

Foreign Affairs Committee

The write to protect: Britain's pen on the world stage

Second Report of Session 2024–26

HC 930

Foreign Affairs Committee

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Summary

The act of penholding at the United Nations Security Council is a role undertaken by Members of the Council (elected or Permanent Members, who are countries). The country that is a lead penholder for a file—which can be either a country like Sudan or a thematic—is the Member State that leads on the negotiation and drafting of resolutions which are related to that file and are in line with the United Nations Security Council agenda. At the time of publication, the UK is the penholder for files on the United Nations Office for Central Africa, Colombia, Cyprus, Libya, Outstanding Issues on Iraq and Kuwait, Myanmar, Peacekeeping, the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Somalia, Sudan, Women, Peace and Security and Yemen.

Leading and managing the penholdership of conflict-affected files at the United Nations is a key aspect of how the UK contributes towards international peace and security efforts. This report considers in detail the UK's track record for the files it holds as a penholder at the United Nations Security Council and examines areas where leadership on these files might be strengthened.

This report is published at a time of profound global geopolitical change, with the future of the multilateral world order uncertain. This is particularly evident at the United Nations Security Council, where there is increasing polarisation between the five Permanent Members: China and Russia on the one hand and the UK and its allies France and the United States on the other. In light of these changes, this report considers the UK's strategy and engagement with the United Nations, and the future of the multilateral system of conflict resolution.

The United Nations as a multilateral institution is constrained, over-burdened and flawed. This does not mean we should abandon it. Rather, as a leading actor, the UK's duty is to push back against attempts to weaken it. The need for strategic and purposeful multilateralism, underpinned by a strong commitment to the rules-based international order, has never been more urgent.

This report is based on our firm conviction that the United Nations remains more than ever an essential global institution. The United Nations has survived eight decades of shifting geopolitics and we are confident that the UK, as a global convening actor, can help to preserve the system and lead the vital continuation of the United Nations during a time marked by extensive change and turbulence.

1 Introduction

1. 2024 saw the greatest number of conflicts since the end of the Second World War in 1945: the world faces 61 state-based conflicts in 36 countries, and 74 non-state conflicts.¹ War, political violence, civil unrest and terrorism have created a world order which is fragmented and disunified. The global increase in conflict and instability highlights the need for an effective United Nations (UN), a keystone of the multilateral system. The UN charges the UN Security Council (UNSC) to maintain global peace and security, resolve conflicts and advance the rules-based international order.² However, its effectiveness—and that of the wider UN system—is under threat. Increasing polarisation between the five Permanent Members is presenting a challenge to those whose aim is to promote peace and security around the world.
2. The UK has recognised the need to “make the system more representative and more responsive to those who need it most” and has advocated for reform.³ Equally the UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched the UN80 initiative which aims to produce short-term cost reductions and long-term institutional reforms.⁴ Proposals for UN reform will be debated during the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2025.
3. This report considers how effectively the UK uses its position as penholder at the UNSC to influence and bring about an end to global conflict, whilst advancing its goals for a rules-based international order. See [Table 1](#) for a full list of files the UK holds the pen for at the UNSC.
4. The report begins with an assessment of how increasing polarisation on the UNSC has hindered global efforts to resolve conflict. This includes examining the UK’s relationships in the multilateral system with China and Russia, and assessing how the UK might best advocate for a values-led and rules-based international order. To this end, this report considers the future

1 The Peace Research Institute Oslo, [Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2024](#), 2025

2 The United Nations Security Council was established under the UN Charter. The UNSC has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and it may meet whenever peace is threatened. The Permanent Members of the UNSC (often referred to as the P5) consist of China, France, Russia, the UK and the US.

3 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [2025 should be a year of progress and reform, in the service of the rule of law, cooperation and peace: UK Statement at the UN General Assembly](#), 15 January 2025

4 United Nations, [Secretary-General, Briefing on UN80 Initiative, Lays Out System-Wide Reform Plans to Make United Nations More Effective, Nimble, Fit for Today’s Challenges](#), 12 May 2025

of the multilateral order amidst a rise in state-led negotiations, peace deals and ceasefires aimed at bringing about an end to conflict bilaterally, rather than through the UN system.

5. A core focus of this report is the relationship between the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the UK's Mission to the UN in New York. To this end, this report examines the extent to which cuts to the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget, and, additionally, departmental cuts in the FCDO announced as a part of the Government's June 2025 Spending Review, affect the UK's ability to resolve conflict through the UNSC. This report finally assesses how these financial changes impact upon the UK's reputation as a global leader in promoting stabilisation and conflict prevention solutions.

Our inquiry

6. We received written evidence for this inquiry and held oral evidence sessions where we heard from a range of experts including former UK diplomats, former UN diplomats, UN observers and the FCDO. We are most grateful to all our witnesses, and to all those who submitted written evidence, for their contributions to this inquiry.
7. The Committee, as a part of its visit to the US in June 2025, visited the UN Headquarters and met with the Secretary General, António Guterres and the UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, James Kariuki. We also met with Permanent Representatives that the UK works closely with at the UN, such as France and the US. The Committee held meetings with representatives of some countries of the files for which the UK is a penholder, including Colombia and Somalia, as well as think-tank experts and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Whilst in Washington DC, the Committee raised questions about the UNSC with members of Congress, the Senate and officials serving within the US State Department. We are very grateful to all those who took the time to meet with us during our visit to the US and for their contributions to this inquiry.

Glossary of key terms

Box 1: Glossary of key terms

Penholder: The penholder role refers to the member of the UN Security Council that leads the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on a particular UN Security Council agenda item.

Co-penholder: Co-penholding happens when Permanent and Elected Members work on a file in tandem.

United Nations: The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation founded in 1945 and it currently consists of 193 Member States. Its work is guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter.

United Nations Security Council: The UN Charter established six main organs of the UN, including the UN Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It may meet whenever peace is threatened. The five Permanent Members of the UNSC (often referred to as the P5) consist of China, France, Russia, the UK and the US. The current Elected Members to the UNSC include Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Somalia. Their terms span two years and they do not all start and end at the same time as one another.

United Nations General Assembly: The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main policy-making organ of the UN. Comprising all Member States, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations. Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.⁵

5 United Nations, [About Us](#) and [Security Council Working Methods](#) (accessed 15 September 2025)

2 Overview of penholding

8. The UK is penholder for the following country and thematic files at the UN Security Council (UNSC):

Table 1: Overview of files the UK holds the pen for at the UNSC

File	Level
UN Office for Central Africa	Country
Colombia	Country
Cyprus	Country
Libya	Country
Outstanding Issues on Iraq and Kuwait (UK) (The US leads on Iraq)	Country
Myanmar	Country
Peacekeeping	Thematic
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (The UK is co-Chair with Denmark)	Thematic
Somalia	Country
Sudan (The US leads on Sudan sanctions)	Country
Women, Peace and Security (The US leads on preventing sexual violence in conflict)	Thematic
Yemen	Country

Source: United Nations Security Council, [2025 Chair of Subsidiary Bodies and Penholders](#) (accessed 7 August 2025)

9. The FCDO told us that the UK's permanent seat on the UNSC, and its role as a penholder, give the UK responsibility for, and a leadership role on, conflict issues around the world.⁶ The Government drives forward Council action for files where the UK holds the pen. This includes convening UNSC meetings and leading negotiations on products such as resolutions and press statements. The FCDO informed us that, as the penholder for a specific file, the UK will take the initiative on UNSC action, making use of UNSC powers to authorise enforcement action including sanctions, deploy UN peacekeeping and special political missions, apply political pressure and maintain international focus.⁷

6 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

7 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

10. We heard that while penholders normally lead routine UNSC action on their files, the informal nature of penholding means any Council member can propose action at any time.⁸ This includes calling for meetings, introducing a draft product or proposing a UNSC visit.
11. Professor Jason Ralph, University of Leeds, and Dr Jess Gifkins, University of Technology, Sydney, told us that penholding carries considerable political power, which includes not only drafting the text of resolutions but also setting the terms of debate.⁹ In written evidence they quote Germany's former Permanent Representative to the UN, who commented:

The one who leads, the one who presents the text, who stakes out a position early in the day, is the one who more or less determines the game.¹⁰
12. We heard from Professor Ralph and Dr Gifkins that penholding goes beyond the ownership over drafting resolutions and includes drafting presidential statements and press statements, leading Security Council country visits, and having the automatic right to speak first in meetings.¹¹
13. Dr Andrea Knapp, University of Bologna, told us that penholding brings key benefits to the UK (or to the country leading the file in question):
 - a. First-mover benefit: Being involved in the drafting process from the outset gives the UK the power to set the agenda and to “frame issues, establish initial language [used in the resolution or statement] and embed national interests from the outset of the negotiation process”.¹²
 - b. Countries who lead on files shape more than just the content of the draft resolutions. They also influence the “negotiation tone, maintain access to UN bureaucrats and [can] strategically affect the timing of submission”.¹³

8 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

9 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

10 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

11 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

12 Andrea Knapp (PhD candidate at University of Bologna) ([UKU0001](#))

13 Andrea Knapp (PhD candidate at University of Bologna) ([UKU0001](#))

14. Professor Ralph and Dr Gifkins told us that the penholder practice draws on the Permanent Member's institutional memory of UNSC rules and procedures and its delegation's diplomatic capital.¹⁴ As the FCDO noted in its evidence, penholding has largely been divided among the P3 (France, the UK and the US), with Russia and China showing limited interest in or engagement with penholding.¹⁵ The FCDO told us that France, the UK and the US 'hold the pen' on a majority of UNSC products.¹⁶ According to the FCDO, this is demonstrative of the P3 using the UNSC actively. The FCDO informed us that, given the prolonged nature of modern conflicts, many files benefit from a penholder who can ensure consistency and continuity in UNSC action.¹⁷ We heard from Professor Ralph and Dr Gifkins that the 2024 Security Council Report lists 41 situations or themes with penholders, of which the UK is penholder or co-penholder for 12 or 29%; the P3 hold 31 or 75% between them.¹⁸
15. The practice of co-penholding and specific files that the UK leads on is discussed in detail in Chapter Six of this report.

14 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

15 Russia is penholder for Central Asia and shares the pen with the US for the Golan Heights. See, the United Nations, [Penholders and Chairs: UN Security Council Working Methods](#) (accessed 15 September 2025)

16 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

17 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

18 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

3 Tension and polarisation at the United Nations Security Council

Setting the scene

16. It became evident to us in the course of our inquiry, including on our visit to the UN Headquarters in New York, that the UN and multilateralism are under grave threat.
17. Since Russia's renewed illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, multilateral institutions such as the UN have found themselves to be exploitable in an age of increasing great power politics and geopolitical fragmentation. Russia is not solely responsible. China is also of concern and has capitalised on this geopolitical fragmentation. More recently, the new administration in the US has shown itself to be more sceptical of multilateral bodies, and an Executive Order signed in February 2025 required a review of all international intergovernmental organisations of which the United States is a member, to provide recommendations as to whether the United States should withdraw from any.¹⁹
18. There is polarisation at the UN Security Council (UNSC), with consensus between China and Russia, on the one hand, and France, the UK and previously the US, on the other hand, increasingly difficult to attain. A paralysed UNSC amplifies the risk that crucial decisions concerning the resolution of conflict and the maintenance of peace and security are not adequately addressed, debated or resolved.
19. It is crucial that the UK and its allies push back against the narrative that the multilateral system is defunct or biased. This is in the national interest: the UK—a founding member—is a country with a long history in the UN and, as a globally recognised convening power, we have the wherewithal to sustain and empower the multilateral system. Multilateralism is also

19 The Whitehouse, [Withdrawing the United State from and ending funding to certain United Nations Organizations and reviewing United States support to all International Organizations](#), 4 February 2025

critical for national security. Sir Mark Lyall Grant, former UK National Security Adviser and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, told us that:

We [the UK], as a leading middle power in the world, and as an open, democratic trading nation, depend both for our prosperity and our security on a rules-based international order. Without that, we will suffer both economically and in security terms.²⁰

20. It is imperative that the UK is as effective as it can be at the UNSC and is seen to be acting upon the best interest for Britain, and for people affected by conflict in the areas for which the UK is the penholder at the UNSC.

