

Opening

- **Good afternoon and thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to speak. I congratulate the ILO for successfully organising this hybrid International Labour Conference.**

Ukraine

- **Chair, I must start by stating the UK Government's position on the Russian Federation's despicable invasion of Ukraine. It is an unprovoked and unjustified attack against a sovereign state, and a gross violation of international law. The UK stands with our international partners in condemning the Russian Federation's reprehensible actions and we urge the Russian Federation to withdraw immediately.**

- **Aside from the terrible and needless loss of life, almost 6.5 million Ukrainians are now refugees and almost 8 million are internally displaced. In the world of work, almost 5 million jobs in Ukraine have been lost, 50 per cent of businesses are closed and an estimated 100 billion dollars' worth of infrastructure – schools, hospitals and other buildings - has been damaged or destroyed.**
- **The UK Government is doing all we can to support those arriving from Ukraine by ensuring they have the right to work, have access to social protection, and by helping to support participation in the UK's labour market.**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

UK Covid response

- The pandemic has been the biggest threat to the global economy in decades. The UK Government took unprecedented action to support individuals, jobs and businesses and to provide public services. Our systems proved adaptable in responding to these changes and the UK labour market is moving towards full recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. The unemployment rate is now the lowest it has been in 48 years. As the UK is emerging from the challenges of the pandemic, we are focused on creating jobs, and helping more people back into work and to develop the skills they need to thrive.

Green Jobs

- And as we recover from the impact of coronavirus, we must use this opportunity to transform our economy to deliver green, sustainable jobs. Moving away from commodities such as gas and oil, and investing in clean technologies, such as wind, carbon capture, hydrogen and many others. This new 'Green Industrial Revolution' will create thousands of new, quality jobs, while simultaneously protecting future generations from climate change.

Least Developed Countries

- Turning to the main elements of the Director General's report to the ILC, Least Developed Countries, the UK Government agrees that tackling poverty cannot be done without the creation of more and better jobs.
- UK Aid has had a real impact in this regard. Between 2015/16 and 2019/20, we supported five million people to raise their incomes or to maintain/gain better jobs or livelihoods.
- The UK is reforming its trade preferences scheme for developing countries, which currently provides preferential market access to 67 developing countries and of those, 47 are least developed countries.
- In the new Developing Countries Trading Scheme, the UK is considering simplifying rules of origin for least developed countries, which are a technical requirement and a barrier of trade. This would respond directly to the Nairobi Declaration and reflect the UK's commitment to supporting least developed countries through economic development and regional integration, which are key pillars in the Doha Programme of Action.

Conclusion

- In these economically challenging times, with the impact of Covid still being keenly felt and the additional economic pain being inflicted needlessly and recklessly by Russia, the discussions, decisions and actions being taken at the International Labour Conference are all the more relevant and the UK looks forward to continuing to participate actively.
- Finally, I wish you, Director General, Guy Ryder, all the best in your next endeavours. The UK has greatly appreciated your excellent leadership of the ILO and our fruitful collaboration with you, including in the G7 and G20.

Thank you, Chair