



Home Office

Statement concerning the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda for the provision of an asylum partnership to strengthen shared international commitments on the protection of refugees and migrants

April 2024



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Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 20(8) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010

April 2024



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Statement to Parliament regarding the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda for the provision of an asylum partnership to strengthen shared international commitments on the protection of refugees and migrants (the ‘treaty’).

Background

On 5 December 2023 the governments of the UK and Rwanda signed a new treaty. This was with the aim of deterring dangerous and illegal journeys to the UK which are putting people’s lives at risk and disrupting the business model of people smugglers who are exploiting vulnerable people.

These aims are secured by:

- i. creating a mechanism for the relocation to Rwanda of asylum seekers whose claims are not being considered by the United Kingdom, and providing a mechanism for an asylum seeker’s claim for protection to be determined in Rwanda in accordance with the Refugee Convention and current international standards, including in accordance with international human rights law;
- ii. creating a mechanism for the relocation to Rwanda of other individuals arriving illegally in the United Kingdom and providing an option for people who, after removal from the United Kingdom, desire asylum or protection to make such a claim in Rwanda or for alternative settlement in Rwanda for Relocated Individuals whose protection claim has been refused in Rwanda; and
- iii. creating a mechanism for the settlement of all Relocated Individuals removed from the United Kingdom to Rwanda and providing them with adequate support to successfully integrate in Rwandan society.

The Government laid the treaty and accompanying explanatory memorandum in Parliament on 6 December 2023 under Rwanda No. 1 2023 and Command Paper number 994.

The governments of the UK and Rwanda agreed this treaty, and undertook the obligations in it, in response to the UK Supreme Court’s judgment of 15 November 2023. The UK Court of Appeal had unanimously upheld the UK High Court’s finding that a policy of removing individuals to a safe third country where their asylum claims would be determined, did not breach the UK’s obligations under the Refugee Convention. The Supreme Court did not disturb this finding. However, the Supreme Court upheld the majority of the UK Court of Appeal’s conclusion (disagreeing with the High Court) that there were substantial grounds for believing that asylum seekers would face a real risk of ill-treatment by reason of refoulement to their country of origin if they were removed to Rwanda. This conclusion was based on the evidential position as of summer 2022, when the judicial review proceedings against the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) with Rwanda, as set out under the terms of the previous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), were first brought.

The Supreme Court recognised that the assurances under the MoU were entered into in good faith by Rwanda and the UK. They further accepted that structural changes and

capacity building needed to eliminate the risk of refoulement may be capable of being delivered in future, but they were not shown to be in place at the time when the lawfulness of the policy had to be considered under those proceedings.

In responding to the Supreme Court judgment, the treaty between the UK and Rwanda:

- i. makes clear and binding in international law the commitments between the Parties;
- ii. makes improvements to the system for the processing of the protection claims of those relocated to Rwanda under the Agreement;
- iii. clarifies the availability of free legal representation for all stages of the process in Rwanda;
- iv. ensures that no individual relocated under the Agreement shall be removed from Rwanda except to the United Kingdom (except voluntarily), ensuring that there is no risk of onward refoulement;
- v. ensures equivalent treatment of those whose protection claims have been refused (or who do not make a protection claim);
- vi. enhances independent monitoring to allow for real-time monitoring in the early stages of relocations, and for a confidential complaints system, allowing any issues to be picked up and addressed quickly; and
- vii. provides for binding dispute settlement.

In this way, the Agreement addresses the issues raised by the Supreme Court.

Report of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee and House of Lords Resolution

The House of Lords International Agreements Committee published their report¹ on the treaty on Wednesday 17 January 2024, following a call for evidence and a number of evidence sessions. I provided evidence on 19 December 2023. Despite the report stating at paragraph 16 that “*on paper, the Rwanda Treaty undoubtedly improves the arrangements originally set out in the MEDP MOU*”, it nevertheless concluded that, at that time, there were a number of legal and practical steps which needed to be taken before protections are operational.

Subsequently, on 18 January 2024, a motion was tabled in the House of Lords “*to move that this House resolves, in accordance with section 20 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, that His Majesty’s Government should not ratify the UK-Rwanda Agreement on an Asylum Partnership until the protections it provides have been fully implemented, since Parliament is being asked to make a judgement, based on the Agreement, about whether Rwanda is safe.*” The motion was passed by 214 votes to 171 following a debate on 22 January 2024, constituting a resolution for the purposes of section 20(1)(c) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG Act) not to ratify the treaty. The House of Commons did not resolve to pass such a motion.

