveys

The Government has heard concerns about the perceived inaccuracy and unfairness of soil surveys undertaken as part of the planning process for solar development. The Government will address this by supporting independent certification by an appropriate certifying body, subject to relevant business case approval, to ensure Agricultural Land Classification Soil Surveys are of a high standard, requiring surveyors to demonstrate meeting an agreed minimum requirement of training/experience. We will also seek to ensure consistency in how data is recorded and presented, so that reports on agricultural land classification are consistent, authoritative and objective.

Supporting solar on rooftops and brownfield sites

Finally, I want to highlight that increasing the deployment of rooftop solar remains a priority for Government. The installation of qualifying energy-saving materials, including solar panels, in residential accommodation and buildings used solely for a relevant charitable purpose currently benefits from a zero rate of VAT until March 2027, at which point they will qualify for the reduced rate of VAT at 5%. At the Autumn Statement 2023, the 100% First Year Allowance for main rate plant and machinery assets, and the 50% First Year Allowance for special rate plant and machinery assets, including solar panels, were made permanent. These measures complement the business rates exemption for eligible plant and machinery used in renewable energy generation and storage introduced in 2022.

This year, UK Government launched a new package of measures to support British farming. Under the second round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant, between £15-25 million was made available for the installation of rooftop solar and other equipment to help farms reduce fossil fuel use, improve their energy resilience, and accelerate progress towards net zero.

We also unlocked a key barrier for large-scale commercial rooftop solar, including on farm buildings, through changes to permitted development rights (PDRs) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Concurrently, we introduced a new PDR allowing for the installation of solar canopies in non-domestic car parks.

We will shortly be delivering the Future Homes Standard which will set the energy performance of new homes and is due to come into force in 2025. Our consultation proposals setting out the proposed technical detail of the standard demonstrated the effectiveness of rooftop solar in reducing energy bills for consumers with solar panels. For non-domestic buildings, the Future Buildings Standard consultation proposed significant amounts of rooftop solar which is also expected to drive the use of solar power on warehouses and commercial buildings.

Additionally, social housing and the public sector both offer excellent opportunities to fit solar on homes and reduce bills. As such, we plan to explore further how to ensure that social landlords can provide solar to their tenants, and work across government to help schools, colleges, hospitals, and other buildings to supply themselves with solar power.

Further information on these initiatives will be set out in the upcoming joint government/industry Solar Roadmap.

I am making this statement with support from my Rt. Hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 15 May 2024

Abortion: Telemedicine

Asked by **Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Department of Health and Social Care on 14 November 2023 (HC527), whether they intend to publish an updated version of the Department for Health and Social Care guidance on completing the EMA1 abortion form or similar certificate, to reflect the fact that the good faith opinion of the medical practitioner as to the patients' gestation period can no longer be relied upon if an in-person consultation has not taken place. [HL4224]

Lord Markham: There are no plans to publish an updated version of the Department's guidance on completing the EMA1 abortion form, or a similar certificate, before early medical abortion pills are prescribed for use in a pregnant woman's home.

In line with the guidance, the EMA1 form, or a similar certificate, must be completed by the registered medical practitioner terminating the pregnancy. This is to certify their opinion, formed in good faith, that if the medicine prescribed for the termination of the pregnancy is self-administered in accordance with their instructions, the pregnancy will not exceed 10 weeks at the time when the first pill, mifepristone, is taken.

This opinion can be formed either via a teleconsultation, or at an in-person appointment. Most women can determine the duration of their pregnancy with reasonable accuracy from the first day of their last menstrual period alone. However, if there is any uncertainty about the gestation of the pregnancy, the medical practitioner will ask the woman to attend an in-person appointment to enable them to form an opinion, in good faith, that the pregnancy will not have exceeded 10 weeks at the time that the first pill is taken.