A multilateral Britain is a secure Britain

21. In 2024, the UK was the fifth largest contributor to the UN's regular budget (as a part of the UK's assessed contributions to the UN),²¹ contributing USD \$137 million.²² For July 2023 to June 2024, the UK's share of the Peacekeeping Budget was USD \$321 million. As a member of the UNSC, the UK has a particular responsibility for upholding peace and security. In his evidence to the Committee, Sir Mark Lyall Grant, said:

We should never lose sight of the origins of the UN and why that system is there. It is there because its predecessor, the League of Nations, failed to prevent the Second World War.²³

22. Upholding and strengthening the multilateral system at a time of rising conflict across the world is crucial to global security and prosperity. Witnesses told us that the UN's influence has ebbed and flowed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.²⁴ The UN is currently in an ebb and the UK finds itself navigating the strained and polarised system with difficulty. Nonetheless, the FCDO said to us that, in considering the history of the UN, there have been moments "when it has waxed and waned in its activity."²⁵ Despite the ebb, the Government informed us that it continues to see the UNSC as having a "very valuable role".²⁶

20 [Q8](#)

21 Assessed contributions are payments that all Member States are required to make under the UN Charter. Assessments provide a reliable source of funding to core functions of the Secretariat through the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets. UN specialized agencies have their own assessed budgets. UN specialised agencies have their own assessed budgets. See: United Nations, [Committee on contributions](#) (accessed 15 August 2025)

22 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

23 [Q26](#)

24 See, for example: [Qq3-6](#) ; [Q26](#); [Qq102-103](#)

25 [Q102](#)

26 [Q102](#)

23. Yet this is not the first time the UN has faced such an ebb, nor will it be the last. Drawing upon lessons from history is important: Sir Mark told us that, throughout the Cold War period (1945–1990) the UNSC was “paralysed on a whole range of issues [...] in fact many more issues” than today.²⁷ We heard that during the Cold War, the UNSC “hardly met”,²⁸ with meetings occurring every second or third week of a month. This is in stark contrast to the 305 meetings which occurred in 2024,²⁹ which Sir Mark said demonstrated the UNSC was “extremely active”.³⁰
24. We heard evidence that the West has only “had 25 out of 80 years”³¹ when the UN system, and in particular the UNSC, has “been firing on all cylinders”.³² This was what Sir Mark referred to as the UN’s golden age, taking place between 1990–2011. This period was defined by Western-led initiatives focused on international law and human rights, including humanitarian intervention and introducing the responsibility to protect. Since 2011, there has been considerably more pushback, led by China and Russia, against this rules-based international order.³³
25. The FCDO told us that despite the challenging geopolitical context, the UNSC remains able to agree action on a significant number of conflicts globally. This includes maintaining 11 UN peacekeeping operations, 14 UN sanctions regimes and mandates for 11 special political missions.³⁴
26. The UK’s role as a Permanent Member of the UNSC provides a particular platform to exert influence and a responsibility to further the resolution of global conflict. Sir Mark told us that during his tenure as Permanent Representative to the UN, the UK was seen to be the “one country that believed the most in the international rule of law and in multilateralism more generally.”³⁵
27. We have no doubt that readjusting the narrative to identify, and then act, to empower the UNSC to be more effective will be challenging. However, the presence of great powers seeking to undermine this process does not mean the UK and its allies must not try and, indeed, win.
28. The UN is only as effective as the international community wants it to be, and the UK shares in the responsibility to make the UN effective. The Government, via the UK Missions to the UN, must take all appropriate

27 [Q32](#)

28 [Q32](#)

29 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

30 [Q32](#)

31 [Q13](#)

32 [Q13](#)

33 [Q4](#)

34 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

35 [Q2](#)

measures to ensure not only the value and continuation, but also the success of the UN. This is difficult, but it is not impossible. UN80—a set of measures and initiatives announced by the UN Secretary General in 2025,³⁶ to streamline the UN and its agencies—is an opportunity for the UK to increase and target its engagement with the multilateral system to its advantage.

29. CONCLUSION

We welcome and recognise the strong leadership demonstrated by the Government in leading on the UK’s global ‘re-engagement,’ including at and through the United Nations. The impending 80th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations system in September 2025, and the ongoing United Nations 80 (UN80) reform agenda, represent an opportunity which the Government must seize to begin a discussion proactively on the future of multilateralism and the role the UK can play in this new system.

30. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should outline its strategy for responding to and engaging with a rapidly changing multilateral system, in its response to this report. This should include a roadmap detailing the UK’s engagement with the ongoing United Nations 80 (UN80) reform agenda at the United Nations and ensuring that the UK is actively in the room and enhancing the efficiency and the effectiveness of the United Nations. This strategy should also indicate how the UK’s soft power and status as a global convening power will enable the UK to navigate the challenging and fragmented period ahead.

Actions of countries regarding the UN

- 31.** States have always been able to use multilateral organisations to further their own agendas. A report by the predecessor Foreign Affairs Committee noted that China seeks to redefine multilateral organisations by overly engaging with institutions such as the UN and gaining international support amongst non-Permanent Members.³⁷ Sir Mark told us that while Russia has “virtually no natural friends” at the UN, “China has a lot of friends”³⁸ and it is through these relationships that it seeks to leverage its influence by exchanging development financing for votes at the UNGA with countries in the Global South. Indeed, since Beijing was recognised as China’s

36 United Nations, [UN80 Initiative: What it is and why it matters to the world](#) (accessed 13 August)

37 First Report of Session 2021–22, [In the room: the UK’s role in multilateral diplomacy](#), HC 199

38 [Q18](#)

representative at the UN in 1971, replacing the Republic of China (otherwise known as Taiwan), China has used its position in the UNSC and the General Assembly to isolate and contain Taiwan within the UN.

- 32. The UN has passed many resolutions since Israel responded to the attacks on 7 October 2023. However, these either have been ignored or have provoked anti-UN responses from Israel.³⁹
- 33. In March 2022, the UN passed a resolution condemning the actions of Russia in Ukraine, approved by 141 countries with only five voting against⁴⁰.
- 34. It is clear that the UK and our allies' collective security as a global multilateral system based upon shared values of a rules-based international order is under threat. Sir Mark told us that "if we, the West, are not contesting that space in the soft power areas as much as we were, the beneficiary will undoubtedly be China."⁴¹

35. **CONCLUSION**

The international community's reluctance to address malign influence within the United Nations system risks the loss of the values-embedded and rules-based international order. If more countries ignore UN resolutions, it will become less and less effective. The UK has a leading diplomatic network, significant soft power, and is a primary financial contributor to the United Nations and must take leadership in responding to these challenges.

36. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should make full use of the whole United Nations system to advance its foreign policy objectives and further British values of democracy and tolerance to counter assertive behaviour by other countries within the United Nations. The Government in its engagement should include publicly calling out countries who are abusing or undermining the United Nations system.

The rise in bilateral conflict resolution

- 37. In evidence, we heard of the increased role played by countries bilaterally or through regional forums in the resolution of global conflict. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey have each recently hosted and facilitated international peace agreements, outside of what would

39 The Financial Times, "[Israel calls UN a 'terror organisation' as tensions escalate over Gaza war](#)", 15 May 2024

40 European Union External Action Service, "[UN General Assembly demands Russian Federation withdraw all military forces from the territory of Ukraine](#)", 2 March 2022

41 [Q18](#)

traditionally be the scope of the UN's peace and security profile including the recent Alaska Summit, led by the US. Martin Griffiths, former Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs at the UN, told us that "mediation is done these days by those with leverage, not necessarily by those with status, as in the [UN Security] Council",⁴² and that this represents a change from historic norms.⁴³ These countries often have vested national or regional interests in the conflict at hand, which Mr Griffiths suggested were "not appropriate for mediation in a classic sense".⁴⁴

38. Richard Gowan, Director of UN and Multilateral Diplomacy at the International Crisis Group, said that this rising trend in bilateral conflict resolution was partially due to the changing geopolitical situation globally. Realpolitik and big power politics led by regional hegemons or superpowers have come to frame our response to conflict. Mr Gowan cautioned that the world shaped the UN, rather than the UN shaping the world.⁴⁵
39. The FCDO explained that it is enhancing Britain's bilateral cooperation with states who are active in conflict resolution, such as working alongside Qatar to strengthen collaboration on mediation.⁴⁶ Bilateral conflict resolution led by countries who share neither the values of the UN nor, for the most part, those of the UK, is a concerning trend. Professor Devika Hovell, London School of Economics, told us that division within the UN will lead to a "fragmented world order governed by ad hoc coalitions, selective enforcement, and power politics".⁴⁷ The absence of the UN from a number of peace processes and agreements is alarming to the future of the multilateral world order and to the resolution of conflict in files we hold the pen for at the UNSC.
40. The exclusion of the UN from peace discussions and post-conflict decisions, most recently demonstrated by Israel preventing the UN from "playing a role in the reconstruction of Gaza",⁴⁸ is an alarming and troubling development. Richard Gowan informed us that the "big powers often keep the UN out".⁴⁹ The UN, and in particular the UNSC, is the sole institution which has the recognition and legitimacy as a platform to address global conflict. Indeed, it is the only organisation to involve all countries in its membership and no singular country has the technical, legal or diplomatic expertise to supersede that of the UN. The primacy of the UN to lead on

42 [Q54](#)

43 Martin Griffiths told us that "Mediation has gone in a very different direction." See: [Q46](#)

44 [Q46](#)

45 [Q47](#)

46 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

47 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

48 [Q46](#)

49 [Q47](#)

the resolution of conflict is backed up by its numerous agencies which have legal authority, and an extensive range of operations across the world. The UN is further strengthened by its deep and extensive diplomatic reach and its impact upon global norms which are governed by the centrality of international law.

41. Yet we recognise that the actors involved in the resolution of conflict, and the processes of negotiating agreeing ceasefires, peace treaties and settlements is changing, with the UN being less central to this process. Whilst we regret this trend away from multilateral conflict resolution, it is, nonetheless, crucial that the UK is involved in such discussions and seen to be present as a global convening actor who uses its strong diplomatic expertise to further British values of the rules-based international system, democracy and tolerance.

42. **CONCLUSION**

This Committee's first priority will always be to push for the use of United Nations mediation, peace and security structures to resolve conflict: the international community is strongest together and a peace agreed by the consensus of the many is one which is firm and lasting. Nonetheless, we are cognisant of the changing reality in which conflicts are resolved in Doha and Istanbul, rather than at the United Nations Security Council in New York.

43. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should adapt to the changing conflict environment, recognising the existing geopolitical realities of conflict resolution, whilst continuing to push for multilateral efforts where possible. The Government should enhance its bilateral partnerships with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as well as Turkey, whilst ensuring it upholds its commitment to a rules-based international order. The Government should also leverage its relationships with regional groupings including the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We call upon the Government to ensure that the UK is in the room during these conversations and driving the agenda forward, drawing upon its expertise in diplomacy and stabilisation, and ensuring that British values, and those embedded universally within the United Nations, are furthered. It is imperative that the Government continues to invest resources in these diplomatic posts and in our representatives to these organisations.