Government Response

Section 20(8) of CRaG Act provides that, in the event that the House of Lords

¹[Scrutiny of international agreements: UK–Rwanda Agreement on an Asylum Partnership \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/international-agreements-committee/reports/scrutiny-of-international-agreements-uk-rwanda-agreement-on-an-asylum-partnership/)

resolves that a treaty should not be ratified, the treaty may be ratified if a Minister of the Crown has laid before Parliament a statement indicating that the Minister is of the opinion that the treaty should nevertheless be ratified and explaining why.

As Secretary of State for the Home Department, I have considered evidence in addition to that published on 11 January 2024 alongside the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill. That evidence indicates not merely the significant work since summer 2022 addressing the Supreme Court's finding; but also, that the practical steps needed to ensure the effective implementation of the treaty are, or shortly will be, in place to ensure proper protection of those removed under its terms.

I am of the view that, in accordance with section 20(8) of the CReG Act, the treaty should be ratified despite the resolution of the House of Lords not to ratify, for the reasons set out in this statement.

The Government is satisfied that the terms of the treaty itself are consistent with the UK and Rwanda's existing international obligations. The Government is also satisfied that all necessary measures and plans are in place in the UK and in Rwanda, or shortly will be, to ensure that Relocated Individuals will be treated in accordance with both Parties' obligations under the treaty as and when they become relevant.

The evidence the Government has published, along with the assurances in the treaty, has allowed Parliament to reach the same conclusion as the Government and to determine, with the passing of the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024, that Rwanda is a generally safe country for the purpose of relocating individuals.

In particular, the risk of refoulement for individuals relocated to Rwanda has been unequivocally and specifically addressed in the treaty in Article 10(3). As already noted, Rwanda has undertaken, and is obliged, not to remove any such individual except to the UK. Any risk of refoulement has been dealt with. This assurance is further strengthened by the provision in Article 10(4), which confirms that anybody transferred under the treaty who is not granted refugee status or humanitarian protection will be given permanent residence and receive equivalent treatment to those who are granted protection; and by the series of practical monitoring and other systems set up under Part 5 of the treaty.

The following sections provide a description of the steps taken and shortly to be taken to ensure the effective implementation of the treaty. They respond in particular to paragraph 45 of the House of Lords International Agreement Committee's report on the treaty which set out the Committee's view on the legal and practical steps which it considered needed to be taken.

New Rwandan asylum legislation

The treaty makes provision for a new 'First Instance Body' and 'Appeal Body', which were developed to address the Supreme Court's findings on the Rwandan asylum system by strengthening and streamlining key aspects of the end-to-end asylum system, in particular decision-making processes and the associated appeals processes.

To implement these changes, Rwanda has amended its ordinary law pertaining to

asylum seekers and refugees. Law n° 042/2024 of 19/04/2024² governing refugees and applicants for refugee status in Rwanda was promulgated on 19 April 2024.

The legislation repeals the previous system of decision-making by Committee with a first instance administrative Ministerial appeal. Instead, a single first instance body will be responsible for registering, recording and making decisions on applications. Interviews are a requirement under the legislation (the provisions on interviews in the treaty are directly reflected in the legislation). The relevant decision-making requirements from the treaty are reflected in the new legislation. The legislation also creates the new Appeal Tribunal which will be responsible for dealing with first instance appeals on refugee status decisions.

A new Presidential Order (n° 051 of 19/04/2024) sets out the independence, responsibilities of the co-presidents, and composition of the Appeal Tribunal, with salient points from the treaty reflected in the legislation (for example, in relation to the co-presidents).

Rwanda has also amended its law n° 30/2018 of 02/06/2018 Determining the Jurisdiction of Courts (in Law n° 041/2024 of 19/04/2024) to reflect paragraph 4.6 of Annex B of the treaty which requires that the new Appeal Tribunal is the final decision maker. We have confirmation in the form of a letter from Rwanda's Attorney General that the co-presidents will be tasked with developing the rules and procedures of the Appeal Tribunal to align with the obligations set forth in the treaty and ordinary law.

The passing of the new Rwandan asylum legislation addresses the point identified in paragraph 45(a) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

Establishment of Monitoring Committee Support Team and independent complaints process

The treaty makes specific provision for governance arrangements to ensure that the partnership is closely managed and that the obligations under the treaty are adhered to in practice. The Joint Committee (Article 16) comprised of senior officials from the UK and Rwanda and the independent Monitoring Committee (Article 15) were already established under the terms of the previous Memorandum of Understanding, although the role of the latter was enhanced under the treaty.

