Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary meets US Secretary of State

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In a press conference after the meeting the Foreign Secretary said:

“I am delighted to welcome Secretary Clinton to the Foreign Office today, on the eve of President Obama’s much-anticipated State Visit, and at a momentous time in foreign affairs.

No-one works more tirelessly for global security than Hillary Clinton. She is a great colleague and a source of inspiration for many people around the world, including, often, for other Foreign Ministers and so I thank her for that.

Our two countries have an extraordinarily close working partnership in foreign policy, and a relationship in defence and intelligence that is without parallel anywhere in the world. And for many years we have confronted the menace from Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups together. We will redouble these efforts following the death of Osama Bin Laden, alongside our support for a lasting political settlement in Afghanistan and for stability in Pakistan. The Pakistani people have suffered another appalling terrorist attack in Karachi which I condemn in the strongest terms.

I see every single day in my work as Foreign Secretary that our relationship with the United States is unique, and that it is indispensable to both our countries. And this is on top of our ties in investment, trade, science, research and education, which support about a million jobs on each side of the Atlantic.

So there can be no doubt that its relationship is still special, still fundamental to both our countries, it’s still thriving it’s still a cornerstone of stability in the world.

The President’s visit coincides, as we know, with a period of immense change in the Middle East and North Africa. It has brought renewed hope of a better life to millions of people, but it has also been marked by violence and uncertainty. The British Government is determined to work closely with the United States and our other allies to support democracy and human rights in that region, and to challenge those who take the path of violence and repression.

In Syria, the regime has chosen violence and the mass detention of protestors over reform. Democratic nations cannot stand silent in the face of such acts. That is why at the meeting I attended earlier in Brussels of EU Foreign Ministers, Europe joined the United States in adopting additional sanctions on those responsible for the continuing violence, including

President Assad himself. Syria must change course and until it does, Britain is committed to working with the United States to increase pressure on the regime, including at the United Nations.

In Libya, our two countries and our allies acted swiftly to prevent the massacre of civilians in Benghazi. Today, Secretary Clinton and I discussed our continuing commitment to implement UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. Our action is protecting civilian life, it is necessary, it is legal and it is right, and Britain is committed to intensifying military, economic and diplomatic action against the Qadhafi regime in the coming weeks.

Secretary Clinton and I discussed President Obama's very important speech on the Middle East, which the Britain Government strongly welcomes and supports.

Like the United States, we are ready to offer our assistance to governments that commit themselves to democratic reform and we support the legitimate aspirations of the people of the region. Later this week we will work together at the G8 Summit to support democratic transition in Egypt and Tunisia and have begun this work ourselves on a smaller scale here in the UK through our Arab Partnership Initiative, and the EU this week will set out its vision for a revised Neighbourhood Policy.

We also believe that progress on the Middle East Peace Process is more urgent than ever. As a strong friend to Israelis and Palestinians we say that time is running out for a two-state solution, and that the initiative must be seized now.

I particularly welcome President Obama's clear message that the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on 1967 lines with agreed land swaps. We have called on the US to make such a commitment as part of the process of re-establishing negotiations on the basis of clear parameters. This is to us a significant and valuable act of American leadership.

A couple of final subjects, Iran's nuclear programme and its refusal to enter constructively into negotiations remains a deep concern for both our countries. Iran should not doubt our resolve: its brutal crackdown on its people, support for repression in Syria and assistance to militant groups across the region have only increased our determination to prevent Iranian nuclear proliferation, and today the EU, with strong British involvement, imposed sanctions on more than 100 Iranian banks, individuals and companies linked to Iran's nuclear programme.

We have also discussed Yemen and Sudan.

Finally Secretary Clinton and I discussed the worrying developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and our determination to support peace and stability in the Western Balkans. The referendum proposals passed by the entity of Repulika Srpska National Assembly in mid-April are a very real threat to the rule of law, to the Dayton Agreement and to Bosnia and

Herzegovina's European future. There is no alternative to a swift and full repeal of the referendum.

Hillary, I am delighted that you are here today, and I know that we both look forward immensely to President Obama's State Visit this week, and to further reinforcing the relationship between Britain and the United States."

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said:

"Well, William, thank you very much, and I would love to be able to get away with just saying, "Ditto," and leaving it at that, but I guess I'm compelled to add my voice to yours, and reiterating the indispensible, unique, and special relationship that exists between our two nations, our governments, and our peoples. And we are certainly looking forward to President Obama and Mrs. Obama's state visit starting tomorrow. And thank you for welcoming us so warmly and thank you for the great working relationship that we have and the many areas where we consult closely and frequently on matters of mutual concern. And I was grateful again for the conversation we had which, as you have just summarized, covered quite a bit of ground. I will just highlight a few of the issues.