Resolving conflict outside of the United Nations Security Council

- 44.** We recognise that it might not always be possible to advance British interests of conflict resolution within the UNSC, given the increasing geopolitical tension amongst Permanent Members and the ongoing efforts of China and Russia to leverage support away from the West. We took evidence for this inquiry on organisations that might best promote the UK's agenda to be a leading actor in the resolution of global conflict outside of the UNSC structure. Evidence suggested the UK draw upon the following organisations, forums or thematic areas:
- a.** Civil society, particularly those who bring policy suggestions or are frontline actors in a file for which the UK holds the pen;⁵⁰
 - b.** The G7 (Group of Seven), comprised of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US;⁵¹
 - c.** The Commonwealth;⁵²
 - d.** The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO);⁵³
 - e.** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);⁵⁴
 - f.** The European Political Community;⁵⁵
 - g.** The funding of Track II diplomacy;⁵⁶
 - h.** Harnessing soft power, including securing the long-term funding of the BBC World Service and the British Council;⁵⁷ and
 - i.** Being a leader in global climate leadership with the recognition that future conflicts may centre around resource scarcity and competition.⁵⁸

50 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

51 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

52 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

53 Max Tinkler (University Student at Edge Hill University) ([UKU0009](#))

54 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

55 Mr Ahmed Mohamoud (Director of Operation, Israac Centre and Lumini Progress) ([UKU0002](#))

56 Mr Ahmed Mohamoud (Director of Operation, Israac Centre and Lumini Progress) ([UKU0002](#))

57 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK ([UKU0005](#))

58 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK ([UKU0005](#))

45. This was echoed by the FCDO, who also highlighted it advances conflict resolution through high-level ministerial engagement, including Foreign Secretary visits.

46. **CONCLUSION**

The UK is well placed to mobilise like-minded states and build regional and bloc-based coalitions to advance efforts to lead on the resolution of global conflict. This applies in particular to those organisations which have a regional remit for country files for which the UK holds the pen on the United Nations Security Council.

47. **RECOMMENDATION**

The UK Government should be more confident in its role at the UN, harnessing its status as a global convenor, and drawing upon the UK's diplomatic expertise to engage like-minded states in resolving conflict in cases where it is not possible to reach agreement at the United Nations Security Council. The Government should leverage its alliances and influence in its continued collaborative efforts to work with European countries, the Commonwealth, NATO and the US, to actively build creative and fresh blocs and coalitions to advance the agenda of conflict resolution. Within these organisations, the UK should prove its value by exercising leadership in line with international law and accountability and link these efforts to its agenda at the United Nations Security Council.

Our relationship with the United States

48. The predecessor Foreign Affairs Committee observed that the US is “seen as the guardian of the multilateral system and the most influential partner of the UK”.⁵⁹ Sir Mark Lyall Grant noted that “the United States sort of vacillates between being more multilateralist and less multilateralist over the years”.⁶⁰ As noted above, this period is certainly less multilateralist with the ongoing review of the US's involvement in international bodies and treaties.

49. Richard Gowan, Director of UN and Multilateral Diplomacy at the International Crisis Group, said in evidence to us that:

During the Biden Administration, the UK and the US had very good relations at the UN. Of course, there were occasional differences, but mostly the alliance was working. Now, no diplomat in New York [...]

59 First Report of Session 2021–22, [In the room: the UK's role in multilateral diplomacy](#), HC 199

60 [Q2](#)

can be confident of what their relationship with the US is going to be tomorrow or next week, which means everyone is naturally more cautious than they previously were.⁶¹

50. We are faced with a renewed Trump Administration whose priorities at times diverge from UK values, yet we believe that it is essential that the UK continues to work with the US where possible at the UNSC, particularly to advance files for which the UK holds the pen. Where UK and US interests diverge, such as on the Women, Peace and Security file (detailed in [Chapter Five](#)), the UK should have the confidence to forge new alliances with Elected Members to the UNSC, to ensure that the progress of a file is not compromised. At all times the UK must be guided by progressing its core belief in a rules and values-based international order.

51. **CONCLUSION**

The UK should continue to work closely with the US in the United Nations Security Council to advance the UK's values-based approach to resolving conflict through multilateral organisations.

52. **RECOMMENDATION**

Where agreement or consensus with the US may not be forthcoming, the Government must engage the US proactively, in behind-the-scenes and backdoor diplomacy. Simultaneously, the Government should have the confidence to develop robust alliances with Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council to advance British values including the belief in a rules and values-based international order and commitment to reduce global conflict and to secure progress on UK penholder files.

61 [Q59](#)

4 Government coordination and alignment

Expertise within the UK Mission to the UN

53. The UK Mission to the UN in New York has a high calibre of diplomatic, policy, linguistic and technical expertise. This expertise is crucial to communicating the UK's values and priorities and engagement with the multilateral system. There are between 110 and 130 staff based in New York⁶² and approximately 20 to 30 staff focused directly on the UNSC.⁶³
54. Sir Mark Lyall Grant, former UK National Security Adviser and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, told us that being posted to the UK Mission to the UN in New York is “very highly prized”⁶⁴ amongst FCDO staff because of the relatively flat structure which allows relatively junior staff to accrue significant negotiation experience. We heard that the vast majority of work on key files was carried out at this level and as such it attracts “some extremely good people”.⁶⁵ Martin Griffiths, former Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs at the UN, observed that the existing UK team in New York, led by Dame Barbara Woodward⁶⁶, is “very impressive” and that he would like to see more of that expertise throughout the UN.⁶⁷ In evidence, Richard Gowan, Director of UN and Multilateral Diplomacy at the International Crisis Group, said that amongst Elected Members to the UNSC, diplomats have in private noted that “when the UK is running a process, it is fairly smooth”.⁶⁸ It is clear that there is an excellent, resourced and responsive team in place at the UK Mission to the UN in New York and that this allows the UK to be the leading actor it is for files which it holds the pen for.

62 [Q76](#)

63 [Q76](#)

64 [Q35](#)

65 [Q35](#)

66 The FCDO announced in May 2025 that Dame Barbara Woodward would be succeeded by Dr Christian Turner (currently FCDO, Director General Geopolitics and Political Director) at the end of 2025.

67 [Q61](#)

68 [Q39](#)

55. However, we are concerned that this expertise may be threatened by significant decreases in FCDO funding. Over the last eight years, Official Development Assistance (ODA) has reduced from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) and then in February 2025, 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI. The reduction to 0.3% of GNI is equivalent to a £6.5 billion reduction in ODA spending in 2027–28.⁶⁹
56. In the June 2025 Spending Review, the Chancellor announced real-terms cuts to the FCDO budget.⁷⁰ Although in cash terms, the operating budget will be the same in 2028–29 as in 2025–26, around £1.5 billion,⁷¹ when adjusted for inflation, this implies a real terms cut of 5.5% over the period.⁷² When the Committee raised the FCDO’s downsized budget with the Permanent Under-Secretary to the FCDO, Sir Oliver Robbins, in July 2025,⁷³ he said that meeting the FCDO’s operating budget by 2028–29 would only be achievable if the FCDO “get[s] significantly smaller over the course of the next three to four years”.⁷⁴ Sir Oliver could not confirm the degree to which staffing would be affected, although estimated it would be cuts of between 15% and 25% to overall FCDO headcount.⁷⁵
57. The FCDO’s Annual Report and Accounts (2024–2025) states that the Multilateral and Human Rights Directorate—the FCDO directorate overseeing the UK’s relationship with the UN as well as other multilateral and human rights organisations and associated programmes—will face significant financial reductions in the next financial year.⁷⁶ Between 2024–25 and 2025–26, the Multilateral and Human Rights Directorate programme budget will decrease by 65% from £52.8 million to just £18.3 million.⁷⁷ The majority of the cuts are planned for the non-ODA element of the directorate’s budget (£24.8 million to £2.3 million, a 91% reduction). The funding cuts to the directorate will impact on the effective operations of not just the UK Mission to the UN in New York, but the entire multilateral system and will surely limit the Government’s ability to be a leading multilateral player with a strong reputation in resolving global conflict.

69 HM Treasury, [Spring Statement 2025](#), CP 1298, March 2025, p20, Table 2.1

70 HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2025](#), CP 1336, June 2025

71 Oral evidence taken on 8 July 2025, [Q196](#) [Sir Oliver Robbins]

72 HM Treasury, [GDP deflators at market prices, and money GDP June 2025 \(Quarterly National Accounts\)](#)

73 Oral evidence taken on 8 July 2025, [Qq152-176](#), [Sir Oliver Robbins]

74 Oral evidence taken on 8 July 2025, [Q153](#), [Sir Oliver Robbins]

75 Oral evidence taken on 8 July 2025, [Q154](#), [Sir Oliver Robbins]

76 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Annual Report and Accounts 2024–2025](#), HC 1198, p270

77 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Annual Report and Accounts 2024–2025](#), HC 1198, p270

This could, in turn, lead to the perception that the UK is an unreliable partner at the UN and in the resolution of conflict, a sphere the UK has long dominated.

58. We are also concerned that such reductions could impact the high-quality calibre of staff in place at the UK's Mission to the UN. Previous changes have had similar impacts; for example in its review of the 2020 merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) the NAO observed that the "FCDO has been aware of the risk of not sustaining its international development skills and expertise, which it currently rates as 'severe', and is working to mitigate this risk".⁷⁸ We do not wish to see a similar loss of key skills and expertise which would undermine the UK's place in the multilateral order.
59. When we raised the cuts with the relevant Minister, Lord Collins of Highbury, he advised us that the restructuring of the FCDO and the focus on deploying greater numbers of staff in-country was about making the UK Mission to the UN in New York "more efficient" and noted that the Mission might "even be strengthened in some respects".⁷⁹

60. **CONCLUSION**

We are concerned about the cuts to the FCDO's budget, including those to the Directorate responsible for multilateral organisations such as the UN. Such measures will reduce the UK's ability to be an effective penholder at the United Nations and to lead on the resolution of global conflict through the United Nations Security Council. More so, these cuts risk ceding further influence to China and Russia within the multilateral system. Indeed, such detrimental measures open the door, willingly, to our competitors and adversaries.

61. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must ensure the retention of the high-calibre staff at the UK Missions to the United Nations and it should outline a clear strategy detailing how it plans to retain these staff. When the Government is clear on the structure and composition of the FCDO following its restructuring, it should, as a matter of priority, provide this Committee a detailed overview of how this will affect UK Missions to the United Nations with a focus on resources, financing and staff retention.