Afghanistan: Hazara

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for a Minister from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to meet Hazara representatives to discuss the continuing violence and persecution facing their community in Afghanistan. [HL4199]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Ministers and officials engage regularly with a range of Afghans, including Hazaras. The Government is monitoring closely attacks against Hazaras in Afghanistan, including by Daesh (Islamic State Khorasan Province), and in December I [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon] publicly condemned them. I

have also raised attacks against Hazaras with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Afghanistan 2023 Human Rights Report by the United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, published on 23 April, in particular with regard to the targeting of Hazara community members by ISIS-K. [HL4200]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government welcomes the State Department's Afghanistan 2023 Human Rights Report, which sheds further light on appalling human rights abuses in Afghanistan. We are monitoring closely attacks against Hazaras in Afghanistan, including by Daesh (Islamic State Khorasan Province), and in December I [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon] publicly condemned them. I have also raised attacks against Hazaras with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Minister of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on 10 January (HC Deb col 133WH) that in Afghanistan "minority groups such as the Hazara people face discrimination and attacks", what action they are taking in this regard. [HL4202]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to monitor and document discrimination and abuses against Hazaras, both through the UN and other institutions, and through our own programme work. Officials from the UK Mission to Afghanistan regularly press Taliban acting ministers and Afghan officials to protect religious and ethnic minorities, including Shia Muslims and Hazara communities. In December, I [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon] raised attacks against Hazaras with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: Politics and Government

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to publish their latest Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability assessment on Afghanistan; and if so, when. [HL4201]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government last completed a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) for Afghanistan in 2019: this document has not been made public, given the sensitive nature of the assessment. We continue to closely monitor the situation in country and the region, drawing on internal and external assessments and reporting. The decision to make public UK-commissioned reports and assessments on the situation in Afghanistan is made on a case-by-case basis.

Agriculture: Seaweed

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assess the impacts, whether positive or negative, on biodiversity and nature recovery of the establishment of seaweed farms in coastal waters. [HL4490]

Lord Benyon: The Marine Management Organisation assesses all licence applications for seaweed farms in its jurisdiction, including their potential impacts on the environment and other sea uses, on a case-by-case basis. More generally, research commissioned as part of Defra's £37m marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) programme includes considering the services provided by farmed and wild kelp and impacts on the environment and people.

Agriculture: Trade Agreements

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to expedite the negotiation and ratification of trade deals benefiting the food and agricultural sector. [HL4250]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The Government is securing improved market access for the food and agricultural sector, through Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) but also the targeted removal of individual market access barriers in key international markets.

The Department for Business and Trade are working hard to secure new, or improved, FTAs with a range of important trade partners around the world. Work also continues to ratify the agreements we have signed, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which should come into force later this year.

Breastfeeding: Breast Cancer

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of low rates of breastfeeding on incidences of breast cancer. [HL4048]

Lord Markham: Improving early diagnosis of cancer, including breast cancer, is a priority for the National Health Service. The public health benefits of breastfeeding for child and maternal health are significant and well established. Evidence suggests a range of potential benefits, for example, research published in the British Medical Journal found breastfeeding gave protection against breast cancer.

We want to ensure that every parent and carer understands the benefits of breastfeeding and has access to the high-quality infant feeding services they need, in their local area, to achieve their breastfeeding goals. Through the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme,

we are investing £50 million to increase the range of specialist support, which is enabling parents to access face-to-face and virtual support whenever they need it.

Cybersecurity: General Elections

Asked by Lord Kempsey

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the personal and cyber security of high-profile individuals involved in politics, such as parliamentarians, ahead of the upcoming general election campaign. [HL4151]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The safety of our elected representatives is essential to the security of our country. Protecting our democratic values and processes is one of the most important duties of government. That is why the Government will take every possible step to safeguard the people, processes, and institutions upon which our democracy relies.

On 28th February the Prime Minister announced the Government was investing an additional £31 million in funding to protect the democratic process and our elected representatives. The funding is being used to strengthen protective security measures for MPs and locally elected representatives over the next year.

Through the funding we are enhancing police capabilities, increasing private sector security provision for those facing a higher risk, and expanding cyber security advice to elected representatives. The investment also enables the expansion of the Operation BRIDGER network, so that every elected representative and candidate is given a dedicated, named police contact to liaise with on security matters, where needed. Through this network all candidates will have access to security briefings in the run up to the General Election.

The funding is accompanied by a new Defending Democracy Policing Protocol, agreed with police to enhance the safety of elected representatives, and protect the UK's democratic process from disruption. Further information about the Protocol is available on GOV.UK.

Furthermore, the Defending Democracy Taskforce has supported the Westminster Parliamentary authorities and the National Cyber Security Centre to develop and roll out an enhanced cyber security offer for Parliamentarians and their teams to better protect them against cyber-attacks and foreign interference. As part of the £31 million uplift, the Taskforce is now seeking to extend this offer to other elected officials including the Devolved Authorities and is working closely with staff from the Devolved Authorities to do so.