First, on Libya, we reiterated our shared commitment to enforce the UN Security Council resolution and to protect Libyan civilians. I think both of us believe that we are making progress, but we know that our resolve must be firm and that we have to make it clear that time is running out for Colonel Qadhafi and those around him.

In Syria, the Asad government continues to respond to peaceful protests with brutal violence. By our best estimate, nearly 1,000 people have now been killed. And that is against the backdrop of President Asad talking about reform while his security forces fire bullets into crowds of marchers and mourners at funerals. This cruelty must end, and the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people must be honored.

The U.S., the EU, and others have already imposed sanctions against senior Syrian officials, including new measures announced today targeting President Asad. Foreign Secretary Hague and I are both absolutely consistent with our message to the Asad government: Stop the killings, the beatings, the arrests; release all political prisoners and detainees; begin to respond to the demands that are upon you for a process of credible and inclusive democratic change.

President Asad faces a choice: He can lead the transition to democracy that the Syrian people have demanded; or he can, as President Obama said on Thursday, get out of the way. But there is no doubt that if he does not begin to lead that process, his regime will face continuing and increasing pressure and isolation.

I appreciated the foreign secretary's positive words about President Obama's speech concerning a comprehensive Middle East peace. The United States has outlined principles that we believe provide a foundation for negotiations to resolve core issues, end the conflict and all claims. Everyone knows what the results should be: two states for two people with secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps and security arrangements that ensure Israel can effectively defend itself by itself.

As the President now has said twice in the last three days, this is a well-known formula to all who have worked on this issue for a generation. Certainly, it is the formula that was used by two prior presidents - one Democratic, one Republican. It allows the parties themselves to account for the changes that have taken place over the last 44 years, including the demographic realities and the needs of both sides.

As the President also said, and I would underscore this, no country can be expected to negotiate with a terrorist organization sworn to its destruction. Any Palestinian government must accept the principles outlined by the Quartet, including recognizing Israel's right to exist and rejecting violence and adhering to all existing agreements.

The foreign secretary and I also reviewed the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, British and American troops continue to work side by side to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaida and its terrorist allies. Our military and civilian men and women have made great progress breaking the Taliban's momentum, and we are determined to continue to press al-Qaida and its affiliates on all fronts, even after killing its leader, Usama bin Ladin.

We are going to be discussing and planning to start bringing troops home as part of a responsible transition to an Afghan lead for security, even as we maintain a long-term commitment to the Afghan people. And we are actively supporting an Afghan-led political process to broker reconciliation with members of the Taliban who renounce violence, cut ties to al-Qaida, and support the Afghan constitution.

With respect to Pakistan, Pakistan has hard choices to make. We know the facts. Pakistan is a nuclear-armed state, home to nearly 180 million people, making it the world's sixth largest nation. It needs international support to deal with political and economic problems and the threats it faces from internal violence. This latest attack on a Pakistani naval installation in Karachi is another reminder of the terrible price the Pakistani people have borne in their own struggle against violent extremism.

We have killed more terrorists on Pakistani soil than anywhere else in the world, and that could not have been done without the cooperation of the Government of Pakistan. But there is more work to be done and the work is urgent. Over the long haul, both the United Kingdom and the United States seek to support the Pakistani people as they chart their own destiny, away from political violence, toward greater stability, economic prosperity, and justice.

In Yemen, we are dismayed that President Saleh continues his refusal to sign the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative which would help resolve the political challenges facing Yemen today. The international community, led by the GCC, has worked hard to build support for this initiative. President Saleh has agreed on multiple occasions to sign it. Once again, he is failing to live up to those promises. We urge President Saleh to immediately follow through on his repeated commitments to peacefully transfer power. This is critical for the peace and security that the Yemeni people are seeking.

Finally, we discussed events in Sudan, in particular in Abyei. The United States calls on the Sudanese armed forces to immediately cease all offensive operations in Abyei and withdraw. Both sides must follow through on implementing the agreements of January of 13th and 17th and chart a way forward that restores calm, upholds the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and advances a negotiated political settlement on the future status of the Abyei area.

There were other matters as well, but I think those were the highlights. But as always with the foreign secretary, we have much to discuss when we meet, because we have a similar perspective and shared values and a long history of facing foreign policy challenges together as partners and friends.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-meets-us-secretary-of-state