78 National Audit Office, Session 2023–24, [Progress with the merger of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office \(FCO\) and the Department for International Development \(DFID\)](#), HC 637, p39, para 2.22

79 [Q77](#)

5 Impact on global security of cutting foreign aid

62. We recognise that our sister Committee, the International Development Committee, has the principal remit to examine expenditure of Official Development Assistance (ODA), and any focus within this report is limited to how ODA cuts endanger international security and multilateralism. When we asked the Permanent Under-Secretary to the FCDO, Sir Oliver Robbins, about the Foreign Secretary's six priorities whilst in office, we were disappointed to hear that multilateralism or engagement with the world at a multilateral level was not amongst them.⁸⁰ The damaging impact of large-scale cuts to the FCDO and ODA budget go beyond the very real and probable loss of capable and bright staff in post. These cuts also impact deeply upon the geopolitical situation.⁸¹
63. Reducing our ODA spend greatly risks the UK being less active as an actor in conflict resolution. It also endangers the future of programmes key to the prevention of conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, counter-terrorism and countering state threats. These are issues which are central to a number of files the UK holds the pen for at the UNSC and which were outlined in the Government's National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence Review.⁸² ODA is not only a crucial soft power tool, it is also critical to foreign policy, defence and national security: proactive actions and key programmes spearheaded by the UK create an environment which keep adversaries in check and promote stability in key ODA-receiving countries.⁸³
64. A reduced ODA budget risks bringing about a wholly detrimental environment within the conflict resolution space in which key actors withdraw, including the UK and the US—which has also cut its foreign aid contributions.⁸⁴ Professor Jason Ralph, University of Leeds and Dr Jess Gifkins, University of Technology, Sydney, told us in their evidence that “China's developmentalist approach to aid gains relative influence

80 Oral evidence taken on 8 July 2025, [Q185](#), [Sir Oliver Robbins]

81 ActionAid UK ([UKU0006](#)) ; CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

82 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), CP 1338, 29 August 2025 and Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 02 June 2025

83 [Q18](#)

84 Mr Ahmed Mohamoud (Director of Operation, Israac Centre and Lumini Progress) ([UKU0002](#)) ; ActionAid UK ([UKU0006](#)); [Q18](#)

within the UN when Western governments cut their aid budgets and departments”.⁸⁵ This creates a vacuum for competitive, malign and hostile countries, including China, Iran—primarily through sponsoring non-state proxy groups—and Russia, to capitalise on the UK’s and the US’s absence, and plug the aid gap left by the UK and US in conflict-affected areas.

65. CONCLUSION

With a reduced Official Development Assistance budget and a smaller budget allocation for conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, the UK is less visible on the global stage and in key conflict zones. This opens up the space to our adversaries and competitors to make significant inroads, particularly China, Iran and Russia.

66. RECOMMENDATION

For the UK to continue being a lead actor within the United Nations Security Council, and a leading global actor in the prevention and resolution of conflict, it is critical that the Government sets out a pathway and timeline as to how it will return to spending 0.5%, and ultimately 0.7%, of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance spend as soon as is fiscally possible. This should include details of a protected budget dedicated to conflict prevention, mediation and civilian-led peacebuilding.

67. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should also, in its response, outline how the FCDO’s reduced operating budget will allow it to continue being a leading multilateral actor and fulfil the Government’s responsibility to push through efficiencies identified throughout the ongoing United Nations 80 (UN80) process to ensure it gets full UK support.

85 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

68.

RECOMMENDATION

It should also detail what interim investments it has made for private finance to plug the Official Development Assistance gap. This includes investment in civilian-led conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. UK expertise, much of it currently concentrated in the Migration and Conflict Department, Integrated Security Fund and FCDO cadre of conflict advisors deployed in various diplomatic posts, is essential to sustaining global credibility and leadership, and must be safeguarded. We also welcome further clarity on how the Government will share its expertise with host countries to develop their expertise on preventing, resolving and reducing conflict in a manner which is reciprocal and mutually beneficial and allows them to develop such capacities over the long-term. The Government must work closely with its European allies to share responsibilities rather than duplicating efforts, to bring about a singular and coordinated response in the prevention and resolution of conflict. Although beyond the scope of this inquiry, a forward-looking whole of government peace and conflict strategy would bring much-needed clarity and ensure that diplomatic, security and development investments are aligned for maximum impact.

6 The UK's role as penholder at the United Nations Security Council

Sharing the pen

69. Some evidence we received suggested that the UK has sought to maintain sole control of its position as penholder at the UN, in light of its decreasing geopolitical power elsewhere.⁸⁶ Dr Andrea Knapp, University of Bologna, told us that the UK leverages the drafting process throughout the penholding process, where it was noted that “a drafting monopoly can create dissatisfaction”⁸⁷ from Elected Members by not being consulted. Professor Jason Ralph, University of Leeds, and Dr Jess Gifkins, University of Technology, Sydney, said that there was “considerable dissatisfaction with P3 (France, UK and US) dominance of the penholding process”, with other countries viewing it as “anachronistic” and an “effect of the institutional structure”.⁸⁸ However, during the course of this inquiry we found little supporting evidence of this and instead found the UK to have a strong and robust penholding process which adheres to the values of democracy and inclusivity.⁸⁹
70. We are also supportive of the UK co-penholding—that is, sharing the pen—with Elected Members to the UNSC as a standard practice.⁹⁰ The UK shared the pen with Mozambique on the UN Office for Central Africa, with Sierra Leone on Sudan, with Germany on Libyan sanctions and Darfur and

86 Andrea Knapp (PhD candidate at University of Bologna) ([UKU0001](#)); Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

87 Andrea Knapp (PhD candidate at University of Bologna) ([UKU0001](#))

88 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

89 [Qq38–40](#)

90 The current Elected Members to the UNSC include Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Somalia. Their terms span two years and they do not all start and end at the same time as one another.

with Mexico on Colombia.⁹¹ The FCDO informed us that penholding requires considerable diplomatic capacity, resources and agility, and that not all Elected Members aspire to penholding.⁹²

71. We believe that co-penholding with Elected Members brings numerous benefits:

- a.** It bolsters Elected Members’ skillsets. The UK is a diplomatic heavyweight with global negotiating and technical expertise and eight decades of institutional memory within the UN system.⁹³ Those within the UK Mission to the UN in New York are skilled in scoping and drafting statements or resolutions from inception through to debate, negotiation, agreement, enforcement and implementation.
- b.** Martin Griffiths, former Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs at the UN, told us that Elected Members often have different “perspectives, reaches and networks”⁹⁴ and utilising them should be a priority for the UK as this buy-in would increase the likelihood of support for a resolution lasting through to the final stage. Elected Members are limited to two years on the UNSC, and as such we believe that co-penholding may also lead to more robust and rapid decision-making. Martin Griffiths explained that these members, during their time on the UNSC, could be “deployed to help prepare the Council to do its best”.⁹⁵
- c.** Through co-penholding, the UK can strengthen its diplomatic relationships with the Global South (a priority outlined by the Foreign Secretary in relation to Africa)⁹⁶ and counteract the rapid diplomatic expansion of China and Russia in countries throughout the Global South.

91 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#)) and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

92 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

93 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

94 [Q45](#)

95 [Q39](#)

96 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [The UK’s Approach to Africa: summary of consultation, June 2025](#), 02 June 2025

- d. Involving Elected Members in the penholding process is a small concession on the part of the UK that addresses attitudes that it is resistant to reform of the UNSC and its system of select Permanent Membership.⁹⁷ Martin Griffiths said that co-penholding is “crucial to democratise somewhat” the UNSC.”⁹⁸
- e. Whilst some Elected Members from countries or regions where a conflict is occurring may not wish to involve themselves in the penholding process, regional buy-in can be crucial to furthering a file’s progress.⁹⁹ Such Elected Members may have established relationships with regional organisations and often more informal and open dialogue with neighbouring capitals. Co-penholding with a regional member in whose neighbourhood a conflict is occurring can incentivise local efforts to bring about a ceasefire, cessation of hostilities or get the relevant partners around the table.¹⁰⁰

72.

CONCLUSION

Sharing the pen allows for Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council to actively partake in the penholder process and to learn from the UK’s expertise as a convening actor in diplomacy and as a leader in the global resolution of conflict. Furthering such relationships would strengthen the UK’s soft power and may lead to the formation of new alliances.

73.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should prioritise co-penholding with at least one Elected Member to the United Nations Security Council per country and thematic file, where appropriate, and where Elected Members are willing and able to contribute meaningfully. This would also provide a practical and implementable reform mechanism within the United Nations Security Council in a manner beneficial to the UK’s interests. The Government should adopt co-penholding as a rule for files where the UK’s foreign policy serves as a barrier to its ability to be an actor in promoting global peace and security efforts at the United Nations Security Council.

97 [Q39](#)

98 [Q38](#)

99 Sir Mark Lyall Grant told us that, at times, Elected Members were hesitant to hold the pen on a conflict-affected file due to push-back from their countries’ capitals where a specific foreign policy might be in-place or due to existing regional dynamics or tensions. See: [Q21](#). Richard Gowan, however, said that this dynamic had changed in the last “four to five years,” with African members in particular becoming increasingly assertive in the penholding space. See: [Q44](#).

100 [Qq44–45](#)

Acting beyond the veto

74. Permanent Members of the UNSC each hold veto power, meaning they may block any substantive UNSC resolution regardless of the support from other elected or Permanent Members.¹⁰¹ Permanent Members use the veto to defend their national interests, to uphold a tenet of their foreign policy or, in some cases, to promote a single issue of particular importance to a state.¹⁰² Whilst the UNSC held its highest number of meetings on record in 2024 (305 meetings) in response to global conflict, the use of the veto has also increased: there were 8 in 2024, the highest number since 1989¹⁰³ with the dissolution of the Soviet Union (8 vetoes).¹⁰⁴
75. We heard evidence which suggested that the UK had refrained from raising Myanmar and Sudan at the UNSC out of caution that either China or Russia would veto the discussion of these conflicts.¹⁰⁵ Mr Griffiths said that instances where the UK had not debated key conflicts because such debates or resolutions may be vetoed were, in his view, “a mistake”.¹⁰⁶ Mr Griffiths said that the UNSC should “not only be about resolutions or presidential statements; it should be about debate”.¹⁰⁷
76. We received evidence that the penholder role can be effective and resolutions should be pursued even if they are ultimately vetoed. Sir Mark Lyall Grant, former UK National Security Adviser and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, informed us that the UNSC, and the UK’s actions there, play a role in making sure that issues are neither “swept under the carpet” nor “exposed to the spotlight”.¹⁰⁸ Mr Ahmed Mohamoud, Director of Operations at the Israac Centre and Lumini Progress, told us penholding could be effective when backed by “sustained political will, coordination with local actors and financial resources”.¹⁰⁹

101 See, for example: UN Security Council Working Methods, [The Veto](#), 13 February 2024

102 UN Security Council Working Methods, [The Veto](#), 13 February 2024

103 With the dissolution of the USSR, when eight vetoes were cast by UNSC Permanent Members in 1989, See, for example: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

104 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

105 [Q11](#) ; [Q47](#) ; [Q53](#)

106 [Q54](#)

107 [Q54](#)

108 [Q9](#)

109 Mr Ahmed Mohamoud (Director of Operation, Israac Centre and Lumini Progress) ([UKU0002](#))

77.

CONCLUSION

Without debate, progress on a file and elevating the platform of a conflict to find diplomatic solutions forward is stalled. This stymies the core mission of the United Nations Security Council, which is to identify and spearhead solutions to restore global peace and security.

78.

CONCLUSION

We recognise that the UK's Mission to the United Nations is operating in an increasingly fraught and challenging geopolitical environment, but that should not preclude the UK from raising and debating files such as Myanmar and Sudan at the United Nations Security Council.

79.

RECOMMENDATION

The UK must continue to put forward, raise and debate issues at the United Nations Security Council for files it holds the pen for, even if these are ultimately vetoed. It is essential that in situations of conflict where the UK has a responsibility, that conflict is seen to be being raised and debated at the United Nations Security Council, despite the outcome. This demonstrates the UK's leadership and commitment to a rules-based international order, whilst highlighting deliberate actions by other Permanent Members to forestall resolutions.

