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Alicia Kearns MP
Chair
Foreign Affairs Committee
UK Parliament

2 March 2023

Dear Ms Kearns

It was a pleasure to speak to you on 25 January about the work of the FCDO's Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation. I committed to provide further information on the achievements of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and intended outcomes for the next few years.

As you know the UK has been leading global efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) since PSVI was launched in 2012. Over the last five years (the period you asked specifically about) the Initiative's achievements include:

- The 2018 **PSVI Film Festival**, where filmmakers from across the globe highlighted how film can be used as a powerful advocacy tool.
- In April 2019 the UK helped to pass UN Security Council Resolution 2467, which called for strengthened accountability and a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to CRSV.
- In October 2019, the UK appointed two **PSVI Survivor Champions**, Nadine Tunasi and Kolbassia Haoussou MBE, to support and champion all survivors and guide PSVI on delivering a survivor-centred approach.
- The UK launched the **Declaration of Humanity** by Leaders of Faith and Leaders of Belief in 2020. This unites multiple faiths and beliefs in a common front to challenge damaging social norms and calls for support for survivors of sexual violence. It has been signed by over 200 faith leaders, along with around 450 civil society actors and community members in countries including Iraq, Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- Following UK advocacy, **NATO's policy on CRSV** in June 2021 outlines actions that NATO will take to prevent and respond to CRSV in its operations. On 25 May 2022 NATO agreed updated military guidelines to put this policy into action.

- Lord Ahmad launched the **Call to Action on Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict** in November 2021. The Call to Action has received 23 endorsements from governments, multilateral and civil society partners.
- In Colombia, PSVI funding supported the **All Survivors Project** to advocate successfully for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open a macro-case into CRSV committed by armed groups and government forces. The macro-case recognises men and children as victims as well as women. This is an important step in the transitional justice process that will strengthen accountability for CRSV in Colombia.
- Lord Ahmad launched the **Murad Code** at the UN Security Council in April 2022. It is a code of conduct to ensure evidence is collected from survivors safely and ethically. 12 countries committed to champion the Murad Code in national commitments made at the PSVI Conference.
- We have a range of programmes in affected countries. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UK funding for **TRIAL International's advocacy** helped to convince the national prosecutor's office to issue a mandatory instruction in January for all prosecutors to help war crimes and human trafficking survivors to receive compensation, paid for by seizing the perpetrator's property.

In November 2022, the UK-hosted PSVI Conference sought to re-galvanise the international response to these crimes. Over 1,000 delegates attended, including survivors, parliamentarians, civil society, multilateral partners and senior representatives from at least 57 countries, including Foreign Ministers and the first ladies of Ukraine and the DRC. The conference demonstrated sustained UK leadership to tackle this global scourge.

We agreed when we met that the conference is not an end in itself. But the new commitments the UK made at the conference and, through our convening, were able to draw from participants will have real world impact. 53 countries and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten endorsed the UK's Political Declaration which sends a clear message that these heinous crimes must end and outlines the steps needed to achieve this. 40 countries made national commitments detailing the tangible actions they will take to tackle CRSV, enabling monitoring and accountability. During the conference President Biden issued a memorandum setting out the USA's intention to promote accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, including through economic sanctions, visa restrictions, and additional measures and authorities.

Survivors were at the heart of the conference, helping to shape the design of the event and speaking on almost every panel. This was a genuinely innovative approach which will help to shape our own and others' future action to focus on the needs of the women, men and children who need it most.

The **PSVI Strategy** was published on 28 November 2022. It sets out our ambition for the next three years, using our diplomacy, development and defence levers to tackle CRSV. The strategy focuses on four objectives:

1. Strengthening the global response to CRSV;
2. Preventing CRSV, including by addressing the root causes such as harmful gender norms;
3. Strengthening justice for all survivors of CRSV and holding perpetrators to account; and
4. Supporting survivors and children born of sexual violence in conflict, including by tackling stigma.

The strategy is underpinned by a robust theory of change which provides an evidence-based conceptual framework for how the UK Government and other stakeholders can contribute to addressing CRSV. Delivery of the strategy will be supported by up to £12.5 million of new funding for PSVI over the next three years. This funding will be complemented by wider investments across FCDO to tackle CRSV.

Looking ahead, key planned outcomes over the next few years to deliver PSVI Strategy objectives include:

1. Strengthening the global response to CRSV
   - Coordinating global action through the **International Alliance on PSVI**. This will be an alliance of states, civil society and survivors to maintain the momentum generated by the PSVI Conference and coordinate global action.
   - Strengthening the international legal architecture through supporting the **Crimes Against Humanity Convention** at the UN.
   - Working with NATO and Allies to ensure **effective implementation of NATO's CRSV policy and military guidelines**, including through providing resource to NATO's Human Security Unit to support delivery of our shared priorities.
   - Continued support of the **Call to Action for the Protection from Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies**, including leading the GBV Financing Task Team to ensure the prioritisation of GBV by Humanitarian Country Teams and accessible funding for women-led organisations.
2. Preventing CRSV
   - Preventing CRSV by tackling the harmful gender norms that drive it, including through the **What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale** programme.
   - Addressing CRSV through UN and UK **sanctions** regimes.
3. Strengthening justice
   - Supporting accountability at national level through the new **ACT for Survivors Initiative.**
   - Enhancing survivor participation and experience with the International Criminal Court (ICC) through the **UK/ICC new tech partnership**.

