

The background of the entire page is a blurred, high-angle view of the Union Jack flag, with its characteristic red, white, and blue colors. The flag is slightly out of focus, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# UN Human Rights Council UNITED KINGDOM 2017 - 2019 candidate



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

*For freedoms and universal rights*





Foreword by Baroness Anelay,  
Minister for Human Rights

**>> I am proud to present the  
United Kingdom for re-election  
to the UN Human Rights  
Council for the term January  
2017 – December 2019. <<**

The work of the Human Rights Council is immensely challenging. Here we discuss some of the most sensitive issues of our day, which go to the very heart of a state's relationship with its people. Equally, it stands as an affirmation of the value the international community attaches to the rules based international order and ensuring that rights are protected and respected.

The Human Rights Council gives us all the opportunity to tackle these issues in a spirit of collaboration and partnership. It is also a forum where we can, and must, respond quickly and robustly to serious violations and abuses of human rights, whenever and wherever they occur, by mustering the political will to tackle difficult issues and create conditions for lasting change. This important work of the Human Rights Council is underpinned by the new Global Goals for Sustainable Development, which provide an impetus to improve global stability.

The UK has played a key role in UN human rights for since their inception. We have been a strong advocate of the Human Rights Council and the tools and mechanisms at its disposal for strengthening human rights protection globally. We would be honoured to serve a further term.

Our pledges are grounded in UK priorities at home and abroad, and draw on a tradition of democratic and inclusive values: strengthening the protection of human rights in the UN's work; translating the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development into action, leaving no one behind; making a stand for freedom of religion or belief at a time when too many are persecuted for their beliefs; working to end violence against women and girls and promoting women's full participation and leadership in political and economic life; and promoting open societies and challenging the threats to civil society.

***We stand for re-election to work with  
all those who stand for freedoms  
and uphold universal rights.***

# What does the UK bring to the HRC?



## ***Engagement across the whole human rights spectrum***

The UK has taken a leading role in UN fora on combating Child Early and Forced Marriage, Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, combating Modern Slavery, protecting freedom of Religion or Belief, and countering extremism.

## ***Commitment to the Human Rights Council's mandate***

The UK will uphold the full mandate of the Human Rights Council. We will continue to contribute, through dialogue and cooperation, towards the prevention of human rights violations and abuses. We will urge the Human Rights Council to respond promptly to human rights emergencies.

## ***Support for civil society***

Democracy, the rule of law, open and accountable governments and institutions, human rights, freedom of speech and equality of opportunity are the building blocks of successful societies. We will maintain regular dialogue with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society in the United Kingdom, Geneva and across our overseas network. We will protect civil society space at the Human Rights Council so that the views of human rights defenders are heard.



The UK hosted the Girl Summit in 2014 aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to end female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage within a generation

Picture: Jessica Lea/Department for International Development

# The UK pledges to strengthen the role of human rights in the UN's work

**Encouraging a fast international response to severe human rights violations and abuses, including in support of conflict prevention.** We will address human rights situations and crises, either through support and dialogue or greater scrutiny. We will increase our focus on those countries where universal rights are at greatest risk, and we will encourage, not penalise, early engagement with the Human Rights Council. We will work to support the successful mainstreaming of human rights across the UN system.

**Helping states through transition by supporting stability and reform efforts on the ground.** We will work with states in transition to encourage systematic implementation of reform and to provide international support. We will encourage the full use of tools at the disposal of the Human Rights Council including e.g. Special Rapporteur visits, Universal Periodic Review, and capacity building.

**Supporting a strong and independent UN human rights system.** We will work to ensure the Human Rights Council remains at the forefront of the UN's work on human rights. We will support the independence and the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office. We will work in a spirit of openness, consultation and respect for all, on a foundation of cooperation across regional groups. We will encourage dialogue with parliaments and civil society. We will promote the vital role of the independent UN human rights Treaty Monitoring Body system in the protection of human rights globally. We will encourage ratification of UN human rights instruments and their successful implementation by governments. We will maintain a standing invitation to and co-operation with the UN Special Rapporteurs who wish to visit and will encourage other countries to do the same. We remain committed to the success of the Universal Periodic Review process and pledge to assist others by sharing our experiences and offering advice and support.



We will work to ensure the Human Rights Council remains at the forefront of the UN's work on human rights.