Specific penholder files

UN Office for Central Africa

80. This file includes the countries of: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and São Tomé and Príncipe. The UK holds the pen for regional, cross-border and thematic mandates as a part of its UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) penholding obligations. Francophone-speaking Africa countries which fall under this file—such as CAR, the DRC and Chad—are usually held by France, although there is no explicit delegation of this.
81. The FCDO told us that the UK was a co-penholder on this file with Mozambique.¹¹⁰ Evidence we received told us that discussions and resolutions have primarily focused on peace and security as well as on inserting language into statements which reference the climate crisis.¹¹¹ The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom said

110 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

111 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

this focus on climate-sensitive language and the inclusion of women in peace processes and decision-making has been a “positive example of the UK’s role as penholder.”¹¹²

82.

CONCLUSION

The UK has demonstrated strong leadership in its management of the penholder file ‘The UN Office for Central Africa’, and should continue this work.

Colombia

83. Whilst in New York, we met with Colombia’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Leonor Zalabata Torres, and are most grateful for her time.
84. The UK, at the UNSC, has been a key figure in driving forward the implementation of the Colombian peace process, which began in 2016 with a peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (FARC-EP). The UK, through the UNSC, established and continues to renew the mandate for the UN Verification Mission in Colombia by monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement with FARC-EP. More recently, the Mission has been expanded to support political dialogue with armed guerilla groups operating in the country and supporting indigenous communities affected by conflict.¹¹³
85. Colombia is also an FCDO Human Rights Priority country and a ‘focus country’ for the FCDO’s Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Strategy.¹¹⁴ ActionAid told us that in 2023–24, the UK supported the development of the Colombian Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan through funding consultations with women’s rights organisations and collaboration with the Colombian government.¹¹⁵ This cross-cutting country-level and thematic penholding across files—Colombia and Women, Peace and Security—was broadly agreed in our evidence to be a positive example of penholding.¹¹⁶
86. However, we note with concern that fighting has resumed. This violence has spread into neighbouring Venezuela and there are alarming violations of human rights.¹¹⁷ It is crucial that the UK Government continues to push

112 Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK ([UKU0005](#))

113 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

114 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

115 ActionAid UK ([UKU0006](#))

116 ActionAid UK ([UKU0006](#))

117 Mr Eliot Wilson (Writer and commentator at Freelance) ([UKU0014](#))

for the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia, bilaterally and through its penholder and Permanent Member obligations at the UNSC.

87. CONCLUSION

The UK is to be commended for its role as penholder for Colombia at the United Nations Security Council and continuing to push for stability in a volatile region.

88. RECOMMENDATION

We urge the Government to outline the steps it is taking as penholder to seek to ensure the long-term consolidation and enforcement of the peace process in Colombia. This should include a summary of the actors it is engaging with on the ground, including civil society and women-led groups and the regional Elected Member at the time, to the United Nations Security Council. The Government should continue to raise human rights violations in Colombia at the United Nations Security Council and take all measures possible, including targeted sanctions or travel bans, against those responsible.

Cyprus

- 89.** The UK has interests and a historical legacy in Cyprus, including the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia and it holds the pen for it at the UN. The UK is also a party to the Treaty of Guarantee (1960). We raised this issue of a possible conflict of interest with witnesses.¹¹⁸ We heard from Richard Gowan, Director of UN and Multilateral Diplomacy at the International Crisis Group, that the UK's position on Cyprus on the Council is "taken as a given" and that were other countries—elected or not—to hold the pen, it would be doubtful whether reunification in Cyprus might be brought about at a faster pace.¹¹⁹ Mr Gowan further said that it was not unreasonable for "the UK to want to maintain a lead at the UN on certain situations where it has particular national investments".¹²⁰

90. CONCLUSION

Our evidence supports the view that UK's roles as penholder for Cyprus at the United Nations Security Council and as a party to the Treaty of Guarantee in Cyprus do not represent a conflict of interest.

118 [Q64](#)

119 [Q64](#)

120 [Q64](#)

91.

RECOMMENDATION

The UK should continue to uphold its commitment to the resolution of the stalemate in Cyprus, utilising jointly its role as penholder and as one of the parties to the Treaty of Guarantee. The Government should detail in its response to this report what steps it is taking to ensure Cyprus remains a primary agenda item at the United Nations Security Council and outline how this work is aligned with ongoing policy on Cyprus at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Libya

92. Richard Gowan informed us that the UK's leadership for and management of the Libya file at the UN was "very controversial"¹²¹ from 2011 onwards, following its joint intervention into that country.¹²² Mr Gowan noted animosity at the time (in 2011) towards the UK and US's approach to this intervention by elected African members of the UNSC,¹²³ as well as from Russia.¹²⁴ However, Mr Gowan noted that this criticism has since become less "toxic"¹²⁵ and Mr Gowan told us that he had not heard direct criticism of the UK as the penholder on Libya "for four or five years".¹²⁶
93. When we asked Mr Gowan which member of the UNSC might hold the pen on Libya should the UK not, he questioned the extent to which other actors would be impartial in their actions.¹²⁷ Mr Gowan said that African countries might want to hold the pen on Libya, but cautioned that "Libya has a complicated relationship with the African Union".¹²⁸ Mr Gowan told us that in the case of Libya, the UK is "more or less the best possible option of those that are available".¹²⁹

121 [Q57](#)

122 In March 2011, a coalition of NATO allies and partners including the UK, France and the United States, began enforcing UN sanctions, maintaining a no-fly zone and protecting civilians and civilian populated areas from attack or the threat of attack in Libya, under Operation Unified Protector. Operation Unified Protector concluded on 31 October 2011. For further information see: NATO, [NATO and Libya \(February - October 2011\)](#), 21 October 2024.

123 [Q57](#)

124 Russia is itself not a neutral observer and actively supports the Libyan National Army Commander Khalifa Haftar with military capabilities, funding and backing from the Russian-state backed private military company, Africa Corps (formerly the Wagner Group). See, for example: Seventh Report of Session 2022–23, [Guns for gold: the Wagner Network exposed](#), HC 1248

125 [Q57](#)

126 [Q57](#)

127 [Q58](#)

128 [Q58](#)

129 [Q58](#)

94. We heard evidence that the UK is a “solid backstop”¹³⁰ in leading diplomatic efforts on Libya, yet had not been active in driving forward the Libya file, owing to increased geopolitical influence by Turkey and the Gulf countries in Libya.¹³¹ Mr Gowan said to us that “the UK can affect events from New York, but it cannot shape events from New York”.¹³²

95. **CONCLUSION**

Libya is a neglected item at the United Nations Security Council and the UK has not taken sufficient action to raise it. Despite controversy relating to the UN Security Council-backed intervention which the UK participated in, our evidence suggested the UK was the only candidate of the UN Security Council Permanent Members likely to have the appetite to hold the pen for the Libya file.

96. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should demonstrate the actions it is taking to promote peace and security in Libya’s borders as its penholder.

Outstanding Issues on Iraq and Kuwait

97. As the Committee received no evidence on this file, we make no comment on the UK’s efficacy as a penholder.

Myanmar

98. The FCDO noted in evidence that in 2024, the UK called for six UNSC meetings on Myanmar, including the first open meeting in over five years focussed on the Rohingya people.¹³³ The FCDO also told us that the UK held the pen on the first UNSC resolution following Myanmar’s 2022 coup d’etat, concerning the political situation in Myanmar, with resolution 2669 (2022).¹³⁴ However, other evidence we received suggested that whilst this resolution was diplomatically “significant” it fell short in introducing reporting requirements on those actors and countries involved, which might ensure full implementation of the resolution and consistent monitoring.¹³⁵

130 [Q57](#)

131 [Q57](#). See also, for example: Atlantic Council, [Turkey’s Syria and Libya strategies add up to a Mediterranean power play](#), 13 January 2025 and Atlantic Council, [The UAE is making a precarious shift in its Libya policy. Here’s why](#), 27 October 2022

132 [Q57](#)

133 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

134 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

135 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

CARE International UK told us that “without regular follow-ups, the situation [in Myanmar] is not receiving adequate and sustained attention nor diplomatic initiative.”¹³⁶

99. CONCLUSION

We note with concern that despite increasing violence and reports of human rights violations, there has been no substantive resolution on Myanmar passed by the United Nations Security Council since 2022.

100. RECOMMENDATION

It is critical that the UK continues to raise the profile of Myanmar in all its efforts as penholder for this file at the United Nations Security Council. The Government should introduce regular mandated reporting on this conflict. The Government should also work with regional actors, including the regional organisation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to bring about a locally-negotiated solution to this conflict.

Peacekeeping

101. Although not a principal focus of this inquiry, we heard that UN peacekeeping needed to adapt to present times and adopt technological solutions which are targeted and efficient.¹³⁷ Analysis and scrutiny of international peacekeeping largely falls within the remit of our sister Committee, the International Development Committee. As such we have sought to highlight the decline in mediation amongst peacekeeping bodies of the UN.

102. We received evidence which told us that the UN is now primarily a vehicle for responding to humanitarian crises, with reduced involvement in peace settlements, conflict resolution, peace building or promoting security through peace and security missions.¹³⁸ This is because it is perceived to be too challenging to advance such issues within a polarised UNSC. Richard Gowan observed that “over the last 10 to 15 years”, the UN had become a less visible actor in conflict prevention and resolution.¹³⁹ This will only become more challenging as the US Administration’s 2026 budget proposes an end to UN peacekeeping payments.¹⁴⁰

136 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

137 [Qq46-51](#)

138 [Qq46-48](#)

139 [Q49](#)

140 US Office of Management and Budget, [Fiscal Year 2026 Discretionary Budget Request](#), 2 May 2025

- 103.** Martin Griffiths informed us that the UN has responded to contemporary conflict by mitigating the human fallout and investing in humanitarian missions.¹⁴¹ Martin Griffiths told us that, to an extent, humanitarian assistance has become a “placebo” for other action. Noting that humanitarian assistance was vitally important, Mr Griffiths nonetheless said it was not a substitute for political action but rather an additional option or a mitigation.¹⁴²
- 104.** The UN was founded to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.¹⁴³ Sir Adam Roberts, Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford, suggested to the House of Lords Committee on International Relations and Defence in 2016 that if the UN was seen to be failing in its capacity to address conflict, it would be in “serious trouble.”¹⁴⁴

Leaner peace and security missions

- 105.** The Government must ensure that peacekeeping is transformed to focus on efficient and adaptable peace and security missions which advance political solutions and concentrate on mediation.
- 106.** We heard that the UK, at the UN, should be looking for opportunities to create a single, unified UN peace and security structure recognising that the organisation’s peacekeeping footprint is shrinking.¹⁴⁵ Lord Collins of Highbury, the Government Minister, cautioned that a big organisation is not necessarily an effective one.¹⁴⁶
- 107.** The UN has been instrumental to guiding peace processes forward in Colombia and is a crucial humanitarian body in Afghanistan. We strongly agree with Mr Gowan’s statement that “in some places where the UK is the penholder, the UN remains pretty much the only lifeline for the people who need it. Let us not let go of that, in addition to the criticism”.¹⁴⁷ Yet we believe its peace and security processes can be leaner and more adept.
- 108.** Both Richard Gowan and Martin Griffiths told the Committee that UN peacekeeping should be embracing technology as part of reforms, which could provide significant savings.¹⁴⁸ Richard Gowan used the example of the peacekeeping mission in Southern Lebanon to illustrate his point:

141 [Q51](#)

142 [Q51](#)

143 United Nations, [United Nations Charter](#) (accessed 04 August 2025)

144 House of Lords International Relations Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [The UK at the UN: Priorities for the new Secretary General](#), HL paper 60

145 [Q66](#)

146 [Q105](#)

147 [Q67](#)

148 [Qq47–48](#) [Richard Gowan]; [Q51](#) [Martin Griffiths]

[...] we [the UN] currently have about 10,000 UN peacekeepers there [Southern Lebanon]. They are observing and patrolling. Do we need 10,000 people to do that in a very small space, or could we get the same effect with 3,000 or 4,000 peacekeepers, plus drones and satellites? Quite probably, yes. This is not going to work in every single case. Sometimes you need men and women on the ground, projecting security. But in some places, you can actually get the same effect or better with a tech-enhanced mission.¹⁴⁹

109. CONCLUSION

We recognise, support and honour the thousands of United Nations peacekeepers who are upholding peace and security and taking risks to their lives in conflict zones around the world.

