

BRIEFING FOR THE FIRST MINISTER

ARAB AMBASSADORS CORPS ROUNDTABLE

11 MARCH 2024 17:00-19:30

Key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More vital than ever that the international community works together as the world faces multiple crises be that war, climate or the economy that can only be addressed through cooperation• My vision for Scotland is set around the three pillars of equality, opportunity, and community.• Scotland has a strong voice in the world and strives to be a good global citizen. We are open for business.• I have repeatedly condemned the Hamas attacks and detention of hostages and called for the UK Government to press for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza by all sides
What	<p>The First Minister has been invited to speak to London-based ambassadors who represent members of Arab League nations followed by an Iftar.</p> <p>Roundtable: After (~3 min) introduction from the Dean of the Arab Ambassadors, His Excellency Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa of Bahrain, the First Minister will deliver opening remarks (~8 mins) before moving into a Q+A session (conducted under the Chatham House Rule) for approximately 45 minutes, facilitated by the Dean.</p> <p>Iftar: from 18:05 the First Minister and Minister Stewart will be invited to pray before being seated for a table-service meal to break fast.</p>
Why	<p>The Arab Ambassador Corps wrote to the First Minister congratulating him on his appointment and suggesting they visit Scotland to meet with him.</p> <p>Recognising the visit to Scotland will require significant coordination and will likely be delivered in slower time, the First Minister agreed to meet the Ambassadors initially on a future visit to London.</p>
Who	Ambassadors of Arab League states based in London. A full guest list can be seen at Annex C.

	To note Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development will join for both the roundtable and Iftar.
Where	Four Seasons Hamilton Pl, Park Ln, London W1J 7DR
When	Monday 11 th March 17:00 – 18:00 Roundtable 18:05 – 19:30 Iftar
Likely themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scotland’s offer to the world, including as a trade and investment destination, source of innovation and our world-class higher education. • Scotland’s place in the world, including as a good global citizen REDACTED
Media	Group photo of the First Minister, Minister Stewart and Ambassadors to be tweeted following the meeting. A communications plan for the visit has been submitted separately.
Support	John Webster Head of Scotland House London REDACTED Head of UK, EU and International Relations REDACTED Deputy Head of Economy Diplomacy Team Scotland House London
Attached documents	Annex A - Summary Page Annex B - Speaking note (submitted separately) Annex C – Attendee List and Seating Plan Annex D - Gaza FMQ brief (submitted separately) Annex E - International Strategy Annex F - Feminist Approach to International Relations Annex G - Trade and Investment Annex H - Human Rights Annex J - Climate Change, Energy and COP28 Annex K - International Higher Education

ANNEX A SUMMARY

You will be the guest of honour at a meeting bringing together Heads of Mission of the Arab Ambassador Corps. This will be the first time you have engaged as First Minister with this collective of the most senior Arab League diplomats posted to the UK. The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development will also attend.

H.E. Ambassador Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa of Bahrain (Dean of the Arab Corps) will open by welcoming you to the meeting. Following short introductory remarks, he will invite you to make brief introductory remarks. The group expect your remarks to promote Scotland as a trade and investment destination and reflect on our world-class higher education offer, explain SG priorities for engaging internationally - including as a good global citizen and our contribution to the international agenda in 2024.

This engagement will be conducted under the Chatham House Rule REDACTED

Engagement

- You have met a number of the Heads of Mission (Jordan, Palestine, UAE engagement at COP) bilaterally over the past 12 months. However this will be the first opportunity to engage with this group as a collective.
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UAE

- H.E Mr Mansour Abdulhoul Ambassador of the UAE will be in attendance. Scotland's relationship with the UAE offers great potential, REDACTED

REDACTED

Sensitivities

REDACTED

ANNEX B
OPENING REMARKS (ATTACHED SEPARATELY)

