Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Baroness Warsi welcomes conclusions of UN Human Rights Council

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Senior Foreign Office Minister Baroness Warsi said:

The UK welcomes the strong action which the Human Rights Council has taken on Sri Lanka, DPRK, Iran, Syria and Burma at this session. I am also encouraged by the Council's effective response to a range of other critical human rights situations including Ukraine and South Sudan.

The UK very much welcomes the action taken by the UN Human Rights Council on Sri Lanka, which has established an international investigation into allegations of violations and abuses of international law on both sides during the military conflict, and calls on the Sri Lankan government to make further progress on human rights, reconciliation and a political settlement. This was the right decision. The Sri Lankan people have waited long enough to know the truth of what happened to their loved ones, and members of the UN Human Rights Council have helped to ensure that this is possible. We hope that the Sri Lankan government will embrace this opportunity to establish the truth, to make progress on human rights concerns, and to lay the groundwork for lasting peace and prosperity.

"The UK continues to condemn in the strongest terms Russia's flagrant disregard of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the Council we called for an immediate, comprehensive and independent investigation into all human rights violations and abuses. We also joined others in raising our serious concerns about credible reports of kidnappings of journalists and activists, the blocking of independent media and the barring of independent observers.

The UK shares the deep concern felt across the world for the increasingly deteriorating situation in the Syrian Arab Republic including the continued systematic and widespread violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law. The high level of support for the Syrian people was again made clear in the Council. The Council renewed the Commission of Inquiry mandate so they can continue to document violations and abuses, demanded that the Assad regime cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry and reaffirmed that all those responsible for horrific atrocities cannot hide and must be held accountable.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has for too long refused to comply with its international obligations or engage properly with the Council. The Commission of Inquiry's findings indicated widespread, state sanctioned horrific violations of human rights. The Council responded to the recommendations in the Commission of inquiry report by agreeing the strongest possible resolution to date, which set out clear steps to enable continued documentation, made it clear that those responsible would be held to account and renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. The UK also strongly supported the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Iran.

The UK welcomes the adoption of the resolution on Burma by consensus. We strongly supported this resolution which rightly recognises both progress and the serious challenges which remain, in particular the situation in Rakhine State, the need for constitutional reform the importance of opening an Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights office and renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

The UK is delighted that the resolution on Libya enjoyed such wide support and co-sponsorship. This is testimony to the commitment and desire of the international community to stand with, and assist Libya, as it works to promote and protect human rights. We must not shy away from the considerable human rights challenges faced by Libya and we will support the government in tackling these challenges head on.

The UK welcomes the attention paid by the Council to the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. There was unanimous agreement that swift and urgent action is needed and that the situation should be kept under constant review to ensure the human rights situation is addressed and those responsible for violations and abuses are held to account.

There were a wide range of thematic initiatives in the Council this session. We continue to support important resolutions on torture and human rights defenders and participated in the panel on the protection of civil society space. Protection of the space in which civil society operates is vital and we will continue to call for states to refrain from and ensure adequate protection from acts of intimidation or reprisals against civil society actors.

People around the world look to this Council to defend their fundamental rights, freedoms and dignity. I am delighted that the United Kingdom has once again been afforded the opportunity to contribute to this vital work as a member of the Council. Without action if we let human rights violations go unchecked and ignored we sow the seeds for instability, conflict and humanitarian Crisis. Early and effective action is so important and the Council must be at the forefront of that effort. The UK will continue to work to ensure it responds appropriately to all violations of human rights, wherever they occur.

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