East Africa: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of official development assistance humanitarian spend in East African countries has been received by local and national non-governmental organisations in country

over the last year; and what steps they will take to ensure UK commitments on such funding are met, such as the Grand Bargain commitment to provide 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to local and national organisations. [HL4212]

Lord Benyon: Local organisations play a vital role in delivering UK funded humanitarian support across East Africa including in Ethiopia and Somalia where we support a range of different national entities. The UK strongly supports the role of national agencies in responding to humanitarian crises and building resilience. This is demonstrated in the recent International Development White Paper which commits the UK to publishing a strategy on engagement with national relief actors. Work to develop this strategy is now underway.

Electric Cables: Costs

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relative costs of undergrounding power lines by (1) cable ploughing, and (2) open trenching. [HL4363]

Lord Callanan: Undergrounding is usually by open trenching with costs varying between 5-10 times those of overhead lines. These costs are from the Institution of Engineering and Technology Study, 2012. Cable ploughing is a newer method of undergrounding some types of electricity cables. The Government has not made a formal assessment of those costs. The Government regularly engages with industry to understand new opportunities and innovations.

Electric Cables: Wales

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Welsh Government on the relative benefits of cable ploughing new power lines. [HL4365]

Lord Callanan: The Government is aware of cable ploughing as a technique for installing some types of electricity cabling lines and is aware of the Welsh Government's work into the merits of cable ploughing. The Government looks forward to engaging with the Welsh Government on the outcomes of that work.

Electricity: Infrastructure

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to commission an up-to-date study of the comparative (1) cost and impact, and (2) feasibility and viability, of each type of infrastructure for conveying electricity. [HL4364]

Lord Callanan: Industry leads on innovation in the technologies and design of the infrastructure developed

and delivered to meet our net zero targets. The Government does not currently plan to directly commission any new work.

Ethiopia: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask His Majesty's Government how much of the £100 million pledged at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Ethiopia pledging conference in April is new and additional funding. [HL4213]

Lord Benyon: At the high-level pledging conference for Ethiopia which took place in April, the Deputy Foreign Secretary announced £100 million in UK funding. This support had not been previously announced. This included £30 million to treat acute malnutrition for those in greatest need.

Financial Times: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the recent content licensing agreement between The Financial Times and OpenAI, what assessment they have made of the potential implications this may have for the AI industry; and what steps they are taking to further promote transparency and accountability in AI-driven content generation and distribution. [HL4244]

Viscount Camrose: The Government wants the AI sector and our creative industries to grow together in partnership and is encouraged to see agreements being reached between AI developers and press publishers.

As set out in its response to the AI White Paper, the Government believes there should be greater transparency from AI developers in relation to data inputs and the attribution of outputs. It is considering ways to achieve this and will engage closely with right holders and AI developers.

Foreign Investment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) retain, and (2) attract, foreign financial firms and jobs in the UK. [HL4309]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Financial and related professional services employ more than 2 million people in the UK and the Government is committed to ensuring the UK remains the location of choice for top talent from across the world. This is part of the Government's mission to ensure the UK retains its position as one of the most innovative and competitive financial centres in the world. Most recently, at Spring Budget 2024, the Chancellor updated on the ambitious package of reforms which will help to deliver the Government's vision for a financial sector that is open, sustainable, technologically innovative, and globally competitive.

Government: Recruitment

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of the risk posed to workers by fake job advertisements, whether it is their policy that Government jobs should only be advertised on websites which are members of an industry-led anti-fraud certification scheme which is compliant with the Online Safety Act 2023. [HL4229]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Preventing fraudulent job postings is of importance to the government and Civil Service roles are mainly listed on our secure Civil Service Jobs website. They may also appear elsewhere on third party job websites. At present, there is no policy which stipulates that Civil Service roles should only be advertised on websites which are members of an industry-led anti-fraud certification scheme compliant with the Online Safety Act 2023.