ANNEX C
GUEST LIST AND SEATING PLAN

Algeria	H.E. Mr Nourredine Yazid , Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Bahrain	H.E. Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohamed Al Khalifa , Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps (Host)
Egypt	H.E. Mr. Sherif Kamel , Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Iraq	H.E. Mr Mohammad Jaafar Al-Sadr , Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq
Jordan	H.E. Mr. Manar Dabbas , Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Kuwait	H.E. Mr. Bader Al-Awadi , Ambassador of the State of Kuwait
Lebanon	H.E. Mr. Rami Mortada , Ambassador of Lebanon
Libya	Mr Abdulrahman Elgannas , Minister Plenipotentiary of the State of Libya
Mauritania	H.E Mr. B.A. Samba Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania
Morocco	HE Mr. Hakim Hajoui , Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco
Palestine	H.E. Dr Husam Zomlot , Palestine Commissioner
Qatar	Mr. Jassim Al Moftah , Deputy Head of Mission of the State of Qatar
Saudi Arabia	HRH Prince Khalid bin Bandar Sultan Al Saud , Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Somalia	Mr Abdulkadir Ahmed-Khery Abdi
Sudan	Mr. Mohamed Salah Hassan , Charge d' Affairs of Sudan
Tunisia	H.E. Mr. Yassine El Oued of Tunisia
United Arab Emirates	H.E. Mr. Mansoor Abulhoul , Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates

SEATING PLAN

SEATING PLANS FOR BOTH THE ROUNDTABLE AND THE IFTAR WILL FOLLOW

The First Minister will be seated as main guest, and to his right will be Ms Stewart, and to his left will be John Webster. The Bahraini Ambassador will be directly opposite the First Minister. The other ambassadors will be seated according to their year of posting.

A comprehensive ops note providing detailed instruction on the handling of the Iftar will follow.

ANNEX D
GAZA FMQ (ATTACHED SEPARATELY)

ANNEX E INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

Background

In January 2024, SG published an action-oriented International Strategy that prioritises our international work and sets out the outcomes we aim to achieve through international engagement for the remainder of this parliamentary term, within the current constitutional context.

Lines to Take

- In the face of an increasingly turbulent world with new conflicts and new global challenges, the Scottish Government needs to work to deepen ties with key partners, increase economic opportunities and build on excellent networks for both Scotland's benefit and that of international partners.
- We have a proven track record of delivering internationally since the devolved settlement 25 years ago and we are dedicated to building on this and taking advantage of international prospects.
- The strategy focuses on three broad themes of the Economy, Energy and Climate Change, and our Relationships and Influence. The actions outlined in the strategy set out how our work over the next few years will directly deliver for Scottish people, as well as uphold Scotland's reputation as a Good Global Citizen.
- Given our size and limited resource, we need to prioritise where we focus our international efforts so that they are concentrated on those areas that will lead to the most impactful outcomes. This means playing to our strengths and building on areas where Scotland already has significant assets, such as engaging with our diaspora and promoting our world-leading higher education institutions and our distinct culture.
- In our international development work, it means considering carefully with our partner governments where, in addition to financial investment, Scotland can provide added value through our expertise in relevant subject areas.
- It also means identifying areas where there is significant potential for Scotland to have impact in the future and secure positive outcomes, such as in renewable energy.
- While we are committed to remaining an active partner in Europe and our near neighbourhood, we also recognise the need to strengthen our social, cultural and economic relationships with emerging and developing economies across the Middle East, Asia and Africa as opportunities emerge and resources allow.

Q&A

Why is Scotland engaging in foreign policy when it is reserved to the UK Government?

- International developments impact directly or indirectly on almost all aspects of domestic policy. So while the international relations are reserved to the UK, the Scottish Parliament and Government have to take an interest.
- The Scotland Act makes it clear that Scottish Ministers are able to engage with other governments on any subject provided that they do not conclude legally binding agreements or purport to represent the UK.
- REDACTED

What benefits does the Scottish Government's international work bring?

We have a proven track record of delivering internationally since the devolved settlement 25 years ago and we want to build on this and take advantage of international opportunities . Successes include:

1. Economy, trade and investment

- The support provided by our enterprise agencies and international network to companies across Scotland in 2022-23 will result in £1.73 billion of planned international sales over the next three years – a 20% increase compared to 2021-22.
- 2022 was a record year for Scottish food and drink, with food exports worth £1.9 billion and exports of whisky alone worth £6.2 billion, demonstrating the excellence of Scottish products and the esteem in which they are held by the rest of the world.

2. Climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy

- We have almost 19,000 km of coastline and a marine area seven times greater than our land mass. From tourism to fishing exports, our marine areas and communities provide an immense contribution to our economy and society with an estimated £4.5 billion in gross value added from the marine economy (2021) and almost 70,000 jobs in the marine economy (2021).
- ScotWind is the world's largest commercial round for floating offshore wind and puts Scotland at the forefront of offshore wind development globally. Scotland's natural resources, skilled offshore workforce, excellent port structure and strong

innovation hub, make Scotland one of the best places in the world to develop offshore wind and its supply chain.

3. Reputation, influence and relationships

- Our reputation as a welcoming place to live and work, study, visit and do business is already strong. The 2022 Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index ranked Scotland as a top twenty country on five of its six dimensions of reputation (governance, culture, people, tourism, and immigration and investment).
- In 2019, screen tourism was linked to 656,000 overnight visits (worth £65 million to the economy). Tourism of this sort is predicted to grow if more productions can be brought to Scotland.

ANNEX F

FEMINIST APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

KEY MESSAGES

- Across the world, women and girls face continued systemic issues from economic insecurity to gender-based violence, from violations of sexual and reproductive health rights and climate injustice, to barriers to accessing education.
- This is why we committed to delivering a feminist approach in all of our international work that puts the rights of women and girls, and other marginalised groups, at the heart of our international activities.
- To date, the Scottish Government has been engaged in a period of evidence gathering, listening and learning from others, including the publication of an independent evidence report in June 2023 and the publication of a policy position paper 'Taking a Feminist Approach to International Relations' in November 2023.
- This commits us to a set of principles which will guide our work and identify the focus and parameters of the policy.
- Our approach is driven by a focus on understanding and addressing the root causes of inequality and the shared global challenges that drive insecurity.
- As part of this, we will continue to strive to give people most affected by structural inequalities and injustice, conflict, climate change and environmental damage a platform to speak for themselves and influence and make decisions.
- We want to make sure our international work is transformative, intersectional, equitable, participatory, consistent and accountable. To achieve this, we will ensure a whole-Government approach and continually review our policies and programmes, where they have an international dimension, to ensure they reflect feminist principles.
- This position paper is the first part of a process to consider and respond to recommendations drawn from engagement with experts, including contributors from the Global South.
- Our new feminist approach will apply regardless of Scotland's constitutional position but clearly the contribution that Scotland could make, and the benefits it could receive, would be significantly enhanced with the powers of independence.

Background

In its 2021-22 PfG, the SG committed to developing a feminist approach to foreign policy (FFP). The concept of feminist foreign policy was introduced in 2014 by Sweden and is now being pursued by an increasing number of countries around the world. There is not one uniform definition of the concept, but the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy and the International Centre for Research on Women are both in agreement that feminist foreign policy aims to interrogate power structures, prioritise peace and protect the rights of women and marginalised groups. In November 2023 SG published a position paper setting out our approach – Taking a Feminist Approach to International Relations.

ANNEX G TRADE AND INVESTMENT

UK-GCC FTA

- The Scottish Government supports increasing trade with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in a way that is consistent with our trade principles as set out in our Vision for Trade. Any new trade agreement must serve the best interests of Scotland: our economy, people and planet.
- Scotland is a world-class exporter in a number of service sectors, and we are keen to make the most of opportunities that a FTA with the GCC may provide for our companies to access new markets. We are calling on the UK to be ambitious in negotiation of services provisions. We are also keen to leverage opportunities of this FTA in the area of renewable energy as our economies transition away from fossil fuels.
- The Scottish Government wishes to embed human rights in all aspects of trade policy, REDACTED

SCOTLAND'S VISION FOR TRADE

- The Vision for Trade, published in January 2021, sets out the Scottish Government's **five principles** - Inclusive Growth, Wellbeing, Sustainability, Net Zero and Good Governance - underpinning our trade decisions and relationships.
- The Vision positions our approach to trade within a broader economic, social and environmental context. It considers the strategic role of trade and how it contributes to wider governmental ambitions, in line with our National Performance Framework.
- In linking our trade policy to these principles, we can add value to Scottish goods, services and our brand, and facilitate the implementation of our three cornerstone international economy plans on exports, investment and capital.
- We recognise that many trade levers are currently reserved to the UK Government, and we have continued to reiterate the importance of an effective role for the Scottish Government in the development of trade arrangements.
- We have continued to scrutinise the UK Government's proposals for each new Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and assessed them against our principles, so that they best serve the interests of Scotland's economy, people and the planet.

