Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK closing statement at 39th UN Human Rights Council

2018-09-28

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 39th session today with important resolutions on Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Burma and a number of other pressing issues.

As I said during my

speech at the Council on 17 September

, human rights remain under threat around the world. The United Kingdom remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rules based international system, of which the Human Rights Council is such an important part. It is essential that we work together with other UN member states to ensure accountability for those who violate the rights of their citizens.

While visiting the Council I was delighted to meet High Commissioner Bachelet during her inaugural session. Her extraordinary wealth of knowledge as well as her professional and personal experience will be invaluable in her role – I wish her well.

Burma

I welcome the Council's establishment of a mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of the human rights atrocities carried out, primarily by the military, in Burma. This resolution, tabled jointly by the

OIC

and the

EU

, shows that the international community as a whole is united in its focus on Burma. The mechanism is an important stepping stone on the road to accountability and justice; Burma now needs to show it will cooperate with this mechanism. Burma's government and military must also show that its Commission of Inquiry will be an impartial, independent and credible process that leads to perpetrators of human rights violations being held to account.

Syria

Turning to Syria, the Council must continue to shine a light on the dire situation there and I welcome the resolution adopted by the Council. The Commission of Inquiry has exposed the ongoing violations of international law, including the regime's persistent use of chemical weapons, torture and forced displacement. Further steps to protect civilians are urgently needed, and so the agreement between Russia and Turkey to avoid a military offensive in Idlib is encouraging.

Yemen

I am pleased that the mandate of the Yemen Group of Eminent Experts has been renewed, though disappointed that a single consensus resolution was not possible. Given the gravity of the situation in Yemen it is important to give the Group of Eminent Experts more time to fully examine the conflict and to ensure that their conclusions accurately reflect the conduct of all parties in future reporting. It is clear that many incidents and alleged violations, committed by all parties, have not yet been fully documented, particularly those by Houthis in Hodeidah and the rest of Northern Yemen.

Venezuela

Elsewhere, I welcome the Lima Group's resolution on Venezuela which reflects the deep international concern at the sharply deteriorating social and economic conditions affecting the Venezuelan people.

Sudan, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Somalia and DRC

I am pleased that the Council renewed the Mandate of the Independent Expert on Sudan and note the Government of Sudan's commitment to open a fully mandated OHCHR office. I also welcome the renewal of mandates of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and the Independent Expert for Central Africa Republic, as well as the Council's continued focus on the human rights situations in Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo.

I welcome the work of the Office of the High Commissioner to bring attention to the issue of the safety of journalists, and the strong message sent by the resolution adopted by the Council. States which stifle free speech and prevent or restrict media freedom do not thrive; politically, socially or economically. I condemn the increasing pattern of threats and intimidation of journalists, media workers and all those who want to freely express their views.

The work of the Human Rights Council is vital in bringing states together to protect and promote universal human rights around the world.

The UK government plays, and will continue to play, an active role at the Council and will continue to support its efforts to hold to account those who perpetrate violations and abuses of human rights.

Further information

Follow Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on Twitter

@tariqahmadbt

Follow the Foreign Office on

Twitter

and

Facebook

Follow the Foreign Office on

Instagram

,

YouTube

and

LinkedIn

Media enquiries

For journalists

Email

newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-closing-statement-at-39th-un-human-rights-council