Haiti: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current political and security situation in Haiti; and what steps they are taking, together with international partners, to provide urgent humanitarian assistance. [HL4163]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Minister Rutley has engaged significantly on this issue, discussing it with regional and international partners over many months. I most recently engaged with Caribbean partners during my attendance at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government meeting in Guyana on 26 February, where I discussed concerns about - and options to respond to - the security situation in Haiti. The UK welcomes the recent swearing in of the Transitional Presidential Council. This is an important step on the journey to restoring much needed political stability in Haiti. It is clear that the climate of insecurity is driving Haiti's humanitarian needs, and we hope that deployment of the Multinational Security Support (MSS) Mission in Haiti, to which the Foreign Secretary announced a £5 million ODA contribution on 9 April, will improve this. The difficult security situation within Haiti has impeded humanitarian access but we will continue to work with our international partners to build a coordinated and coherent response so that international support can reach people in need.

Housing: Disability

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Newcastle

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to statistics from the 2021 Census which showed that the North East has the highest proportion of disabled people in England, what steps they are taking to ensure there is an adequate provision of accessible housing in the region. [HL4230]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Newcastle

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of homes built in the North East of England in the past year are wheelchair accessible. [HL4231]

Baroness Swinburne: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that local authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community, including older people and people with disabilities, and reflect this in their local plan. As planning is a local responsibility, proportionate data about local housing needs and provision is not held centrally, although the English Housing Survey collects data on accessibility and adaptations within the home; the most recent adaptations report is published online.

Immigration Controls: Israel

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government what policies, guidance and practices the Border Force has adopted in relation to the arrival of (1) Israeli nationals, and (2) individuals with joint UK–Israeli citizenship in the UK; and whether there has been any change in this policy and its operation since October 2023. [HL4208]

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government what policies, guidance and practices the Border Force has adopted in relation to the arrival in the UK of (1) Israeli nationals, and (2) individuals with joint UK–Israeli citizenship, who have served in the IDF. [HL4209]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Border Force's number one priority is to keep our borders safe and secure, and we will never compromise on this.

Border Force would not comment on individual policies that could jeopardise border security.

Border Force performs checks on 100% of passengers arriving at the UK border on scheduled services, enabling interventions against those known or suspected to pose a risk to the national interest.

There are many reasons why a Border Force Officer may feel it necessary to ask additional questions to satisfy themselves of eligibility to enter. Officers carry out checks that are deemed necessary in accordance with immigration procedures.

In the UK, the Immigration Rules require all arriving passengers, regardless of their nationality or country they arrived from, to establish their eligibility for admission. To maintain a safe and secure border, a passenger's passport or national identity card is checked. There are also times when extra checks are conducted.

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) UK–Israeli citizens, and (2) IDF veterans or serving personnel, the UK Border Force detained for questioning in the periods (a) October 2023 to present,

(b) October 2022–October 2023, and (c) October 2021–October 2022. [HL4210]

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government how many individuals entering the UK from Israel or Palestine, who are not UK–Israeli citizens or IDF veterans or serving personnel, the UK Border Force detained for questioning in the periods (1) October 2023 to present, (2) October 2022–October 2023, and (3) October 2021–October 2022. [HL4211]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Border Force does not publish information on operational activities. Doing so would publicise operational practices which would be used to assist in the evasion of customs controls and compromise border security.

However, the Home Office published data can be found at the following link: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65d887a154f1e70011165914/passengers-refused-entry-border-datasets-dec-2023.xlsx>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Passengers refused entry [passengers-refused-entry-border-datasets-dec-2023.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-04-30/HL4210>

Import Controls

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that the introduction of import controls does not result in lengthy administrative processes for businesses. [HL4253]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) has been designed with traders and consumers at the forefront. Our global risk-based approach harnesses data and technology to help reduce administrative burden for businesses. Further, most fruit and vegetables are currently treated as low risk and will not require any additional paperwork or checks. A limited number of meat and dairy products have been categorised as medium-risk. For these, simplified and streamlined certification is available.

Through the BTOM, we are piloting world-first Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Trusted Trader schemes. These will allow businesses, including some SMEs, to utilise their own processes to provide us with the assurance normally achieved through border controls, reducing administrative burden, time and costs. Further pilots that allow some traders to be approved to carry out their own checks at point of destination are now being rolled out.

Central to our support for businesses is our commitment to deliver a Single Trade Window (STW) with a further

milestone this autumn. When fully operational, the STW will provide one digital gateway for users, where they can provide all the data once that is needed to fulfil their border obligations.