A TRADING NATION

- A Trading Nation (ATN) was launched in 2019 with a target of increasing international exports from 20% to 25% of GDP over 10 years (2029). This would increase GDP by around £3.5bn per annum and create 17,500 more jobs with an increased tax take of around £500m per annum.
- ATN takes an evidence-led approach to set the direction on how best to grow Scotland's exports by focusing our policies and resources on the priority markets (where), sectors (what) and businesses (who) to best deliver that growth (how).
- Evidence shows that we should refocus our support towards our top 1,200 exporters and target our key sectors and exporting destinations to maximise Scottish export sales and increase GDP.
- The latest HMRC regional trade in goods statistics show the value of Scotland's international goods exports increased by 4.3% in the year ending September 2023 compared to the previous year when oil and gas are excluded. This compares to a 5.3% increase for the UK as a whole^[1].
- Whilst we recognise that many trade levers are currently reserved to the UK Government, and we have continued to reiterate the importance of an effective role for the Scottish Government in the development of trade arrangements.
- To clearly define our views on trade, we published our "Vision for Trade" in January 2021, which set out our five principles to build all decisions and relationships upon.
- These include Inclusive Growth, Wellbeing, Sustainability, Net Zero and Good Governance.
- It is important that we in Government always consider how strategic role of trade can support our own ambitions and must include a wide range of economic, social and environmental considerations.
- In addition to Vision for Trade, we launched our Export Growth Plan "A Trading Nation" in 2019, aiming to increase international exports from 20% to 25% of GDP over 10 years (2029).
- Our Economic Analysis highlights that Scotland's exports to the Middle East accounted for £1.4 billion of exports in 2021, accounting for around 4.5% of our total international Exports.
- Whilst these numbers have bounced back post-Covid, my officials are always looking at further opportunities to continue growing our trading relationships.
- Over the past 3 years, we have seen success in growing our trading relationship with the UAE Government.

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UAE TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Background

- Since 2019, SG and Scottish Development International (SDI) have been leading a programme of business and government engagements with the UAE.
- REDACTED

^[1] Data is presented in current prices, which means that it also includes the effects of inflation. Caution should therefore be applied when comparing values of exports over recent years, as changes may be due to inflation rather than changes in the volume of exports. Comparing trends with other regions of the UK is not subject to these caveats as they are likely to have experienced similar inflationary effects.

^[2] <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-expo-2020-dubai-evaluation-report/>

ANNEX H HUMAN RIGHTS TOP LINES

- As a good global citizen, Scotland is committed to promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights.
- We seek to meet our own human rights obligations in full and to show leadership on human rights, both at home and internationally.
- We actively participate in UK reporting (to the UN and other international institutions) on compliance with treaty obligations. The UK's record on implementing civil and political rights will be examined by the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva on 12 and 13 March.
- In Scotland we are actively fostering a culture of accountability and participation in decision-making which reflects the broad spectrum of human rights set out in the 7 core UN treaties ratified by the UK.
- We believe in seeking to lead by example. That is why we have already incorporated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law and will shortly introduce a bill to incorporate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- The bill will also give effect to obligations under UN treaties dealing with racial discrimination (CERD), discrimination against women (CEDAW) and the rights of disabled people (CRPD), as well as recognising the human right to a healthy environment.
- We strongly support the vital work done by Human Rights Defenders, which is often undertaken at great personal risk. Our Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship contributes to delivery of the UK's pledge to support Human Rights Defenders given in December (to mark 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- We have embedded human rights and equality in wider policies, for example in our Vision for Trade and by taking a Feminist Approach to International Relations (recognising the crucial role that women play in promoting and advancing peace and security).

ANNEX I CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND COP28

EU Energy Security

- As a trusted and reliable trading partner, Scotland can play a central role in securing Europe's future energy supply and the global transition to net zero.
- We recognise that international co-operation will be key to developing future hydrogen markets and their supporting infrastructure and will continue to seek out collaboration opportunities
- In addition to our vast renewables potential, Scotland is well-placed in terms of proximity and infrastructure connectivity to key hydrogen import locations in northern Europe, with the potential to become an export hub linking the North Sea region and the north of Europe.

