



## United Nations Association

### London & South East Region

From: The Policy Conference Chair,  
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The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP,  
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs  
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH  
United Kingdom

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2022

Dear Elizabeth Truss,

You will be aware of the work of the United Nations Association which, since 1945, has been the country's foremost advocate for UK action at the UN; the UK's leading source of analysis on the UN; and a vibrant grassroots movement of 20,000 members and supporters from all walks of life.

I write to you as Chair of the Policy Conference of the London & South East Region of UNA to share the policy resolutions adopted on the 23rd April on a hybrid Zoom call of 40 + UNA members and supporters from around London & the South East.

### **New policy areas**

This year we adopted new policy positions on Afghanistan's assets, the position of UK nationals caught up in foreign conflicts and on Ukraine.

On **Afghanistan's Assets** we discussed issues of conditionality in dealing with Taliban government generally to which we may return in more detail subsequently. However we adopted the resolution calling for the return of Afghanistan's assets and for the UK to work with the US to bring this about in view of the humanitarian situation, the fact that this money belongs to Afghanistan and should not be used for other purposes - however deserving - and bearing in mind that the Afghan people are also victims of the 9/11 attacks.

On so called "**foreign fighters**" we called for the UK to recognise its responsibilities for UK citizens (including repatriating and bringing them to justice where offences may have been committed) in view of the importance - even in the face of terrorism - of maintaining international rules such as those on statelessness and human rights and the practical complications and security dangers of governments around the world opting to create stateless individuals in these circumstances.

On **Ukraine** we support the government rigorously enforcing sanction on Russia and supporting Ukraine without committing NATO to any military action that is more than defensive, and taken in line with R2P, and we call for the removal of obstacles to Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK including requirements for on-line applications where access and language barrier may apply.

## **New developments that have led us to amend existing policy areas**

We welcomed the emphasis given to **atrocities prevention** and strengthening fragile countries' resilience to external interference in the March 2021 Integrated Review and commend to you our previous proposals on the role of the R2P Focal Point and the importance of an atrocities prevention 'lens' in reviewing policy as part of implementing the Integrated Review conclusions.

We have updated our **Climate** policy following from CoP26 to reflect the strength of the IPCC's latest conclusions, and emphasise the importance of finance flows to make developing countries more climate resilient and of 'green' infrastructure energy efficiency in buildings at home. We have identified the forthcoming CHOGM meeting in Kigali as an important opportunity to build on the "loss and damage" outcome from COP26 particularly given that the majority of **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** are Commonwealth members.

We have also highlighted the climate impact of warfare and following the plans to reduce emissions adopted by the UK MoD we call for all governments to include the emissions from military related activity in climate accounting and action at COP27. In terms of reducing military emissions, we see better conflict avoidance, control of the arms trade, wider understanding of the aims of the UN and reduced global military expenditure (which can help finance climate mitigation and transition) as the most sustainable path.

On **CyberSecurity** we welcome the plans for a single permanent UN Forum, which we encourage the UK to support. We call for an approach centred on the victims of Cyber attacks and support for Commonwealth nations cybersecurity needs in particular.

We have re-written our policy on the **Hong Kong Special Administrative Region** in the light of the implementation of the National Security Law and suggest a number of ways that UK and other countries can continue to pursue the concerns which we know you share.

We urge full UK co-operation with the **Dag Hammarskjöld** investigation due to report in September 2022, including the release – 60 years on - of relevant paper by UK agencies.

We have noted the P5 declaration that **nuclear war** cannot be won and must never be fought. We call for the UK to participate as an observer at the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons meeting planned for June and to contribute constructively to the NPT Review in August, including by committing to No First Use of UK nuclear weapons.

We have been pleased to update our **Oceans** policy to align with the 30% Marine Protected Areas successfully promoted by the UK government around COP26 and commend to you the Sussex Blue Charter promoted by our UNA Climate & Oceans in this regard as a model of local action.

We have updated our **Pandemic** policy to urge a rapid conclusion to the WTO negotiations in favour of vaccines, testing and therapeutics manufacture in developing countries without patent holder permission for the duration of the pandemic.

We had added to our continuing serious concern about conditions for **Refugees and Asylum Seekers in London Hotels**, an additional concern about NHS charges being applied (by policy or sometimes in error) in ways that damage health outcomes and deter some from seeking medical attention. We call for an urgent investigation of the impacts of this policy on those concerned and upon public health and for the government to abandon plans to make failure to pay such fees a reason to deny Refugee status to people who have an otherwise valid claim.

We call for a commitment to a second Voluntary National Review of the UKs approach to the **Sustainable Development Goals** involving civil society more fully than in the first review.

On **Sri Lanka** we welcome Human Rights Council resolution 46/1 from March 2021, but in view of the OHCHR reports from March 2022 we have called for the investigation of whether genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed, including by President Gotabaya.

On **Syria** we welcome the use of the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to investigate unlawful attacks involving use of chemical and conventional weapons, including attacks against medical facilities and call for a meeting of the UN General Assembly to hear a report on progress. We also urge the Security Council to instruct the re-opening of all necessary crossing points into the Idlib region and to hold a meeting of the Security Council in Idlib in the immediate future to underline its role in upholding the principles upon which the UN was founded. We call for further UK humanitarian assistance for the 5 million people in dire need inside Syria and to Lebanon, Turkey & Jordan who are host to 6m refugees from Syria.

On **UK Aid** we note the Russian invasion of Ukraine is causing new stresses on the world's food and energy systems and threatening famine in vulnerable countries. We believe such new needs should be met from additional funds rather than putting further pressure on the present 0.5% GNI budget. We call for the reversal of cuts to vital UN agencies in this regard as well as the drastic cuts announced in humanitarian spending in Yemen, Afghanistan, and Africa, Education of Girls in Bangladesh and family planning (under the umbrella of United Nations Population Fund) and the Global Polio Initiative.

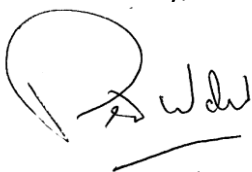
We call for more practical action to address the representation of women at all levels in the UN, and on **Women Peace & Security** we have added calls for the Security Council to provide rapid emergency grants to women's human rights defenders; to implement the Murad Code for survivors of sexual violence in conflict; to make Security Council resolution 1325 legally binding; and to insist that 40% of participants in peace talks are women.

We also made some minor updates to our policy on **Palestine** and our call for a UK **PeaceKeeper Training Centre**.

The London & South East Region speaks for itself in these matters and is not claiming to represent the views of UNA UK nationally. We would nonetheless welcome your response to the various issues and calls for government action in the enclosed. We plan to share your response with UNA members and supporters in London & the South East (and to publish it on our website) to encourage further debate and discussion, including with local MPs.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Webster', with a horizontal line underneath.

Peter Webster  
Chair, UNA London & South East Region Policy Conference