

LASER June 2024 Campaign: What we want to see from the next UK Government

A general election has been called in the United Kingdom, taking place on July 4. This election takes place against the backdrop of significant political divide in the country. Important international issues include: meeting the UN overseas aid recommendation; fully supporting the climate Loss and Damage Fund; meeting the goals of the [UNFCCC Paris Agreement](#); the UK weapons policy, especially on the arms trade and on nuclear weapons; the UK position in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine; .

It is vital that the next UK government puts the people and planet first and must use its convening power at the international stage to encourage greater action on climate change, human rights and, more broadly, the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

As we count down to the next election, we encourage supporters to write to their local parliamentary candidates (and contribute to local election hustings) asking the following:

1. Stop UK's Overseas Aid Shrinking and Breaking Promises to The World's Most Disadvantaged People

Ensure that the current 0.5% GNI figure dedicated to foreign aid within the Treasury is returned as soon as possible to 0.7% Gross National Income (GNI), which the UK had met in 2015, in line with UN recommendations. We need to restore our support to abandoned projects on education, women's and girls' rights, nutrition, and peacebuilding – among others – which supported the world's most disadvantaged people..

2. Commit Substantially to the Loss and Damage Fund

Vulnerable and poor countries, which did little to cause the climate crisis, need the biggest fossil fuel polluting countries to help mitigate the pain and suffering from climate change. The \$700m (£557m) so far pledged by wealthy nations most responsible for the climate emergency covers less than 0.2% of [what is needed](#) every year.

In order for climate damage mitigation payments not to increase poor country debt, we should give grants, not loans to help mitigate the damage we have caused. Also, the UK has indicated that the money it has commitment to the fund has come from diverting pre-existing commitment, contrary to the conditions of the fund.

3. Phase out Fossil Fuels Urgently

Wealthy and high emitting countries, including the UK, must take urgent action to phase out fossil fuels. Only a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels will keep within reach the target of limiting global warming to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures, which was agreed in 2015 in Paris.

4. Stop Selling Arms to Saudi Arabia

UK weapons have played a central role in the war in Yemen via their largescale sale to Saudi Arabia which has used them to arm the Houthi rebels. The damage inflicted included serious human rights violations on civilians. Saudi Arabia also has an appalling human rights record internally. We urgently call on the UK government to cease supplying arms to Saudi Arabia and, instead, use its power to promote global peace and stability, to call for an end to this brutal war, which has seen thousands of innocent civilians lose their lives.

5. Sign the TNPW (Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons)

The UK has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which opened for signature in September 2017. Since 2018, the United Kingdom has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW and calls upon all states to sign, ratify, or accede to it "at the earliest possible date". Along with other nuclear-armed states, the United Kingdom

has said that it does “not accept any claim that [the TPNW] contributes to the development of customary international law”. It has called on all states that are considering supporting the treaty “to reflect seriously on its implications for international peace and security”.

A public opinion [poll](#) conducted in 2021 by Survation on behalf of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament found that 59% of Britons believe that their country should join the TPNW, with just 19% opposed to joining.

6. Cancel Trident

Of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the UK is the only one with a single nuclear delivery system, Trident. The Trident system is exorbitantly expensive, ineffective and any use of it is likely, according to an ICJ opinion, to be “contrary to the rules of international law”. Originally Trident cost £12.5 bn (about £21bn in today’s money); maintaining it costs about £3bn pa; the replacement submarines currently being built will cost about £31bn. Also the two most recent tests of its unarmed missiles (on loan from the US and costing £17m each) – in 2016 and 2024 – have both failed.

Although the ongoing threats will not disappear immediately, the UK must consider an alternative system to deter threat that is in line with the TPNW.

7. In Israel/Palestine: call for ceasefire and hostage return; support UNWRA; recognise Palestine; stop arms sales to Israel; boycott illegal Israeli settlements

Recently, Ireland, Norway and Spain recognised Palestine as an independent, sovereign state. The UK remains one of ten G20 countries that do not recognise Palestine as an independent state. The total number of UN member states who recognise Palestine has now reached 144 out of 193. Since current UK policy is to “strongly advocate a two-state solution” and the situation has got much worse, not better, in recent decades. We need to take urgent action: to prevent further suffering now; to break the political logjam for future relations between Israel and Palestine; and to ensure that the Palestinians themselves decide the form of government they want.

Therefore the British government should call for an immediate, permanent ceasefire and return of all the hostages; it should immediately resume its full funding commitment to the major provider of humanitarian assistance in Palestine, UNWRA ;and it should recognise the state of Palestine, alongside Israel, on pre-June 1967 borders. It should also end arms sales to Israel (because UK defence equipment has been used in the destruction of Palestinian civilians) and consider carefully any trade links with Israel, avoiding all those which might involve illegal Israeli settlements on the West Bank.

8. Support for the Rules-based International Order

The new UK government should make clear its support – in word and in deed – for the rules-based international order that the UK helped to construct after the Second World War. For example, it should support the request to the ICJ (the World Court) for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel’s continued refusal to end its occupation of Palestine. Also, it should take note of any arrest warrants issued by the ICC (International Criminal Court) for Israeli or Palestinian leaders for crimes against humanity.