We continue to explore new ways to harness technology and streamline trade. Through the Ecosystem of Trust pilots, which developed theoretical models for 'frictionless' trade, the government partnered with industry to test new approaches to the use of technology and data at the border. These new approaches are now being taken forward via what we are calling "Border Trade Demonstrators" - aimed at improving border processes through better information sharing and improved governance.

Import Controls: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what instructions, if any, they have issued to (1) environmental health officers, and (2) other relevant officers, as to the future charging for port inspections on goods coming from Great Britain to Northern Ireland (a) in general, and (b) when the goods fail the inspection. [HL4332]

Lord Douglas-Miller: On 31 January 2024, the Government published the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper. It set out proposals for a new UK internal market system, ensuring a permanent, smooth flow of goods within the UK's internal market.

Under this new system, there will be no checks on goods moving within the UK internal market system. Checks will only be conducted as part of a risk or intelligence-led approach to tackle issues like criminality, abuse of the system, smuggling and disease risks.

Following the agreement of the Windsor Framework, the Border Target Operating Model sets out new arrangements for Irish goods and non-qualifying goods moving directly from the island of Ireland to GB from 31 January 2024. Physical checks on goods arriving at West Coast ports will not begin before Spring 2025.

We will begin phasing in checks and controls for non-qualifying goods moving from the island of Ireland, while ensuring that Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods continue to have unfettered access to the GB market, whether those goods are moving directly from Northern Ireland to Great Britain or moving to Great Britain from Northern Ireland via Ireland.

Local Government Finance

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of core funding for delivering rural services; and what plans they have to create equitable funding between rural and urban councils. [HL4352]

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to extending the Rural Services Delivery Grant to all rural councils in future years. [HL4353]

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to fully implement the changes to the Needs Assessment component of the funding formula made in 2013; and subsequently whether they will increase funding to rural councils to reflect inflation in the years since these changes were made. [HL4354]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 makes available up to £64.7 billion, an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £4.5 billion or 7.5% in cash terms on 2023-24. This above-inflation increase demonstrates how the Government stands behind councils up and down the country. Furthermore, we recognise the importance and difficulties of councils serving dispersed populations. That is why we have increased the value of the Rural Services Delivery Grant by over 15%, from £95 million to £110 million in 2024-25. This is the highest increase since 2018-19, and the second successive year of above-inflation increases.

We last calculated the Settlement Funding Assessment in 2013/14. The Government is committed to reforming the local government funding landscape in the next Parliament to deliver simpler, fairer and longer settlements.

The Rural Services Delivery Grant is allocated to local authorities ranking in the top-quartile of sparsely populated areas in England, using the Government's 'Super Sparsity' measure. The methodology is unchanged from 2023-24 and any funding decisions beyond the 2024-25 financial year are a matter for the next Spending Review.

Nutrition

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the UK Nutrient Profiling Model 2018 review, when they plan to implement an updated version of the Nutrient Profiling Model. [HL4175]

Lord Markham: The Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) is a tool that can underpin policy and implements dietary recommendations.

The United Kingdom NPM was first developed by the Food Standards Agency in 2004 to 2005 (UK 2004/5 NPM). The first Childhood Obesity Plan (2016) committed Public Health England to review the UK 2004/5 NPM and align it to the latest dietary recommendations. A robust and transparent process was undertaken to update the model, with an Independent Expert Group to provide oversight and scientific scrutiny. In 2018, as part of the process, a 12-week public

consultation on the modifications made to the current UK 2004/5 NPM took place. The final version will be published in due course.

Any application of the updated NPM in a policy would be subject to normal policy making and consultation processes and would be accompanied by technical guidance to support its use and implementation. Stakeholders and interested parties would have an opportunity to comment on developing work as part of that process.

Overseas Trade: Small Businesses

*Asked by **Viscount Waverley***

To ask His Majesty's Government what support they are providing to small and medium-sized enterprises to help them adapt to new import and export regulations. [HL4251]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government published the final Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) on 29 August 2023. It outlines new policies and processes that importers, the border industry and wider stakeholders including EU exporters will need to go through in order to import goods. We are implementing the BTOM in stages throughout 2024 to help industry get accustomed to the changes.

We have worked extensively with small and medium enterprises to help us define and help them adapt to new controls and requirements. Since publishing the final BTOM, Defra's ongoing engagement has included regularly contacting 30,000 importers with up-to-date information, delivering over 50 webinars to thousands of businesses, providing bespoke training and working with HMRC to issue communication to 150,000 businesses in the UK.