To underpin its independence, the Monitoring Committee has developed its own enhanced Terms of Reference³, which are publicly available, and has developed a detailed Monitoring Plan Proposal.⁴ This constitutes a comprehensive and transparent framework for the operations and procedures of the Committee, including the details of the enhanced initial monitoring phase provided for in the treaty. The plan provides an overview of the Monitoring Committee's specific activities, monitoring techniques, and the personnel involved. It also outlines reporting procedures and describes how the Monitoring Committee intends to operate independently with transparency to ensure accountability.

² [Gazetted Laws and Presidential Order](#)

³ [Terms of reference \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Monitoring Plan Proposal \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The Monitoring Committee will, as per Article 15(8) of the treaty, be supported in its work by a new support team, which will likewise be independent of the UK and Rwandan governments. The Monitoring Committee has also been involved in setting the requirements for the procurement of its support team and approved the plans for recruitment. The UK and Rwanda are going through procurement exercises, and we expect to have the first member of the support team identified in a matter of days. At this stage, the Monitoring Committee is scheduled to convene on 26 April to approve the first member of the team and, if approved, that individual will start in post on 29 April. This will address the point identified in paragraph 45(d) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

The support team will work to the Monitoring Committee and under its direction will help undertake duties that are defined in the published Monitoring Plan Proposal. This encompasses a series of monitoring phases and associated activities, including:

- pre-departure monitoring;
- initial enhanced monitoring (3 months' intensive monitoring which can be extended);
- appeal monitoring;
- general monitoring.

A complaints system has been established which allows members of the Monitoring Committee to confidentially, through encrypted credentials, receive and respond to complaints (including a translation service to address complaints by individuals who are unable to write in English). This system does not run on either UK or Rwanda government systems and cannot be accessed by any individual of either government to retain confidentiality and is built to security specifications in line with UK domestic requirements. The system has been made available to the Monitoring Committee to manage directly and is suitable for any Relocated Individuals or their representatives to lodge confidential complaints regarding any aspect of the relocation process. All 8 members of the Monitoring Committee have been trained on this complaints system.

In establishing a process for submitting individual complaints to the Monitoring Committee, the Government has addressed the point identified at paragraph 45(c) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee Report.

Appointment of co-presidents of the Appeal Body

To address the issues raised by the Supreme Court as to the Rwandan judiciary's independence and its willingness to find against a decision of the Government of Rwanda, the treaty strongly strengthens the appeals process by requiring appeals to be made to a new specialist appeals body to ensure the final determination of any decision on an asylum claim is objective and impartial.

As detailed in paragraph 4.2 of Annex B of the agreement, for the first five years following ratification of the treaty (extendable by agreement between the Parties) the Appeal Body shall have one Rwandan and one other Commonwealth national co-president with asylum/humanitarian protection experience.

The co-presidents will be responsible for selecting judges from a mix of nationalities who will then be duly appointed.

The co-presidents identified are Justice Sam Rugege and Michael Clements.

Justice Sam Rugege, the Rwandan Co-President, has been recognised for his significant contributions to the legal profession in Rwanda, having been honoured by the East African Law Society, the Rwandan Bar Association and the Kigali Arbitration Centre, as well as elected Honorary Fellow of St. Peter's College, Oxford in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of law.

Justice Rugege served eight years as Chief Justice and eight years as Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rwanda. As Chief Justice, he was responsible for developing judicial policy and overseeing judicial reforms encompassing the use of court technologies, continuing legal education and specialised training for judges. Under his watch, access to justice was enhanced through constitutional challenges, public interest litigation and the promotion of court-annexed mediation. He is a certified and registered mediator and brings a wealth of invaluable experience to support the establishment and successful embedding of the new appeals process.

Michael Clements, the Commonwealth Co-President, has had a highly distinguished judicial career in the UK. He served eleven years as President of the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) in the UK, leaving that role in November 2022. As President of the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber), he led a national tribunal of over 470 judges, hearing a range of complex and high-profile immigration, asylum and overseas deportation appeals, and overseeing a complete end-to-end reform of the appeals service, issuing practice statements to enhance and streamline the process. He has delivered judicial training both nationally and internationally and was the lead trainer for training judges in the Cayman Islands in 2019 and 2021, where he was involved in developing new procedure rules.