110. CONCLUSION

However, we recognise that United Nations peacekeeping missions require reforms to ensure they are fit for purpose. This should include consideration of technological solutions—like the use of drones for monitoring conflict zones—to both support United Nations peacekeeping missions and reduce costs in light of reducing funding from Member States such as the US. It is also important to review peacekeeping missions regularly to ensure that missions do not run on endlessly.

111. RECOMMENDATION

It is clear that United Nations peacekeeping requires reform, and we support the Government's efforts to promote a leaner peacekeeping and peace and security architecture at the UN. However, we would urge the Government to maintain UK investment in conflict prevention, including through the UN. The Government should:

- a.** Set out, in its response to this report, its long-term plan to reform the over-inflated peacekeeping bodies and missions at the United Nations and how those plans fit into the United Nations 80 (UN80) agenda. The Government should detail its specific objectives. It should also consider whether in some places, redirecting investments to other UN arms, such as the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and its Peacebuilding Fund, could deliver the same or more impact at a fraction of the cost.
- b.** Drive forward the review and closure of United Nations peacekeeping structures, missions, mandates and agencies which overlap or those which are not delivering their objective of

promoting mediation and security. Additionally, the Government should outline its internal review process for deciding how mandates are evaluated.

- c. Lead on efforts to create a unified and singular United Nations peace and security structure, which is focused on mediation and conflict resolution. This structure should be responsible to the United Nations Security Council.
- d. Outline how it will use its penholdership of this file to promote, secure and further the United Nations' role in peace, security and mediation and detail what conflicts it will identify as priorities.
- e. Seek to ensure that United Nations peacekeeping budgets and relevant peacekeeping mandates are financially supported despite the increasing polarisation evident on the United Nations Security Council, which may hinder regular budgetary processes.
- f. Actively push for the use of technology, particularly drones, in peacekeeping as a way to mitigate costs and promote safety in regions where peacekeepers may be at greater risk. In its response, the Government should detail what steps it is taking to advance the incorporation of technology into peacekeeping with our allies at the United Nations.

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

112. Evidence we received on this applies to specific country files. It is covered under each country file as and when relevant.

113. **CONCLUSION**

The Government should ensure that it is taking all possible steps to ensure that civilians in armed conflict are protected and given access to shelter, food and healthcare. The Government should use the offices of the UN to urge warring parties to respect protected spaces such as schools and hospitals.

114. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government, in its response, should detail the process by which national interest is weighed against obligations as penholder at the United Nations when assuming responsibility for a file, with reference to its responsibility for the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts file.

Somalia

115. Whilst in New York, we met with Somalia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Abukar Dahir Osman, and are most grateful for his time.
116. We received evidence which noted that Somalia is a strong example of "the UK's potential when diplomatic leadership is aligned with operational and funding instruments."¹⁵⁰ As penholder, the UK has successfully steered the renewal of UN mandates authorised for African Union peacekeeping forces, delivering peace and security.¹⁵¹
117. Professor Hovell referred to the UK's strong lead in mobilising funding and engaging at federal and state levels in Somalia,¹⁵² part of its strong leadership on the ground. This gave UK diplomats in Somalia, and those working on the file at the UN, "a material edge and a legitimacy often lacking in other penholder contexts."¹⁵³ He noted that the UK had cooperated to a strong extent with regional organisations, including the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development¹⁵⁴ and that the UK routinely "consulted with African Council members and supported the Somali Government's stabilisation priorities".¹⁵⁵
118. The Committee was also told that the UK had lost access to European Union (EU) development financing and to EU funding instruments to support the implementation of UN and regional-led African Union mandates in Somalia, such as African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).¹⁵⁶ At the same time, the US, at the UNSC, has not supported the successor African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), which might jeopardise efforts to promote peace and security for this file.¹⁵⁷

150 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

151 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ([UKU0007](#))

152 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

153 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

154 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

155 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

156 Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#))

157 International Crisis Group, [Security Council Misses Funding Deadline for AU Mission in Somalia](#), 16 May 2025

119. CONCLUSION

The UK has demonstrated strong leadership on the Somalia file at the United Nations, drawing on a network of African actors built up over two decades and a strong in-country presence.

120. RECOMMENDATION

A stable Somalia is crucial to global and maritime security. The Government should, in its response, outline how it is continuing to work with regional actors in Somalia and detail which funds it will use to support the implementation of United Nations and regional African Union-led mandates in Somalia. The Government should set out what form this new financing partnership will take, such as a joint UK-led Security Council Stabilisation Fund in cooperation with like-minded countries.

Sudan

121. Delivering on management of the Sudan file is of crucial importance to the UK, particularly given that it has been identified as one of the Prime Minister’s priorities, alongside Gaza and Ukraine.

122. We heard that the UK is in a difficult position as penholder for Sudan.¹⁵⁸ Whilst witnesses praised the UK’s leadership as a penholder—highlighting the UK’s procedural effectiveness and resourcefulness to push for action outside of the UNSC—it was noted that the UK is constrained by Russia’s support for the Sudanese Government. Russia also vetoed the most recent UNSC resolution, which the UK had drafted, on Sudan.¹⁵⁹ We are conscious of the reality that the UK is also limited in its action as penholder by the interests of regional players, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in the Sudan conflict.

123. Richard Gowan observed that with reference to the Sudan conflict, the British are playing “a yeoman role,” to which Martin Griffiths expanded to note that the UK are not in the inner circle on the Sudan conflict, at the UNSC, or present at external discussions.¹⁶⁰ Martin Griffiths said he thought a regionally-negotiated peace was more likely than one brokered in the UN: “my gut feeling is that the solution to the Sudanese war probably lies in Jeddah, Abu Dhabi or somewhere in the region, rather than in New York”.¹⁶¹ Mr Gowan cautioned us to be “realistic”¹⁶² about the level of action the

158 Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK ([UKU0005](#)); CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

159 [Q53](#)

160 [Q54](#); [Q53](#)

161 [Q54](#)

162 [Q53](#)

UK can take in the UNSC as concerns Sudan. Mr Gowan said that the UK could retain focus on the conflict, and “try to cast a spotlight on what other players are doing”.¹⁶³

- 124.** Lord Collins of Highbury told us the FCDO has “been consistent” in its condemnation of all external players who fuel the conflict.¹⁶⁴ However, the Minister said that the UK does need to “do more and we need to raise awareness of it”.¹⁶⁵

125. CONCLUSION

We commend the UK’s tenacity and leadership on the Sudan file but urge it go further to promote peace and security in Sudan, both at the United Nations Security Council and bilaterally. We are cognisant that the UK is operating in a difficult, fractious and complex geopolitical environment and is constrained at the United Nations Security Council.

126. RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the UK take the following actions as soon as possible:

- a.** Pursue all efforts possible to intensify its diplomatic efforts and pass a United Nations Security Council resolution which calls for an immediate end to fighting in Sudan and upholds the protection of civilians.
- b.** The Government should outline in its response how it plans to enforce deterrents including sanctions against individuals and entities who violate United Nations Security Council resolutions on Sudan.
- c.** As penholder for the Women, Peace and Security file, the UK must do all it can to ensure that mediation efforts involve Sudanese women and women-led civil society organisations. This includes support for accessing healthcare, including supporting organisations involved in assisting women who are victims of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence.
- d.** Engage the Sudanese diaspora in the UK, who have been instrumental in highlighting the devastating impact of this war, to inform the Government’s Sudan policy.

163 [Q53](#)

164 [Q93](#)

165 [Q93](#)

Women, Peace and Security

- 127.** SecurityWomen, an NGO, told us that whilst the UK's actions as penholder on this file are valued and powerful, debates tended to result in "rhetorical commitments"¹⁶⁶ as opposed to "concrete, actionable outcomes."¹⁶⁷ We heard that that the UK's role as penholder gives it "a unique opportunity to ensure that these debates are more than just symbolic",¹⁶⁸ yet noted that poor follow-through on discussions has fostered the impression that the commitment was only rhetorical.
- 128.** CARE International UK said that whilst it has observed "positive examples of coordination"¹⁶⁹ of Women, Peace and Security on the ground with women-led organisations, these organisations "often report no meaningful inclusion in UNSC processes"¹⁷⁰ nor are they visible in multilateral diplomatic efforts undertaken by the UK. The inclusion of women in conflict resolution has been proven to increase a peace deal lasting by 20%¹⁷¹ and we regret that only one of the peace agreements reached in 2022 included a women's representative as a signatory.¹⁷² Martin Griffiths told us that "we know that the inclusion of women, including as leaders in mediation, has just not happened".¹⁷³ Care International UK further noted that women, peace and security commitments remained absent or limited in files such as Myanmar and Yemen, where "women peacebuilders remain excluded from formal processes".¹⁷⁴
- 129.** SecurityWomen noted that when the UK served as President of the UNSC in November 2024, it did not convene a dedicated session¹⁷⁵ on Women, Peace and Security. We view this as a missed opportunity to highlight the UK's commitment to this file.

Countering traditional views on women, peace and security

- 130.** Professor Jason Ralph, Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds and Dr Jess Gifkins, Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney, highlighted an alarming decline

166 SecurityWomen ([UKU0004](#))

167 SecurityWomen ([UKU0004](#))

168 SecurityWomen ([UKU0004](#))

169 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

170 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

171 Council on Foreign Relations, [Women's Participation in Peace Processes](#) (accessed 26 August 2025)

172 [Qq97-99](#)

173 [Q63](#)

174 CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

175 SecurityWomen ([UKU0004](#))

in the inclusion of gender-sensitive language in UNSC statements and resolutions, including around reproductive rights and gender protection.¹⁷⁶ This was attributed to the political agenda of the current US Administration led by President Trump, and increasing and ongoing pushback against references to gender equality by China and Russia.

131. Richard Gowan told us that:

The Women, Peace and Security file in the Council has been difficult for about five or six years. Not only the first Trump administration but Russia and China have worked very hard to contain the Council's work on WPS [women, peace and security], and it has been difficult for the UK to navigate the situation.¹⁷⁷

132. Our evidence was clear that the UK's reputation as penholder on Women, Peace and Security will require it to be clear, steadfast and "hold firm"¹⁷⁸ on including language which prioritises sexual and reproductive health. Lord Collins of Highbury told us that the UK is "absolutely framing the debate and building alliances to ensure delivery of it but, no doubt, there are attempts to roll back" on Women, Peace and Security.¹⁷⁹

133. CONCLUSION

The UK has historically demonstrated strong management and leadership as concerns the Women, Peace and Security file, however it can and must go further.

134. RECOMMENDATION

We recommend:

- a.** The Government should outline in its response to this report what work it is pursuing as penholder for Women, Peace and Security to include women and women-led organisations in mediation and peace negotiations. The UK Mission to the United Nations in New York should lead by example by including women in all stages of the penholding process across files.
- b.** The Government should outline, in its response, its strategy for navigating increasing attempts by some countries who are Permanent Members to the United Nations Security Council to

176 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

177 [Q59](#)

178 Professor Jason Ralph (Professor of International Relations at University of Leeds); Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#))

179 [Q96](#)

remove references to women's health and safety from resolutions. The Government should detail how it is engaging like-minded allies, Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council and regional actors to push back against such narratives.