The risk-based model outlined in the BTOM supports businesses of all sizes by minimising costs and burdens for traders and consumers. For example, low-risk products of animal origin will not require an Export Health Certificate or routine border checks and medium risk goods will undergo reduced intervention at the border. We are also piloting new Trusted Trader schemes that will support groupage loads, which is how SMEs often transport their goods.

All businesses will benefit from using the Single Trade Window, saving time and cost for traders. When fully operational, it will make better use of data and remove duplication to make it easier to trade internationally. This can also limit the requirement to use intermediaries and helps to support small businesses through the user interface on the platform. As the Single Trade Window develops, more information will be provided as to how SMEs can be involved and utilise the service.

The Department for Business and Trade supports small and medium enterprises with national programmes such as the Growth Hub network and through schemes such as Help to Grow. The new Help to Grow Campaign includes a dedicated website, acting as a resourcing hub for

business support and advice, as well as SME leadership training schemes, Help to Grow Management and Help to Grow: Management Essentials. UK businesses can access DBT's wealth of export support via [Great.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk). This comprises a digital self-serve offer and our wider network of support including trade advisers, Export Champions, the Export Academy, our International Markets network and UK Export Finance.

Furthermore, since its launch in October 2021, to February 2024, the Export Support Service (ESS) Export Digital Enquiry Service has supported over 16,800 enquiries. The ESS International Markets (IM) service has been live in all nine HMTC regions since April 2022 and has received 23,500 market enquiries from 10,700 businesses (up to February 2024).

Personal Independence Payment

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people are in receipt of Personal Independence Payment assessments in England and Wales. [HL4235]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: All claims to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), except those made under Special Rules for End of Life, are subject to a PIP assessment. From when PIP was introduced in 2013 until January 2024 there were 7,016,000 PIP claims cleared in England and Wales under normal rules. This number has been rounded to the nearest 1,000 and may include multiple claims made by the same person.

This data is available on Stat-Xplore at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/> in the 'PIP Clearances' dataset. Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>. An account is not required to use Stat-Xplore, the 'Guest Login' feature gives instant access to the main functions.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to ensure that people are safeguarded from serious harm as a result of the new policies currently under consultation in relation to Personal Independence Payments. [HL4236]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The purpose of the consultation is to open a conversation on Personal Independence Payment. The consultation is guided by three priorities: providing the right support to the people who need it most; targeting our resources most effectively; and supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to live independently and reach their full potential. As we develop any proposals, we will carefully consider the impacts of any potential changes.

We recognise that as a Department we come into contact with some claimants who are potentially very vulnerable. We have a range of policies and procedures in place to help those individuals with difficult personal

circumstances and/or life events to access benefits and use our services and will continue to provide this support should any changes be taken forward as a result of the consultation.

Police and Crime Commissioners: Elections

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Police and Crime Commissioners who are defeated in the forthcoming elections are entitled to 'loss of office payments' similar to MPs; and if so, what is the size of those payments. [HL4248]

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Police and Crime Commissioners who are defeated in the forthcoming elections are entitled to payments for winding up their offices similar to those paid to MPs; and if so, how are those payments calculated. [HL4249]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Police and Crime Commissioners are not currently entitled to any winding up payments, or a loss of office payment, if they lose their seat at an election.

Police and Crime Commissioners: Training

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government what arrangements they have made to provide training to newly elected Police and Crime Commissioners. [HL4247]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office has provided a grant to the APCC for 2023/24 and 2024/25 for a programme of work that includes the development and delivery of a comprehensive induction programme for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) following the elections in May.

The programme will cover the fundamentals of the role, working with and getting the best out of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, establishing effective relationships with the Chief Constable and the force, financial management, commissioning and influencing at the national level.

Each Office of Police and Crime Commissioner will also deliver bespoke programmes, focusing on the local needs of newly elected PCCs.

Privy Council Judicial Committee

Asked by Lord Beith

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to bring forward Orders in Council to allow judges from relevant overseas jurisdictions to be appointed to serve on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. [HL4318]

Lord Bellamy: The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has a jurisdiction beyond the UK and serves as

the final court of appeal for many Commonwealth and other jurisdictions. From time to time, the work of the Judicial Committee has been augmented with the jurisprudence and expertise brought by appellate judges from jurisdictions beyond the UK.