Hydrogen

- Scotland has the resources, people and ambition to become a world leader in the production of reliable, competitive and sustainable hydrogen.
- Our Hydrogen Action Plan sets out how we will work collaboratively with the energy sector and partners to deliver our ambition of 5GW of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen capacity by 2030 and 25 GW by 2045.
- Delivery against this ambition will be supported by our reported potential offshore wind project pipeline of over 40GW capacity (subject to marine planning, consenting and finding a route to market).
- This will put us on the pathway to becoming a leading hydrogen nation by 2045
- As committed in our Hydrogen Action Plan, we are working to develop a Hydrogen Sector Export Plan, work is well underway and we plan to publish this in the coming months.
- The plan will outline how the Scottish Government will use its trade and investment levers to support the development of the sector in Scotland, so that it is fit to respond to the growing international demand.
- Working with industry and enterprise agencies, we have now completed an extensive programme of engagement with stakeholders.

Recent developments offshore Wind in Scotland

- In October 2023 the First Minister announced up to £500 million to stimulate and support private investment in the infrastructure and manufacturing facilities critical to the growth of our world-leading offshore wind sector.
- We are kick-starting this commitment to anchor our offshore wind supply-chain in Scotland with investment of £67m next year.
- A Strategic Investment Model (SIM) has also been established with the aim of enabling a move from project-led to sector level investment that better supports growth in port and supply chain capacity and capability.

- October also saw Seagreen become Scotland's largest (1.1 GW) wind farm as well as the world's deepest fixed-bottom offshore wind farm (deepest foundation installed at 58.7 metres below sea level),
- Seagreen is 27km off the Angus coast, and the company (a JV between TotalEnergies and SSE Renewables) say it is generating enough renewable energy to power almost 1.6 million homes annually.

COP28

- At COP28, the Scottish Government sought to build on the role played at both COP26 and COP27. At COP26, Scotland was the first country to commit funding to loss and damage. At COP27, Scotland played a particular role in pushing for greater action to support global south countries experiencing loss and damage as a result of climate change. In terms of trade and investment, the Glasgow event was used as a platform for engaging with investors and showcasing Scotland's net zero economic strengths.
- On Climate Justice, we continued our work building momentum on adequate funding to address Loss and Damage (L&D). Scotland was the first global north country to commit funding (£2 million) to addressing L&D at COP26. This was followed by subsequent announcements at COP27 (£5 million), New York Climate Week 2023 (£1 million), and a further £2 million at COP28. Through this, Scotland, working with our partners in the global south, has helped keep the spotlight firmly on the issue over the last two years.
- We continued, from COP26, to play a bridging role, with both ministers and officials using speaking opportunities to champion the rights of those impacted climate change, in particular women, young people, and the global south.
- Both the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary participated in panel discussions at the Under2 Coalition General Assembly, setting out Scotland's progress, how we are tackling challenges as we move towards net zero, and emphasising the importance of empowering non-party governments to achieve all they can in tackling climate change.

ANNEX J

INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Scottish International Education Strategy

Top Lines:

- The 2021-22 PfG included a commitment to develop a new international strategy to promote Scotland's education offer globally and maintain our links with the EU.
- Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland have been engaged in the development of the strategy and their feedback has been incorporated into the document.
- The IES launched 07 February 2024.
- The IES is focused on three key themes: attracting and diversifying the international student population; maximising the economic benefits of international higher education; and promoting Scotland's as a work leader in research and knowledge exchange.

General Lines

- Scotland welcomes international students and recognises the important and valuable contribution they make to the Scottish economy, our educational environment and Scottish society.
- Scottish Government's priority is to become more active internationally, fostering good global connections by promoting educational and research exchange to raise the profile of Scotland as a place to live, work and study.
- We remain committed to strengthening our institution's international links by supporting the attraction of international students and staff, highlighted by our commitment to a new International Education Strategy and promotion of Study in Scotland through our website.

Background

Our vision is to become more active internationally, forming connections and partnerships across the globe with countries who share our ambitions to alleviate poverty, achieve net zero and to raise the profile of Scotland as an attractive place to live, work, visit, study and do business.