Both individuals have accepted in principle the invitation extended by the Government of Rwanda to serve as co-Presidents of the Tribunal, pending their formal appointment. This will address the point identified in paragraph 45(f) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

The Presidential Order which establishes the appeals body sets out the responsibilities of the co-presidents (referred to as the Bureau). Article 10 (Responsibilities of the Bureau of the Appeal Tribunal) states the Bureau of the Appeal Tribunal is in charge of:

- a) selecting other members of the Appeal Tribunal;*
- b) heading, making follow-up on and coordinating activities of the Appeal Tribunal;*
- c) designating members of the bench that hears the appeal and modalities for hearing;*
- d) ensuring that decisions are made impartially, solely on the basis of evidence and in reference to the provisions and principles of the refugee Convention and humanitarian protection law;*
- e) determining any other place in the country at which the Appeal Tribunal may sit, if necessary;*

f) adopting the internal rules and regulations of the Appeal Tribunal prepared by the Registrar.

The other judges selected by the co-presidents will then be appointed by Presidential order. This will address the point identified in paragraph 45(g) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

All judges who are not of Rwandan nationality shall receive training on Rwandan law and judicial practice, and all judges shall, as necessary, receive training on asylum and humanitarian law and practice, on the Agreement and its implementation. This will address the point identified in paragraph 45(h) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

This is in addition to training that has already been delivered to existing members of the Rwandan judiciary, including by the International Association for Refugee and Migration Judges.

Appointment of Independent Experts

The treaty sets out that the First Instance Body will, for at least the first 6 months following the date of arrival of the first person relocated, seek and consider views of a seconded expert before refusing a claim and when giving reasons for a decision.

Similarly, the Appeal Body will, for the first 12 months following ratification of the Agreement (extendable by agreement between the Parties), receive and take into account an opinion from an independent expert in asylum and humanitarian protection law before determining any appeal of a decision by the First Instance Body.

This will provide a further layer of quality assurance in the decision-making process, as well as supporting the development of further capability and expertise within the Rwandan system.

We have confirmation in the form of a letter from Rwanda's Attorney General that the Government of Rwanda has identified suitable candidates and the process for selection is proceeding at pace. The co-Presidents will need to appoint the independent experts for the Appeal Body and need themselves to be formally appointed before being able to do so. We expect both of these independent expert posts to be filled by no later than 27 May 2024, and will be in place by the time of the first flight.

This will address the point identified in paragraph 45(e) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee Report.

Data Management system for tracking progress of claims and protecting relocated individuals through the monitoring of their location

The treaty makes specific provision for information management and protection at Annex C. In line with these requirements, and with our obligations at Article 10(3), which stipulates that the Parties shall agree an effective system for ensuring removal of Relocated Individuals from Rwanda contrary to the terms of the Treaty does not occur,

it is vital that we are able to monitor and record the status of Relocated Individuals in Rwanda.

An interim end to end case management system manually operated by officials has been agreed, to be used for smaller numbers until the comprehensive end-to-end digital system capable of supporting increased numbers of relocations is completed. A working group of technical expert officials from the UK and Rwanda are working together on the digital system to ensure compatibility and capacity build.

The interim system will be maintained and stored by the Government of Rwanda in accordance with agreed data security and protection principles and will capture as a minimum the following details of each Relocated Individual:

- Compliance and Enforcement Person Record number
- Biographic details
- Status (i.e. stage of asylum claim and/or alternative status)
- Location
- Completion of reception activities (ie registration, induction, health screening)
- Vulnerabilities
- Contact details

The Government of Rwanda will follow a process for ensuring the spreadsheet is up to date within 24 hours of event or change of circumstances, in accordance with data protection arrangements.

These arrangements will also be subject to monitoring by the Monitoring Committee and their support team under Article 15 of the treaty.

Creating a system to ensure that refoulement does not take place addresses the point identified in paragraph 45(b) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

Ongoing work with Government of Rwanda

UK officials continue to work closely with the Government of Rwanda to support practical delivery.

This ongoing assurance work involves updating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These detail how various aspects of the end-to-end relocation process should operate in practice, covering areas such as reception and accommodation, safeguarding vulnerable individuals, healthcare provisions, access to UK justice from Rwanda and the process of returning an individual to Rwanda if required. Final SOPs will be published as part of the updated Country Information Note prior to the commencement of operational decision-making on relocations.