- c. The Government should seek to strengthen United Nations Security Council statements, resolutions and mandates concerning Women, Peace and Security through the inclusion of measurable and concrete commitments which go beyond symbolism and which protect the language around women's inclusion and health.

Yemen

135. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Gender Action for Peace and Security and ActionAid UK all suggested that the UK was conflicted in its penholdership of the Yemen file due to its arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which was at war against the Houthi terrorist group in Yemen.¹⁸⁰ We also heard that the UK had fallen short in its capacity as penholder when it came to promoting peace and security for the Yemen country file and in its management of the files Protecting Civilians in Armed Conflict and Women, Peace and Security.¹⁸¹
136. We raised these concerns with Sir Mark Lyall Grant, former UK National Security Adviser and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, who told us that all action taken by the UK at the UNSC on the Yemen file was done "in consultation, at the request of the UN special envoy for Yemen and the regional body [the Gulf Cooperation Council]".¹⁸² Sir Mark noted that whilst the UK has a historical connection to Yemen and is penholder, it was limited in the amount of direct influence it had, pointing to the UK having a small mission in Yemen and providing limited aid.¹⁸³
137. Sir Mark told us that:

It was not that we [the UK] were operating on behalf of narrow British interests in that [Yemen] penholding role; we were operating as penholder on behalf of the international community, the regional

180 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK ([UKU0005](#)); ActionAid UK ([UKU0006](#)); Gender Action for Peace and Security ([UKU0016](#))

181 Dr Jess Gifkins (Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Technology Sydney) ([UKU0003](#)); Mr Ahmed Mohamoud (Director of Operation, Israac Centre and Lumini Progress) ([UKU0002](#)); SecurityWomen ([UKU0004](#)); Professor Devika Hovell (Professor of International Law at London School of Economics) ([UKU0011](#)); CARE International UK ([UKU0015](#))

182 [Q19](#)

183 [Q19](#)

bodies and the UN system ... In all the resolutions we drafted and had adopted, we would be co-penholder with the UAE or any other Arab members on the Council.¹⁸⁴

- 138.** Sir Mark further explained that there was no conflict with the UK holding the pen for Yemen because there was very limited support for the Houthis, excluding Iran.¹⁸⁵ Sir Mark also said Britain was able to advance resolutions on Yemen in the UNSC because “neither Russia nor China had a vested national interest in Yemen”.¹⁸⁶ He continued that, in his capacity as National Security Advisor, he had urged Saudi Arabia “on every single occasion” to ensure that their “targeting was effective and that they were not indiscriminately bombing and killing civilians”.¹⁸⁷ He further noted:

It was a big issue for the British Government to pursue. I do not think one should reduce Yemen to a single issue of “It’s the problem of the Saudis”; the problem was the Houthis, not the Saudis.¹⁸⁸

- 139.** Sir Mark also told us that the UK was the only country at the UNSC willing to lead on Yemen. Referring to co-penholding on this file with Elected Members, Sir Mark observed:

I think that if we offered them [Elected Members to the UNSC] the pen on Yemen, most of them would run a mile, because we often tried to encourage other Elected Members to hold the pen, but they were very reluctant to do so ... I do not think there would be anyone clamouring to take it, to be honest.¹⁸⁹

- 140.** Lord Collins of Highbury informed us that the UK, as penholder, has considered how it can promote a UN-led process with a “more sustainable, long-term political settlement” in Yemen.¹⁹⁰

141. CONCLUSION

There has been criticism that the UK’s penholdership of the Yemen file was compromised due to UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia who were at war against Houthi terrorists in Yemen. However, Saudi Arabia has now largely withdrawn from Yemen. We agree that the UK remains the best-placed Permanent Member to hold this file at the United Nations Security Council. However, progress on the Yemen file has been slow despite neither Russia nor China having vested interests which could lead them to use their veto.

184 [Q19](#)

185 [Q20](#)

186 [Q20](#)

187 [Q22](#)

188 [Q22](#)

189 [Q21](#)

190 [Q95](#)

142.

RECOMMENDATION

We encourage the Government, through the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York, to continue to push for long-term peace and security in Yemen, with particular reference to upholding maritime security, the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the safety of women and girls. It must continue to work closely with the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen and Yemeni stakeholders to secure a sustainable peace in Yemen.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Tension and polarisation at the United Nations Security Council

1. We welcome and recognise the strong leadership demonstrated by the Government in leading on the UK's global 're-engagement,' including at and through the United Nations. The impending 80th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations system in September 2025, and the ongoing United Nations 80 (UN80) reform agenda, represent an opportunity which the Government must seize to begin a discussion proactively on the future of multilateralism and the role the UK can play in this new system. (Conclusion, Paragraph 29)
2. The Government should outline its strategy for responding to and engaging with a rapidly changing multilateral system, in its response to this report. This should include a roadmap detailing the UK's engagement with the ongoing United Nations 80 (UN80) reform agenda at the United Nations and ensuring that the UK is actively in the room and enhancing the efficiency and the effectiveness of the United Nations. This strategy should also indicate how the UK's soft power and status as a global convening power will enable the UK to navigate the challenging and fragmented period ahead. (Recommendation, Paragraph 30)
3. The international community's reluctance to address malign influence within the United Nations system risks the loss of the values-embedded and rules-based international order. If more countries ignore UN resolutions, it will become less and less effective. The UK has a leading diplomatic network, significant soft power, and is a primary financial contributor to the United Nations and must take leadership in responding to these challenges. (Conclusion, Paragraph 35)
4. The Government should make full use of the whole United Nations system to advance its foreign policy objectives and further British values of democracy and tolerance to counter assertive behaviour by other countries within the

United Nations. The Government in its engagement should include publicly calling out countries who are abusing or undermining the United Nations system. (Recommendation, Paragraph 36)

5. This Committee's first priority will always be to push for the use of United Nations mediation, peace and security structures to resolve conflict: the international community is strongest together and a peace agreed by the consensus of the many is one which is firm and lasting. Nonetheless, we are cognisant of the changing reality in which conflicts are resolved in Doha and Istanbul, rather than at the United Nations Security Council in New York. (Conclusion, Paragraph 42)
6. The Government should adapt to the changing conflict environment, recognising the existing geopolitical realities of conflict resolution, whilst continuing to push for multilateral efforts where possible. The Government should enhance its bilateral partnerships with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as well as Turkey, whilst ensuring it upholds its commitment to a rules-based international order. The Government should also leverage its relationships with regional groupings including the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We call upon the Government to ensure that the UK is in the room during these conversations and driving the agenda forward, drawing upon its expertise in diplomacy and stabilisation, and ensuring that British values, and those embedded universally within the United Nations, are furthered. It is imperative that the Government continues to invest resources in these diplomatic posts and in our representatives to these organisations. (Recommendation, Paragraph 43)
7. The UK is well placed to mobilise like-minded states and build regional and bloc-based coalitions to advance efforts to lead on the resolution of global conflict. This applies in particular to those organisations which have a regional remit for country files for which the UK holds the pen on the United Nations Security Council. (Conclusion, Paragraph 46)
8. The UK Government should be more confident in its role at the UN, harnessing its status as a global convenor, and drawing upon the UK's diplomatic expertise to engage like-minded states in resolving conflict in cases where it is not possible to reach agreement at the United Nations Security Council. The Government should leverage its alliances and influence in its continued collaborative efforts to work with European countries, the Commonwealth, NATO and the US, to actively build creative and fresh blocs and coalitions to advance the agenda of conflict resolution. Within these organisations, the UK should prove its value by exercising leadership in line with international law and accountability and link these efforts to its agenda at the United Nations Security Council. (Recommendation, Paragraph 47)

9. The UK should continue to work closely with the US in the United Nations Security Council to advance the UK's values-based approach to resolving conflict through multilateral organisations. (Conclusion, Paragraph 51)
10. Where agreement or consensus with the US may not be forthcoming, the Government must engage the US proactively, in behind-the-scenes and backdoor diplomacy. Simultaneously, the Government should have the confidence to develop robust alliances with Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council to advance British values including the belief in a rules and values-based international order and commitment to reduce global conflict and to secure progress on UK penholder files. (Recommendation, Paragraph 52)

Government coordination and alignment

11. We are concerned about the cuts to the FCDO's budget, including those to the Directorate responsible for multilateral organisations such as the UN. Such measures will reduce the UK's ability to be an effective penholder at the United Nations and to lead on the resolution of global conflict through the United Nations Security Council. More so, these cuts risk ceding further influence to China and Russia within the multilateral system. Indeed, such detrimental measures open the door, willingly, to our competitors and adversaries. (Conclusion, Paragraph 60)
12. The Government must ensure the retention of the high-calibre staff at the UK Missions to the United Nations and it should outline a clear strategy detailing how it plans to retain these staff. When the Government is clear on the structure and composition of the FCDO following its restructuring, it should, as a matter of priority, provide this Committee a detailed overview of how this will affect UK Missions to the United Nations with a focus on resources, financing and staff retention. (Recommendation, Paragraph 61)

Impact on global security of cutting foreign aid

13. With a reduced Official Development Assistance budget and a smaller budget allocation for conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, the UK is less visible on the global stage and in key conflict zones. This opens up the space to our adversaries and competitors to make significant inroads, particularly China, Iran and Russia. (Conclusion, Paragraph 65)
14. For the UK to continue being a lead actor within the United Nations Security Council, and a leading global actor in the prevention and resolution of conflict, it is critical that the Government sets out a pathway and

timeline as to how it will return to spending 0.5%, and ultimately 0.7%, of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance spend as soon as is fiscally possible. This should include details of a protected budget dedicated to conflict prevention, mediation and civilian-led peacebuilding. (Recommendation, Paragraph 66)

15. The Government should also, in its response, outline how the FCDO's reduced operating budget will allow it to continue being a leading multilateral actor and fulfil the Government's responsibility to push through efficiencies identified throughout the ongoing United Nations 80 (UN80) process to ensure it gets full UK support. (Recommendation, Paragraph 67)
16. It should also detail what interim investments it has made for private finance to plug the Official Development Assistance gap. This includes investment in civilian-led conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. UK expertise, much of it currently concentrated in the Migration and Conflict Department, Integrated Security Fund and FCDO cadre of conflict advisors deployed in various diplomatic posts, is essential to sustaining global credibility and leadership, and must be safeguarded. We also welcome further clarity on how the Government will share its expertise with host countries to develop their expertise on preventing, resolving and reducing conflict in a manner which is reciprocal and mutually beneficial and allows them to develop such capacities over the long-term. The Government must work closely with its European allies to share responsibilities rather than duplicating efforts, to bring about a singular and coordinated response in the prevention and resolution of conflict. Although beyond the scope of this inquiry, a forward-looking whole of government peace and conflict strategy would bring much-needed clarity and ensure that diplomatic, security and development investments are aligned for maximum impact. (Recommendation, Paragraph 68)

The UK's role as penholder at the United Nations Security Council

17. Sharing the pen allows for Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council to actively partake in the penholder process and to learn from the UK's expertise as a convening actor in diplomacy and as a leader in the global resolution of conflict. Furthering such relationships would strengthen the UK's soft power and may lead to the formation of new alliances. (Conclusion, Paragraph 72)
18. The Government should prioritise co-penholding with at least one Elected Member to the United Nations Security Council per country and thematic file, where appropriate, and where Elected Members are willing and able to contribute meaningfully. This would also provide a practical

and implementable reform mechanism within the United Nations Security Council in a manner beneficial to the UK's interests. The Government should adopt co-penholding as a rule for files where the UK's foreign policy serves as a barrier to its ability to be an actor in promoting global peace and security efforts at the United Nations Security Council. (Recommendation, Paragraph 73)

