



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Department
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The Rt Hon the Baroness Anelay of St
Johns
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11 January 2022

Dear Baroness Anelay of St Johns,

I was pleased to appear before your Committee on 8 December. During my evidence I promised to write to you with more information in answer to the Lord Teverson's question: *What was the UK doing to help Greece and Cyprus, as a member of the Commonwealth, in the face of Turkish aggression with regard to their respective EEZs?*; and on the human rights and climate refugee points raised by the Lord Alton.

Q 110. UK support to Greece and Cyprus in response to Turkish actions in their EEZs

The UK continues to oppose Turkish drilling in the waters around Cyprus. The UK has consistently stated its support for the Republic of Cyprus' sovereign right to exploit any oil and gas in its internationally agreed Exclusive Economic Zone and continental shelf. We continue to believe any disputes should be resolved through dialogue and in accordance with international law and believe the most enduring way of resolving difficult issues such as this is to achieve a Cyprus settlement in line with the UN parameters. To this end, we continue to engage at Ministerial and Officials level to urge all parties to refrain from actions or rhetoric that could damage the prospects of a settlement and to redouble their efforts in pursuit of a just and lasting settlement.

Q 112. Human rights and climate refugees

The Government is concerned about the human rights abuses that are taking place at sea. We recognise that there are challenges around upholding human rights for those working away from home, beyond the view of the normal authorities ashore and in view of the jurisdictional complexities that exist at sea. We also recognise that these abuses are linked with a broad range of issues such as modern slavery, drug trafficking, people trafficking, working conditions on vessels, crimes on ships, piracy.

The Government is fully committed to the welfare of all seafarers and fishermen regardless of their nationality and we are working with our international partners and in the relevant international organisations to tackle this issue. We use G7 and G20 networks, and other international groupings to raise issues of concern and to highlight the responsibilities of ship owners and fishing vessel owners and of governments in this regard.

The UK is leading on this by example. We ratified and rigorously enforce the International Labour Organisation's Work in Fishing Convention (2007), and the International Maritime Organisation's Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), which set minimum global standards for living and working conditions on fishing vessels and merchant vessels respectively. While these Conventions do not seek to enforce human rights, the inspection framework they provide allows Flag and Port States to identify potential cases of labour exploitation and modern slavery which can then be referred to the appropriate authorities.

The MLC was amended in 2014 to provide protection for seafarers who are abandoned by the ship owner. Ship owners must now have financial security, which will pay for the support and maintenance, repatriation and up to four months of unpaid wages to seafarers in the case of abandonment. Seafarers have direct access to make a claim to a financial security provider. The UK is participating in the IMO Correspondence Group on abandonment and will strongly oppose any guidance, which requires seafarers to join abandoned ships without adequate safeguards. The MCA is working on guidance for its own surveyors on how to deal with abandonment situations that arise in the UK. The UK Admiralty Court has the powers to arrest a ship in order to pay its creditors, including seafarers who are owed wages.

The MLC seems to be having a positive impact in respect of the welfare of seafarers. MCA has been able to address seafarer complaints about non-payment of wages, and since 2018 (when amendments to the MLC were implemented), seafarers abandoned by the ship owner have had direct access to the ship owner's financial security provider for assistance.

Several regional regimes are in place to enforce port state control such as the Paris Memorandum of Understanding and the Tokyo Memorandum of Understanding, under which countries check that vessels entering their ports comply with the major IMO Conventions including obligations to seafarers under the labour conventions. I can confirm that the UK is a member of the Paris MoU. For vessels which do not comply with these international conventions, there is potentially a significant sanction, which can ultimately lead to the exclusion of the vessel from all the ports in the region covered by the Memorandum of Understanding.

All fishing vessels, including all foreign owned fishing vessels, on the UK register have been inspected by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and issued with documents of compliance where appropriate. The MCA works with the National Crime Agency, the Police, Border Force, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and other agencies to assist those fishermen caught up in such practices.

The Government also encourages and supports industry initiatives such as the Neptune Declaration on seafarer wellbeing, spearheaded by the Global Maritime Forum, and now signed by 850 companies and organisations, which aims to address the crew change crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With respect to 'climate refugees' we recognize that climate change will increasingly become a significant factor in driving migration. Action on mitigation and adaptation remains important to limit this as much as possible. The UK is leading international action on this agenda, including through our Presidency of COP26.

In July this year, the FCDO published a [Rapid Evidence Assessment](https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/rapid-evidence-assessment-on-the-impacts-of-climate-change-on-migration-patterns)¹ on the impacts of climate change on migration patterns. The evidence shows that climate extremes and environmental degradation are often amplifiers of other principal migration drivers (economic, social and political). We should recognise the complexity of causes of migration and seek to provide people with options for sustainable livelihoods that do not compel them to migrate.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/rapid-evidence-assessment-on-the-impacts-of-climate-change-on-migration-patterns>

The REA recommends the use of the phrases 'climate-related migration' or 'climate change-related migration' instead of 'climate (or climate-induced) migration', to reflect the mediated, indirect ways in which climate change and climatic factors may influence migration. In fact decisions to migrate are rarely mono-causal. The response to migration requires an in-depth understanding of causal factors.

Recognising the ever-increasing numbers of displaced persons across the globe driven by conflict, climate change and covid-19, the UK is strongly committed to the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees. At a recent High Level Officials Meeting, following on from the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019, Minister Cleverly confirmed the UK's commitment to delivering on the Global Compact and to support forcibly displaced persons through a holistic approach which restores dignity and offers a viable future². The Minister highlighted the UK's strong track record of helping those who need protection, and the significant support provided by the UK to the world's largest refugee crises.

With best wishes,



THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-cleverly-intervention-at-global-compact-on-refugees-high-level-officials-meeting>