This has been supported by on the ground review of the assurances and facilities in place, including in-person visits by UK officials to reception and accommodation sites and facilities for accessing the UK's legal system from overseas. This work ensures the necessary infrastructure is in place to deliver the provisions set out in the treaty, and the agreed operational procedures set out in the SOPs, in practice and to the requisite

standard.

Compliance with the standards set out in the SOPs for reception and accommodation arrangements will be overseen in the first instance by the MEDP Coordination Unit (MEDP-CU) within the Government of Rwanda, which has been established specifically to assume responsibility for these arrangements for Relocated Individuals in Rwanda, for facilitating medical, psychosocial, and integration support, and for arranging translation, interpretation and legal services.

These arrangements will also be subject to monitoring by the Monitoring Committee and their support team under Article 15 of the treaty.

Healthcare

There is a clear process, set out in a SOP agreed between the UK and Rwanda, for Relocated Individuals to access health care services in Rwanda.

Under this process, the MEDP-CU will record the relevant medical information provided by the UK and make any specific arrangements to ensure an individual's needs are met on arrival, including considering the suitability of reception facilities and arrangements for storing medication with which an individual would arrive.

The MEDP-CU will coordinate initial health screenings for relocated individuals. Upon arrival in Rwanda, relocated individuals will be offered an initial health assessment conducted by qualified medical personnel. These voluntary assessments will aim to address the medical needs of each relocated individual and will be used to identify health conditions or safeguarding issues that require attention in addition to the information provided by the UK prior to removal. Where an individual has a specific safeguarding concern including risk of self-harm, immediate steps would be taken to prevent harm which includes medical support and appropriate safeguards put in place including in accommodation facilities.

From arrival, each relocated individual will, have access to quality preventative and curative primary and secondary healthcare services that are at least of the standard available to Rwandan nationals. The MEDP-CU will coordinate access to healthcare services. All relocated individuals will be provided with an insurance card or ID number, which they can present to doctors, hospitals, dentists or pharmacies when accessing healthcare services. In the event that an individual loses their insurance card, MEDP-CU will arrange for a replacement.

Relocated individuals will be eligible for health insurance for a period of 5 years. This provision will be supported by a health care insurance contract, MoUs with two hospitals that ensure provision of necessary healthcare on the tarmac on arrival, initial healthcare screening and 24/7 support in reception accommodation. There will be one further medical professional on site, with a specialism in mental health between the hours of 9am-5pm each day and availability of on-call services at all other times. Any necessary healthcare that falls outside the MoUs or the insurance contract will be covered in full by the Government of Rwanda.

Prior to case-working decisions commencing, the Government will publish a full Country Information Note detailing medical provision under these arrangements in Rwanda.

Safeguarding

The SOP on Identifying and Safeguarding Vulnerable persons sets out guidelines on how to identify and refer vulnerable persons for specialised safeguarding support to prevent abuse or exploitation of Relocated Individuals.

At any stage in the relocation, integration and refugee status determination process, officials who encounter an individual who presents with physical or psychological indicators of vulnerability and who may require further support and safeguarding, must consider if a safeguarding referral is appropriate and if it is, contact the relevant MEDP-CU Protection Team outlining relevant information. All officials who come into contact with Relocated Individuals and might need to refer to the Protection Team will receive training.

Screening of vulnerabilities will be conducted by Protection Officers with the relevant training.

The delivery of training has already begun, with training provided by the Office of the Children's Champion – the Home Office's children and vulnerable adult safeguarding experts – for accommodation officers and protection officers conducted from 16 to 22 of April and training for asylum caseworkers from 23 to 26 of April. This is supported by the processes now outlined in Government of Rwanda's Standard Operating Procedures on safeguarding vulnerable persons.

Upon receiving a safeguarding referral, the Protection Team will arrange an interview with the individual taking into account specific vulnerabilities and prioritising cases. Where necessary, if the person requires emergency protection or care, the emergency services must be contacted.

The UK and Rwanda have agreed that the role of the Protection Team may include supporting an individual's capacity to remain engaged in the asylum or migration process and to cooperate with the system's requirements. They may also provide advice to relevant officials in the process.

Individuals who require specialist mental health services will be supported to access them. The Protection Team may decide that further support is required to support a vulnerable person. This may include medical and/or psychosocial support or support within their accommodation facilities. The officer may wish to discuss what support the person wishes to receive and where possible, this should be with the informed consent of the individual. Where this is not possible but in the best interests of the person, the protection team should still take all necessary steps to safeguard the individual.