# The UK pledges to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into action that leaves no one behind

## Helping women and girls achieve voice, choice and control in development

**(Goal 5).** We will help remove barriers stopping women in the world's poorest countries from getting jobs. This includes tackling discriminatory laws, all forms of violence in public and private spheres and poor infrastructure. We will support work in education by helping 6.5 million more girls to go to school over the next 5 years, and support efforts led by affected communities to end FGM and child, early and forced marriage in a generation.

## Tackling the scourge of Modern Slavery across borders

**(Goal 8.7).** We are implementing the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which ensures major businesses operating in the UK must report on how they tackle modern slavery in their global supply chains. We support anti-trafficking projects globally including working in partnership with the International Labour Organisation on the "Work in Freedom" programme. And the UK Government and the UK Independent

Anti-Slavery Commissioner work with Governments, national and international law enforcement agencies, civil society and other stakeholders to end modern slavery.

## Supporting work on justice, rule of law and open societies

**(Goal 16).** We will continue to support peace and security across the globe, including through the work of the Human Rights Council. We are working to improve access to security and justice services for 10 million women and girls. We will support efforts to improve governance and tackle corruption and bribery, through the work of the Open Government Partnership, the UN, and a Global Anti-Corruption Summit led by Prime Minister David Cameron in London.



We will support work in education by helping 6.5million more girls go to school over the next 5 years

# The UK pledges to stand up for Freedom of Religion or Belief

**Defending the freedom of people of all religions and beliefs to live without discrimination and violence.** We will continue to challenge discriminatory legislation and practices. We will encourage full use of the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process, UN Special Procedures and Treaty Body mechanisms to raise cases where Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is violated. We will play an active role in the International Contact Group on FoRB, and support the International Panel of Parliamentarians on FoRB.

**Supporting persecuted minorities in the Middle East.** We will continue to work with civil society to develop strategies to assist Christians and people belonging to other minorities. We will work with regional allies to address the climate of impunity and legal discrimination that persists against minorities in the region.

**Advocating in favour of equality and non-discrimination, including on the grounds that freedom of religion or belief can help to counter violent extremism.** We will promote a whole of society approach to extremism, including by working with religious leaders, teachers and civil society groups to encourage them to play an active role in tackling extremism in their communities.



We will defend the freedom of people of all religions and beliefs to live without discrimination and violence.

# The UK pledges to work to end violence against women and girls and to promote women's full participation and leadership in political and economic life

**Tackling violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict, all forms of domestic violence and harmful practices, including during humanitarian crises.** We will drive forward the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and champion the Roadmap to take forward the Call to Action to Protect Women and Girls in Emergencies. We will promote widespread implementation of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict and encourage greater support, assistance and reparation for survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls. We will advocate for sexual and gender based violence responses and the promotion of gender equality and women's participation to be fully integrated in all peace and security efforts. And we will work with other governments to improve international strategic co-ordination.

**Promoting women's economic empowerment and the representation of women in political and public life, especially in leadership positions.** We will continue to support women's equal participation in public and political life, and we will provide political and technical support to help women attain their rights and achieve their potential whilst they rise to become national and global leaders.

**Challenging discriminatory laws and practices.** We will work with governments to change discriminatory legislation and practices, sharing our expertise and best practise. We will support the application of relevant international human rights norms at the national level, making full use of the Universal Periodic Review process to translate action at the Human Rights Council to the local level.



We will drive forward the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and champion the Roadmap to take forward the Call to Action to Protect Women and Girls in Emergencies

## The UK pledges to work to promote open societies and challenge threats to civil society

We will encourage all governments to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society, which promotes free media and protects journalists from harm



**Promoting societies which are inclusive and just.** We will encourage all governments to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society, which promotes free media and protects journalists from harm. We will promote the economic, scientific and cultural benefits of open societies; and encourage businesses to realise the value of civil society and advocate on its behalf.

**Working with individuals and organisations that are developing and expanding their civil society and helping them engage with international organisations including the Human Rights Council.**

**Harnessing the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process to strengthen safeguards for civil society in the states under review.**



**Evidence gathering and documenting sexual violence crimes must be survivor-centred**

**WE ARE:**

Training civil society, judiciary and medical professionals on good practice in documenting and investigating sexual violence crimes

**END SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE  
IN CONFLICT**  
MUCH ACHIEVED  
MUCH MORE TO DO



End Sexual Violence In Conflict |



@END\_SVC |

#TIMETOACT



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