In Scotland's first International Education Strategy our ambitions are:

- ❖ to work with our universities and colleges to attract global students, staff, and researchers to help diversify our international student population and support them to maximise their contribution to Scotland.
- ❖ as an outward looking, inclusive nation that values our international education capabilities and export potential, we will work with universities and colleges, to maximise our social, educational and economic contribution globally.
- ❖ as a world leader in international education, research and knowledge exchange, deepen our global collaborations and engagements.

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) highlights that Scotland has more top universities per head of population than any other country in the world and is in the top quartile of OECD countries for Higher Education Research & Development. The opportunity to draw in talent, co-develop and attract investment into joint collaborations and build our international reputation and profile is huge. Our universities and colleges are globally respected and our teaching, research, innovation, and knowledge exchange, must continue to make a difference; to enhance and contribute to global wellbeing, address 21st Century challenges and attract inward investment and talent to study, live and work in Scotland.

ISRAEL GAZA

06 Mar: Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron met with Israeli minister Benny Gantz and advised that the flow of aid into Gaza must increase.

05 Mar: A group of Canadian lawyers is suing Canada's global affairs ministry for exporting military goods and technology to Israel during the Gaza conflict.

04 Mar: Israeli negotiators refuse to join Cairo talks on ceasefire and hostage release, demanding first the names of surviving hostages. US sources claim that outline of a 6-week ceasefire covering Ramadan had been agreed.

03 Mar: US parachutes 38,000 meals into Gaza in a joint operation with the Jordanian air force.

02 Mar: The EC will continue financing UNWRA and pay €50 million this week, as part of a wider €82 Million commitment.

01 Mar: Hamas-run Gaza health Ministry states that 30,228 have been killed and 71,377 injured in Gaza.

29 Feb: Over 100 died in a food distribution and a further 700 injured. Claims that those who died were shot by Israeli troops. UN notes a number of gunshot injuries in a local hospital.

26 Feb: UNRWA chief Lazzarini said that February saw a 50% reduction in humanitarian aid entering Gaza, compared to January.

23 Feb: FM wrote to PM calling for an immediate ban on licensed arms exports from UK to Israel in light of expected Rafah offensive

22 Feb: Catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity with Save the Children reporting families forced to "forage for scraps or food left by rats and eating leaves out of desperation to survive," amid rapidly declining aid supplies.

18 Feb: Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has called for a "ceasefire that lasts" during a speech at the Scottish Labour conference in Glasgow. Conference passed a motion calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

15 Feb: Australia, Canada and New Zealand PMs call for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in a rare joint statement

2 Feb: 18 states including the UK and US suspend funding to UNRWA following allegations that 12 staff were involved in 7 Oct attacks. Several European nations have committed to continue funding.

26 Jan: ICJ issues order for Israel to cease action which could be considered genocidal and ensure humanitarian access to the Gaza strip. Judgement stops short of calling for immediate ceasefire.

26 Jan: Israel alleges that UNRWA staff were involved in Oct 7th attacks. UNRWA have launched immediate investigation.

ISRAEL/GAZA

We unequivocally condemn the abhorrent terrorist actions of Hamas.

- The hostages taken by Hamas must be released immediately and unconditionally. Hamas missile attacks must cease immediately.
- Israel – like any other country – has a right to protect itself and its citizens from terror. In exercising its right to defend itself, Israel must abide by international humanitarian law.

ISRAEL GAZA

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I have written to the Prime Minister on 23 February to call for an immediate ban of licenced arms exports from the United Kingdom to Israel in light of Israel's statements that its armed forces will attack Rafah.

- The Scottish Government has had human rights due diligence rules in place for some years, and even before the current conflict in Gaza we were addressing the question of businesses shown on a UN list as possibly being active in the occupied Palestine territories.
- The Scottish Government can only operate within the bounds of the relevant UK legislation and our devolved powers which limit the activity the Scottish Government can take.

We call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire by all sides.

- To prevent further deaths, the bombs and rockets must stop, humanitarian and medical facilities must be protected, and civilians must be given unrestricted access to the basic necessities of life, wherever they are.
- The ICJ ruling is clear, the killing and destruction in Gaza must stop. Urgent humanitarian assistance must be provided to prevent more suffering and hostages must be released immediately.