19. Without debate, progress on a file and elevating the platform of a conflict to find diplomatic solutions forward is stalled. This stymies the core mission of the United Nations Security Council, which is to identify and spearhead solutions to restore global peace and security. (Conclusion, Paragraph 77)
20. We recognise that the UK's Mission to the United Nations is operating in an increasingly fraught and challenging geopolitical environment, but that should not preclude the UK from raising and debating files such as Myanmar and Sudan at the United Nations Security Council. (Conclusion, Paragraph 78)
21. The UK must continue to put forward, raise and debate issues at the United Nations Security Council for files it holds the pen for, even if these are ultimately vetoed. It is essential that in situations of conflict where the UK has a responsibility, that conflict is seen to be being raised and debated at the United Nations Security Council, despite the outcome. This demonstrates the UK's leadership and commitment to a rules-based international order, whilst highlighting deliberate actions by other Permanent Members to forestall resolutions. (Recommendation, Paragraph 79)
22. The UK has demonstrated strong leadership in its management of the penholder file 'The UN Office for Central Africa', and should continue this work. (Conclusion, Paragraph 82)
23. The UK is to be commended for its role as penholder for Colombia at the United Nations Security Council and continuing to push for stability in a volatile region. (Conclusion, Paragraph 87)
24. We urge the Government to outline the steps it is taking as penholder to seek to ensure the long-term consolidation and enforcement of the peace process in Colombia. This should include a summary of the actors it is engaging with on the ground, including civil society and women-led groups and the regional Elected Member at the time, to the United Nations Security Council. The Government should continue to raise human rights violations in Colombia at the United Nations Security Council and take all measures possible, including targeted sanctions or travel bans, against those responsible. (Recommendation, Paragraph 88)

25. Our evidence supports the view that UK's roles as penholder for Cyprus at the United Nations Security Council and as a party to the Treaty of Guarantee in Cyprus do not represent a conflict of interest. (Conclusion, Paragraph 90)
26. The UK should continue to uphold its commitment to the resolution of the stalemate in Cyprus, utilising jointly its role as penholder and as one of the parties to the Treaty of Guarantee. The Government should detail in its response to this report what steps it is taking to ensure Cyprus remains a primary agenda item at the United Nations Security Council and outline how this work is aligned with ongoing policy on Cyprus at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. (Recommendation, Paragraph 91)
27. Libya is a neglected item at the United Nations Security Council and the UK has not taken sufficient action to raise it. Despite controversy relating to the UN Security Council-backed intervention which the UK participated in, our evidence suggested the UK was the only candidate of the UN Security Council Permanent Members likely to have the appetite to hold the pen for the Libya file. (Conclusion, Paragraph 95)
28. The Government should demonstrate the actions it is taking to promote peace and security in Libya's borders as its penholder. (Recommendation, Paragraph 96)
29. We note with concern that despite increasing violence and reports of human rights violations, there has been no substantive resolution on Myanmar passed by the United Nations Security Council since 2022. (Conclusion, Paragraph 99)
30. It is critical that the UK continues to raise the profile of Myanmar in all its efforts as penholder for this file at the United Nations Security Council. The Government should introduce regular mandated reporting on this conflict. The Government should also work with regional actors, including the regional organisation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to bring about a locally-negotiated solution to this conflict. (Recommendation, Paragraph 100)
31. We recognise, support and honour the thousands of United Nations peacekeepers who are upholding peace and security and taking risks to their lives in conflict zones around the world. (Conclusion, Paragraph 109)
32. However, we recognise that United Nations peacekeeping missions require reforms to ensure they are fit for purpose. This should include consideration of technological solutions—like the use of drones for monitoring conflict zones—to both support United Nations peacekeeping missions and reduce

costs in light of reducing funding from Member States such as the US. It is also important to review peacekeeping missions regularly to ensure that missions do not run on endlessly. (Conclusion, Paragraph 110)

- 33.** It is clear that United Nations peacekeeping requires reform, and we support the Government's efforts to promote a leaner peacekeeping and peace and security architecture at the UN. However, we would urge the Government to maintain UK investment in conflict prevention, including through the UN. The Government should:
- a.** Set out, in its response to this report, its long-term plan to reform the over-inflated peacekeeping bodies and missions at the United Nations and how those plans fit into the United Nations 80 (UN80) agenda. The Government should detail its specific objectives. It should also consider whether in some places, redirecting investments to other UN arms, such as the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and its Peacebuilding Fund, could deliver the same or more impact at a fraction of the cost.
 - b.** Drive forward the review and closure of United Nations peacekeeping structures, missions, mandates and agencies which overlap or those which are not delivering their objective of promoting mediation and security. Additionally, the Government should outline its internal review process for deciding how mandates are evaluated.
 - c.** Lead on efforts to create a unified and singular United Nations peace and security structure, which is focused on mediation and conflict resolution. This structure should be responsible to the United Nations Security Council.
 - d.** Outline how it will use its penholdership of this file to promote, secure and further the United Nations' role in peace, security and mediation and detail what conflicts it will identify as priorities.
 - e.** Seek to ensure that United Nations peacekeeping budgets and relevant peacekeeping mandates are financially supported despite the increasing polarisation evident on the United Nations Security Council, which may hinder regular budgetary processes.
 - f.** Actively push for the use of technology, particularly drones, in peacekeeping as a way to mitigate costs and promote safety in regions where peacekeepers may be at greater risk. In its response, the Government should detail what steps it is taking to advance the incorporation of technology into peacekeeping with our allies at the United Nations. (Recommendation, Paragraph 111)

34. The Government should ensure that it is taking all possible steps to ensure that civilians in armed conflict are protected and given access to shelter, food and healthcare. The Government should use the offices of the UN to urge warring parties to respect protected spaces such as schools and hospitals. (Conclusion, Paragraph 113)
35. The Government, in its response, should detail the process by which national interest is weighed against obligations as penholder at the United Nations when assuming responsibility for a file, with reference to its responsibility for the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict file. (Recommendation, Paragraph 114)
36. The UK has demonstrated strong leadership on the Somalia file at the United Nations, drawing on a network of African actors built up over two decades and a strong in-country presence. (Conclusion, Paragraph 119)
37. A stable Somalia is crucial to global and maritime security. The Government should, in its response, outline how it is continuing to work with regional actors in Somalia and detail which funds it will use to support the implementation of United Nations and regional African Union-led mandates in Somalia. The Government should set out what form this new financing partnership will take, such as a joint UK-led Security Council Stabilisation Fund in cooperation with like-minded countries. (Recommendation, Paragraph 120)
38. We commend the UK's tenacity and leadership on the Sudan file but urge it go further to promote peace and security in Sudan, both at the United Nations Security Council and bilaterally. We are cognisant that the UK is operating in a difficult, fractious and complex geopolitical environment and is constrained at the United Nations Security Council. (Conclusion, Paragraph 125)
39. We recommend that the UK take the following actions as soon as possible:
 - a. Pursue all efforts possible to intensify its diplomatic efforts and pass a United Nations Security Council resolution which calls for an immediate end to fighting in Sudan and upholds the protection of civilians.
 - b. The Government should outline in its response how it plans to enforce deterrents including sanctions against individuals and entities who violate United Nations Security Council resolutions on Sudan.
 - c. As penholder for the Women, Peace and Security file, the UK must do all it can to ensure that mediation efforts involve Sudanese women and women-led civil society organisations. This includes support for

accessing healthcare, including supporting organisations involved in assisting women who are victims of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence.

- d.** Engage the Sudanese diaspora in the UK, who have been instrumental in highlighting the devastating impact of this war, to inform the Government's Sudan policy. (Recommendation, Paragraph 126)
- 40.** The UK has historically demonstrated strong management and leadership as concerns the Women, Peace and Security file, however it can and must go further. (Conclusion, Paragraph 133)
- 41.** We recommend:
 - a.** The Government should outline in its response to this report what work it is pursuing as penholder for Women, Peace and Security to include women and women-led organisations in mediation and peace negotiations. The UK Mission to the United Nations in New York should lead by example by including women in all stages of the penholding process across files.
 - b.** The Government should outline, in its response, its strategy for navigating increasing attempts by some countries who are Permanent Members to the United Nations Security Council to remove references to women's health and safety from resolutions. The Government should detail how it is engaging like-minded allies, Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council and regional actors to push back against such narratives.
 - c.** The Government should seek to strengthen United Nations Security Council statements, resolutions and mandates concerning Women, Peace and Security through the inclusion of measurable and concrete commitments which go beyond symbolism and which protect the language around women's inclusion and health. (Recommendation, Paragraph 134)
- 42.** There has been criticism that the UK's penholdership of the Yemen file was compromised due to UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia who were at war against Houthi terrorists in Yemen. However, Saudi Arabia has now largely withdrawn from Yemen. We agree that the UK remains the best-placed Permanent Member to hold this file at the United Nations Security Council. However, progress on the Yemen file has been slow despite neither Russia nor China having vested interests which could lead them to use their veto. (Conclusion, Paragraph 141)
- 43.** We encourage the Government, through the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York, to continue to push for long-term peace and security in Yemen, with particular reference to upholding maritime security, the

protection of civilians in armed conflict and the safety of women and girls. It must continue to work closely with the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen and Yemeni stakeholders to secure a sustainable peace in Yemen. (Recommendation, Paragraph 142)

Formal minutes

Monday 15 September 2025

Members present

Dame Emily Thornberry (Chair)

Alex Ballinger

Aphra Brandreth

Phil Brickell

Richard Foord

Uma Kumaran

Abtisam Mohamed

Edward Morello

Sir John Whittingdale

The UK at the United Nations Security Council

Draft Report (*The write to protect: Britain's pen on the world stage*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 142 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available
(Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 16 September at 10.00 a.m.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Monday 23 June 2025

Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Former UK Ambassador and Permanent Representative (2009-2015), United Nations, Former National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister (2015-2017), UK Government [Q1-36](#)

Tuesday 1 July 2025

Richard Gowan, Director of UN and Multilateral Diplomacy, International Crisis Group; **Martin Griffiths**, Former Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations [Q37-67](#)

Tuesday 15 July 2025

The Lord Collins of Highbury, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO); **Freya Jackson**, Director for Multilateral and Human Rights, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) [Q68-107](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

UKU numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	ActionAid UK	UKU0006
2	CARE International UK	UKU0015
3	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)	UKU0007
4	Gender Action for Peace and Security	UKU0016
5	Gifkins, Dr Jess (Senior Lecturer in International Relations, University of Technology Sydney); and Ralph, Professor Jason (Professor of International Relations, University of Leeds)	UKU0003
6	Hovell, Professor Devika (Professor of International Law, London School of Economics)	UKU0011
7	Knapp, Andrea (PhD candidate, University of Bologna)	UKU0001
8	Mohamoud, Mr Ahmed (Director of Operation, Israac Centre and Lumini Progress)	UKU0002
9	SecurityWomen	UKU0004
10	Tinkler, Max (University Student, Edge Hill University)	UKU0009
11	Walker, Linda	UKU0010
12	Wilson, Mr Eliot (Writer and commentator, Freelance)	UKU0014
13	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK	UKU0005

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Israel-Palestine conflict	HC 488