Training for Rwandan officials dealing with asylum applicants

To further support capacity and capability within the Rwandan asylum system and ensure the delivery in practice of the processes set out in the agreed SOPs, UK experts

have been working closely with the Government of Rwanda to deliver additional training to Rwandan officials involved in the refugee status determination and appeals processes.

Details of training delivered as of January 2024 was published in Annex 1 (Government of Rwanda evidence)⁵ to the updated Country Information Note: Rwanda Asylum System⁶, on 11 January 2024.

The training to date has, where appropriate, been adapted to address specific concerns about the quality of asylum decision-making in the Rwandan system raised by the UNHCR during the legal proceedings against the MEDP. For example, one course focused on cementing knowledge of the Refugee Convention and other relevant international and regional law and how to apply that in asylum interviews and decision-making. It covered the legal mechanisms for protection, both international and regional, and the Rwandan refugee status determination process, as well as how to apply refugee law in asylum interviews and decision-making, and best practice in assessing credibility and utilising country of origin information.

The training specifically addressed the risk of substantive misunderstandings of refugee law by covering the following key concepts: imputed political opinion, including the principle that it is not reasonable to expect an individual to conceal their political opinion or sexual orientation in order to avoid persecution, particular social groups, sur place claims; and understanding of refoulement, exclusion and revocation clauses. Training also included an overview of handling trauma and how it can impact an asylum seeker's ability to recount their claim in an interview.

Further asylum training will be delivered by the Home Office asylum training team in Kigali in the coming weeks focusing on decision-making for caseworkers. This will support delivery of their new asylum legislation operating under a single case-worker model.

The training already given addresses (and the further training will further address) the point identified in paragraph 45(i) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

Legal assistance and Interpretation services

Part 3 of Annex B to the treaty details the provision that shall be made in Rwanda for Relocated Individuals to access legal assistance and interpreters.

Paragraph 5 confirms that Relocated Individuals will be given orientation that includes details of the asylum process and support that is available to them. They can also seek free legal advice at all stages of the asylum application process.

In order to facilitate provision of legal aid, and as detailed in the Policy Statement⁷ first published by the Government on 12 December 2023, the Rwandan Ministry of Justice signed an agreement with the Rwandan Bar Association on 1 March 2023 to provide

⁵ [Government of Rwanda evidence \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ [Rwanda: Asylum system \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Policy Statement \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

legal assistance to asylum seekers relocated under the MEDP at all appeal stages of their asylum claims. The agreement stipulates that the Rwandan Ministry of Emergency Management shall provide facilitation fees to cover all administrative and court fees required for all steps of the case. The agreement also sets out monitoring and reporting requirements and establishes a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to oversee the program.

To ensure availability of interpreters, Rwanda has negotiated a contract with Big Word Pay as You Go for interpretation services, in addition to using local interpreters already employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

These measures to ensure provision of legal aid and interpretation services will address the point identified in paragraph 45(j) of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee report.

Conclusion

As this statement sets out, the UK and Rwanda have made substantial progress in implementing the measures agreed under the terms of the agreement between the two Parties for the provision of an asylum partnership. To summarise, this includes:

- strengthening the Rwandan end-to-end asylum system through their own new domestic asylum legislation, which they passed on 19 April;
- introducing a specialist asylum appeals tribunal, the Co-Presidents for which have been identified, to consider individual appeals against refused asylum claims, ensuring the final determination of any such claim is objective and impartial;
- enhancing the role of the independent Monitoring Committee, which will ensure adherence to obligations under the treaty and have the power to set its own priority areas for monitoring;
- developing with the UK government a range of Standard Operating Procedures detailing how the provisions under the treaty will be delivered in practice. This includes processes for safeguarding vulnerable individuals and accessing the comprehensive medical support package available to Relocated Individuals.

Where measures have not, at the time of laying this statement, been implemented in full, I am satisfied that we have robust assurances and a clear way forward agreed with the Government of Rwanda to ensure they will be in place within the coming weeks, prior to a first flight.

The Government is therefore proceeding towards ratification of this treaty. Provisions for the treaty to enter into force are set out in Article 24 of the treaty. This specifies that the treaty shall enter into force on the date of receipt of the last notification by the parties that their internal procedures for entry into force have been completed. The Government's intention is that this treaty shall be ratified and enter into force today, 25 April 2024, following the completion of domestic processes by both parties.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Cleverly', is positioned at the top of the page.

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP

Home Secretary

25 April 2024

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