The Lord Chancellor welcomes and approves Lord Reed's proposal to invite judges outside the UK to sit on the Judicial Committee, and the necessary work is in train.

Proportional Representation

Asked by Lord Kempsey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the performance of proportional representation as it has been deployed in electoral systems across the UK. [HL4226]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government was elected on a manifesto which included a commitment to continue to support use of the First Past the Post voting system.

The Government believes that the First Past the Post system is a robust and secure way of electing representatives, that is well understood by voters, and provides for strong and clear local accountability. It ensures a clear link between elected representatives and constituents in a manner that other voting systems may not.

The Government does not support nor has it assessed the use of proportional voting in the UK.

Republic of Ireland: Borders

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have had any discussions with the government of the Republic of Ireland regarding whether it plans to send Garda to the border between the Republic of Ireland and the UK. [HL4527]

Lord Caine: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Tánaiste last spoke about this issue on 1 May, and the Tánaiste confirmed there would be no deployment of officers from An Garda Síochána to the Northern Ireland/Ireland border.

During this exchange, both UK and Irish Governments confirmed their commitment to the Common Travel Area and are focused on securing its external border.

Small Businesses: Loans

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the bank loan application success rates of small and medium-sized enterprises. [HL4546]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government recognises the vital importance small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and is committed to supporting SMEs

grow and create jobs by providing an environment in which they can thrive.

Access to finance for small businesses is important to drive growth. The government supports that access through the Recovery Loan Scheme, which offers a 70% government guarantee on loans to SMEs of up to £2 million. The scheme has supported over £5.3 billion of finance to SMEs since its introduction in April 2021.

At the 2024 Spring Budget, the Government announced that the Recovery Loan Scheme would be extended to the end of March 2026, and renamed as the Growth Guarantee Scheme.

Sudan: Foreign Relations

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask His Majesty's Government what diplomatic action they are taking, along with international partners, to secure a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Sudan; and what consideration they have given to appointing a dedicated envoy for Sudan. [HL4228]

Lord Benyon: The UK is working with a wide range of partners, including Gulf and African countries, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the UN, to urge the parties to agree a permanent ceasefire, to allow unfettered humanitarian access, to protect civilians and to commit to a sustained and meaningful peace process. We welcome reported plans to restart talks in Jeddah, jointly led by the US and Saudi Arabia. The UK Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea spends a significant amount of time on efforts to secure peace in Sudan, working closely with other envoys covering Sudan.

Sudan: Refugees

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to remarks by Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park on 24 May 2023 (HL Deb col 870), when the initial £5 million, including £2 million in South Sudan, to meet the urgent needs of refugees and returnees who were fleeing the violence in Sudan was released; and on what it has been spent. [HL4216]

Lord Benyon: On 4 May 2023, the UK Government announced an initial £5 million allocation to support those fleeing the conflict in Sudan. In Chad, this included £1.75 million for the World Food Programme on food and logistics ahead of the rainy season and £1 million to the Sahel Regional Fund to support urgent protection and assistance by NGOs. In South Sudan, this included £1.5 million to the World Food Programme for use in border areas, £500,000 to UNICEF for Sexual and Gender Based Violence protection services and £250,000 to REACH towards initiatives to improve analysis about evolving needs to support wider humanitarian action. In total, since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan, the UK has allocated £15 million to support those fleeing to Chad, and £7.75

million to support existing and new Sudanese refugees as well as vulnerable returnees and host communities in South Sudan.

Supply Chains: Slavery

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to eradicate modern slavery from centrally held procurement supply chains. [[HL4227](#)]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Modern slavery has no place in public supply chains.

We have taken action in the Procurement Act to strengthen the rules around excluding suppliers linked to modern slavery. The current rules require the supplier to have been convicted or there to have been a breach of international treaties banning forced labour, or evidence of grave professional misconduct.

We recognise that modern slavery often occurs in countries which are not party to international treaties on forced labour and which are unlikely to prosecute the perpetrators. Our changes will allow authorities to exclude suppliers and disregard their bids where there is sufficient evidence of modern slavery. This will apply whether or not there has been a conviction or a breach of an international treaty.

The Cabinet Office has also published a Procurement Policy Notice which sets out how UK Government departments must take action to ensure modern slavery risks are identified and managed in government supply chains.