In an address to the UN Security Council on 22 February, Medicine Sans Frontiers Secretary General Christopher Lockyear said:

- **[QUOTE]:** *There is no health system to speak of left in Gaza. Israel's military has dismantled hospital after hospital. What remains is so little in the face of such carnage. It is preposterous.*

Jan Egeland, from the Norwegian Refugee Council said:

- **[QUOTE]** *'The children of Gaza are visibly malnourished, reduced to searching the streets for food and assistance. It is unimaginable that an entire population is left to starve while vast amounts of supplies sit waiting just a few miles away across the border.'*

As António Guterres, Secretary General of the UN said:

- **[QUOTE]:** *"An all-out Israeli offensive on [Rafah] would not only be terrifying for more than a million Palestinian civilians sheltering there; it would put the final nail in the coffin of our aid programs,"*

ISRAEL GAZA

As Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator stated:

- [QUOTE]: *'The rules of war are clear: civilians must be protected and have the essentials to survive, wherever they are and whether they choose to move or stay'.*

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk said:

- [QUOTE]: *"Justice is a pre-requisite for ending cycles of violence ... the entrenched impunity reported by our Office for decades cannot be permitted to continue. There must be accountability on all sides".*
- [QUOTE]: *"Indiscriminate attack[s] resulting in death or injury to civilians, or attack[s] ...that will cause excessive incidental civilian loss, injury or damage, are war crimes."*

Michael Fakhri, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, warned that

- *"Intentionally depriving people of food is clearly a war crime. Israel has announced its intention to destroy the Palestinian people, in whole or in part, simply for being Palestinian. In my view as a UN human rights expert, this is now a situation of genocide. This means the state of Israel in its entirety is culpable and should be held accountable – not just individuals or this government or that person."*

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SG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

We are deeply concerned by allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the abhorrent Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7.

- We recognise the swift action taken by UNRWA to dismiss these employees and to launch a full independent investigation. Also the assurance by UNRWA that any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution

The UK government and the international community must work with the UN to find mechanisms to sustain and increase the levels of life-saving aid getting into Gaza.

- UNRWA is the largest humanitarian actor in Gaza and the primary source of life-saving aid for 2.3 million people. In pausing aid lives are being put at risk.
- The UK and international community must work with the UN to resolve this situation and ensure aid can be provided to the population.

Scottish Government has not paused or withdrawn aid to UNRWA as was mistakenly reported by some media outlets.

- Scottish Government provided £750,000 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) flash appeal in response to the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip. This funding was transferred in full to UNRWA in November 2023.

ISRAEL GAZA

- The UN special rapporteur has said that the 2.2 million people in Gaza are now facing “inevitable famine”, partly due to the decision of donors to cut funding to UNRWA. The international community cannot stand by while these men, women and children starve knowing that they could have done more.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The UK Government has refused our calls to work together to explore a possible Resettlement Route to help anyone who is forced to flee the region.

- Many Palestinians will wish to remain in their homeland, and it is right that the current focus is on calls for a ceasefire and an increase in humanitarian aid.
- Should a displacement of refugees occur, we have called on the UK government to use its existing UK Resettlement Scheme, and ensure it is aligned with UNHCR to provide those who want to leave with the support they require.
- In a response to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, the Home Office Minister for Legal Migration confirmed on 3 January that the UK Government has no current plans to open a resettlement route for people who wish to leave Gaza.
- In the past, people in Scotland and across the UK have opened their hearts and communities to welcome those from Syria, Ukraine and many other countries. We are ready to do so again if called upon to do so.

REDACTED

OHCHR List of Companies Listed Activity in OPTs

Following the publication in 2020 of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) database of companies active in listed activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), we wrote to public bodies in Scotland and asked that they consider the database as part of their human rights due diligence processes.

- We also contacted companies who are listed on the database and have a relationship with a Scottish public body, to ask what they are doing to cease the activities that led to their inclusion.
- As the First Minister told Parliament in November 2023, we are considering next steps following the publication of the revised database in June 2023.

UK-Israel FTA

Even before the current conflict the Scottish Government raised concerns with the UK Government in relation to the proposed UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the human rights record and ongoing conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

REDACTED