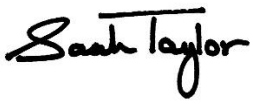
- Using the **Murad Code** to strengthen UK Government practice and embedding it in the work of government, multilateral and civil society partners.

4. Supporting survivors and children born of sexual violence in conflict
    - Empowering survivors to access redress and rebuild their lives through our financial support to the **Global Survivors Fund**.
    - **Supporting children born of CRSV**, including by working with the Government of the DRC to review how their laws and policies could better empower this vulnerable group.

Annex A provides further detail on a range of PSVI workstreams.

As we deliver this work we will continue engaging closely with Parliament, survivors, governments, civil society and multilateral partners. I hope to have the opportunity to discuss our work further with the Committee in due course. In the meantime, thank you for continuing to champion this vital agenda.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Taylor

Director, Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation

Annex A

ACT for Survivors

The UK launched a new initiative ‘ACT for Survivors’ at the PSVI Conference in November. The initiative aims to strengthen accountability for conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) crimes at the national level, including (but not limited to) increased prosecutions, with strengthened survivor focus.

ACT for Survivors will focus on strengthening accountability at the national level through: strengthened and analysis and best practice sharing, including through an online repository and guidance for states; capacity building for states to support them to build better judicial mechanisms to prosecute CRSV; and support for survivors, including through broader justice and accountability measures.

Murad Code

In April 2022, Lord Ahmad chaired a Security Council Open Debate on CRSV to press for stronger global action and launch the UK-funded ‘Murad Code’, which sets out how to collect information from survivors safely and effectively. The code has been translated into Ukrainian to support the response to CRSV in Ukraine.

We will shortly be launching a review, conducted by a member of the PSVI Team of Experts, to consider how the Murad Code can strengthen HMG practice. We are also putting the code into practice, for example integrating it into the technical support we are providing to the Ukrainian Office of the Prosecutor General. We are promoting its use to partners and 12 countries committed to champion the Murad Code in national commitments made at the PSVI Conference.

Call to Action on Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict

In November 2021, Lord Ahmad launched the Call to Action to Ensure the Rights and Wellbeing of Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict. So far, the Call to Action has received twenty-one formal endorsements: fourteen Governments (the UK, United States, Norway, Mexico, Guatemala, Kosovo, South Sudan, DRC, Canada, Nigeria, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, New Zealand, Ecuador and Bangladesh), UN Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for Children and Armed Conflict, and on Violence Against Children, the Global Survivors Fund, International Rescue Committee, the Children Born of War Project and other civil society organisations.

The UK will continue to work closely with those who have endorsed through the Platform for Action Promoting the Rights and Wellbeing of Children Born of CRSV, a framework for implementing the principles in the Call to Action. To date, the UK, along with Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Global Survivors Fund and UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, have committed to key actions under this Platform. For example, with the UK’s support the Government of the DRC has committed to reviewing how its laws and policies could better empower this vulnerable group. Together, these initiatives

are key to galvanising international action to support the tens of thousands of children who, due to the circumstances of their conception, are marginalised and stigmatised by their families and communities.

Global Survivors Fund

Rather than prioritising justice in the courts, many survivors seek employment, small business loans, direct financial contributions, or help with education. As a result, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad launched the Global Survivors Fund (GSF) in October 2018.

The UK sits on the Board of the Global Survivors Fund. Since its inception, we have provided £2.7 million to support their critical work. At the PSVI Conference, we announced a further £5.15m contribution to the Fund over the next three years.

Sanctions

The Foreign Secretary announced at the PSVI Conference the UK's continued commitment to use all levers at our disposal to prevent and address CRSV, including through the use of sanctions. On 9 December the UK announced a sanctions package which included 6 targets in Mali, Myanmar and South Sudan who were designated for their involvement in sexual and gender-based violence, including CRSV.

What Works

Addressing the root causes of CRSV – such gender inequality – is critical for a strategic approach to prevention. We have committed £67.5 million to the What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale programme to respond to the urgent need to scale up Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) prevention. The programme will contribute to generating a world-class evidence base on what works to prevent CRSV.

UK/ICC new tech partnership

At the PSVI conference the Foreign Secretary announced a new tech partnership between the UK and the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC. Funded by the FCDO (Frontier Technologies Hub), this innovative project explores how new technologies such as virtual reality could solve some of the challenges faced by survivors when seeking justice for CRSV.