Individual procurements and their contract management of course remain the responsibility of government departments.

UK Trade-EU Trade

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that trade relations with EU member states are not disrupted as a result of new import controls. [[HL4255](#)]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government has undertaken extensive engagement with EU Member States to reduce any risk of disruption to trade as a result of the new requirements. This included Ministerial engagement in the joint UK / EU Domestic Advisory Group session at the start of January 2024, enabling EU trade associations to engage directly on their outstanding queries ahead of the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) implementation.

We continue with official level engagement with trading partners across the EU, including official visits to Belgium (by myself), the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Poland and Germany in 2023 and 2024. The Chief Veterinary Officer has also engaged with counterparts across the EU in order to resolve issues such

as ensuring availability of translated Export Health Certificates.

Prior to the second BTOM milestone of 30 April 2024, officials worked with EU-based businesses to conduct robust operational testing. We have and will continue to work with the European Commission, individual EU Member States and trade bodies through established fora, webinars, business-to-government and commodity-specific sessions. We are always keen to seek feedback to address any concerns.

Undocumented Migrants: Republic of Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what arrangements are in place with the government of Ireland for illegal immigrants to be returned from that country to the United Kingdom. [[HL4217](#)]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: We have no plans for a specific returns agreement with Ireland on the return of asylum seekers.

UNRWA: Finance

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to resume funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), following the publication of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality on 22 April. [[HL4180](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the events that took place on 7 October in Israel are appalling, which is why we took decisive action to pause future funding to the organisation.

The Prime Minister has been clear that the UK will set out its position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report, UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation into these allegations. We recognise the pivotal role the UNRWA play in support of Palestinians in Gaza and neighbouring countries.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Independent Review Group on the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 22 April; what are the implications of the report for future UK policy towards the agency; and whether they will resume funding UNRWA. [[HL4237](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the events that took place on 7 October in Israel are appalling, which is why we took decisive action to pause future funding to the organisation.

The UK recognises that UNRWA is critical to aid delivery in Gaza. The Prime Minister has been clear that the UK will set out its position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report, UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation into these allegations.

We remain absolutely committed to getting humanitarian aid to people in Gaza who desperately need it, including through other UN agencies and British charities.

Wetherby Young Offender Institution: Body Searches

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to take action against the management and guards of Wetherby Young Offenders Institution who permitted male officers to forcibly strip girls there, as reported by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in December 2023. [HL4319]

Lord Bellamy: There is no plan to take formal action against staff members who were responding to an emergency to preserve life. In emergencies, the first priority of staff is always to safeguard the life and safety of those in their care.

This incident was not a strip search as erroneously reported but the removal of clothing from a child who was using it to create ligatures and self-strangulate. She was placed into anti-ligature clothing to prevent causing further harm to herself.

Following the incident highlighted by H M Inspectorate, a learning review has been conducted by the Youth Custody Service's Safeguarding Team. It focused on four main themes:

- protecting the well-being of children and staff during and after incidents

- further training and guidance for staff in incident management of girls
- integrated care management to ensure all departments work effectively with a child
- management of resources to ensure there is an appropriate gender balance of staff on night duty.

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) will oversee the action in response to the learning review. This includes the provision of additional support to HMYOI Wetherby in its management of exceptionally complex high-risk, high-harm girls, the development of specific gender-responsive operating guidance, and effective use of available resources to support children.

The YCS has revised the Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint syllabus, which is the behaviour management and restraint system used to provide youth estate staff with the ability to identify behaviour that causes concern and use de-escalation and diversion strategies to minimise the use of restraint through the application of behaviour management techniques. This has been rolled out at HMYOI Wetherby.

World Bank: Agriculture

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on poverty reduction of conditionalities on World Bank funding to lower and middle-income countries that incentivise smallholder farmers to purchase commercial seeds and fertilisers; and whether they plan to make representations to the World Bank to ensure that such conditionalities allow smallholder farmers to retain their own seeds. [HL4214]

Lord Benyon: We have previously engaged with the World Bank on this matter. The World Bank has confirmed to us that they do not have a policy in place that restricts farmers in choosing their seeds. The World Bank advocates the use of quality seeds as part of their overall approach to productivity and climate resilience. Furthermore, World Bank operations are designed at a country level, in support of local government priorities and plans, and in consultation with other stakeholders.

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