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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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The first time a Member speaks to a new piece of parliamentary business, the following abbreviations are used to show their party affiliation:

Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Thursday 22 November 2018

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Durham.

Oaths and Affirmations

11.05 am

Baroness Amos took the oath, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Mental Health Budget: Domestic and Sexual Violence

Question

11.06 am

Asked by Baroness Thornton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much of the National Health Service mental health budget goes towards intervention to address domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord O'Shaughnessy) (Con): My Lords, it is not possible to provide a precise figure because expenditure is not identified by cause of health condition. Abuse victims accessing services are not identified separately: they receive treatment based on clinical need rather than on the cause of their condition. However, the NHS is expanding psychiatric liaison services in A&E, in which staff are trained to assess the risk to patients of violence. Sexual assault referral centres then provide health support to victims and have £31 million of funding in 2018-19.

Baroness Thornton (Lab): I thank the Minister for that Answer. Given that the Government have recognised the scale of the mental health challenge, particularly for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and have put some money aside for this area to be spent at local level, how do they plan to ensure that the funding is available and gets to the refuges and organisations on the front line that are desperate to tackle this desperate need?

Lord O'Shaughnessy: I am grateful to the noble Baroness for her recognition of the work that is going on in funding. It is important to point out that NHS England published a sexual assault and abuse strategy this April. That involved funding for sexual assault referral centres and a range of other innovations, including an Identification and Referral to Improve Safety project, which has now been rolled out in 800 GP practices. So work is going on not only to roll out these kinds of services but to make sure that many more victims are coming through to them. I know that the Women's Mental Health Taskforce is due to report later this month and I will speak to my colleague,

Jackie Doyle-Price, who is the lead Minister, to find out if we can give more specificity on how we track the number of users of these kinds of services.

Baroness Hollins (CB): My Lords, we know that sexual violence in childhood, whether as a victim or secondary victim, correlates closely with mental illness in adulthood. Will the Government make childhood trauma a local commissioning priority and invest in trauma-informed models of care?

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The noble Baroness is right and I can reassure her that some of the additional £100 million of funding that the Government are providing for this issue is going on children who have been victims of abuse. Indeed, the draft domestic abuse Bill that we look to bring forward this Session will propose tougher sentences when a child has been involved in domestic abuse.

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Con): My Lords, is it possible for the Department of Health to assist the police in some way? So many victims of sexual violence, several of whom have approached me personally, say that there is quite a long delay between their reporting the violence and the police bringing the perpetrator to court—if the case gets that far. Is there any way to shorten that timescale, without any implication of justice not being allowed or cut too short for the accused? Is there anything that the Department of Health could do to bridge that gap a little? It would be so helpful.

Lord O'Shaughnessy: My noble friend is right: that is a really important part of the approach. It is encouraging that 88% of women would now tell someone about abuse they have suffered and that there has been a 20% increase in domestic abuse convictions since 2010. As we discussed in this House last week, we are seeking through the GP contract negotiations to abolish the fees that some GPs charge for the letters needed for referral to legal aid and other things. That is something we continue to push.

Baroness Jolly (LD): My Lords, the statistics tell us that for every two women who are affected by domestic violence or abuse, there is one man. Can the noble Lord reassure the House that spending allocations reflect this?

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The noble Baroness is quite right. The strategy, of course, has a focus on women and men. Women are the greater victims of abuse; indeed, the more severe the abuse, the more likely it is that the victim is a woman. However, I can tell her that it is a broad strategy which encompasses both. We still have a problem, in that men are much less likely to come forward if they have been abused than women.

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, it is much to be welcomed that the Government are allocating this money. I am also glad that the needs of young people have been highlighted, but the Minister will be aware that statistics show that roughly 340,000 elderly

[THE LORD BISHOP OF ST ALBANS]
people are suffering abuse in the community each year. If we are not tracking how the money is spent, how can we be sure that the mental health needs of the elderly are being properly addressed at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives?

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The right reverend Prelate makes an excellent point. The intention is that there will be greater reach into care home settings as well as domestic settings, so that people who experience abuse in those settings are able to come forward and we can provide such protections for people in homes.

Humanist Marriage Ceremonies

Question

11.11 am

Asked by **Lord Harrison**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to enable humanist marriage ceremonies.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): My Lords, marriage is a complex area of law that needs systematic review to enable any reform proposals to be delivered fairly and consistently. We are working with the Law Commission to draw up terms of reference for the wider review of the law on marriage ceremonies, announced in the recent Budget. The Government welcome the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group, the APPHG, and are carefully considering its findings.

Lord Harrison (Lab): My Lords, given that some 1,900 of the respondents to the Government's consultation were in favour of humanist marriage, and given that in Scotland more marriages are now humanist in kind than religious, might the Government go one step further than they did earlier this month when they allowed humanists to represent those in the Armed Forces to attend at the Cenotaph as part of the ceremony recognising the wars of the past? Might they go forward with some verve and fervour to ensure that humanist marriages are permissible throughout the United Kingdom?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, I pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Harrison, for his tireless work in this area. As I mentioned, we are carefully considering the report from the APPHG and we have commissioned this wider review. In 2015, there were over 245,000 marriages in England and Wales, and in Scotland, as the noble Lord mentioned, we have seen that humanist marriages are attractive to many couples. It is therefore absolutely critical that we do not embark on piecemeal reform, which may lead to inconsistencies between groups—for example, between non-religious belief organisations and religious belief organisations. I look forward to seeing the Law Commission review in due course.

Lord Pannick (CB): My Lords, the Minister says that she is concerned about inconsistencies. Is she aware that, as the result of a judgment of the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland in June this year in Laura

Smyth's case, humanist marriages are now lawful in Northern Ireland? Can there really be a justification for treating people in England and Wales differently from people in Scotland and in Northern Ireland?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, it is indeed called devolution. We are not looking to treat people differently. We are looking to reform the marriage ceremonies for all people to make sure that there is equality and that there is parity between different groups.

Lord Garel-Jones (Con): My Lords, my noble friend is well aware of the disparity, which has just been pointed out, between Northern Ireland and Scotland, where humanist marriages are permitted, and England and Wales, where they are not. Will she tell the House what steps the Government are taking to rectify this injustice? Consultation with the Law Commission simply will not do, because as long ago as 2013, when the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act was passed, the Secretary of State was given power to make humanist marriages legal by statutory instrument. Will she please ask him to exercise that power forthwith?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My noble friend will know that that is a permissive power, not an obligation. Following the 2013 Act, the Law Commission undertook a scoping study in 2015. It concluded that exercising the 2013 power is not a viable option because of the difference that would then appear between the different sorts of groups. The Law Commission is a statutory independent body. It makes sure that the law is fair, modern, simple and cost-effective. I do not believe that we should ignore its recommendations. We should listen to what it has to say and look at all marriage ceremonies across all sorts of organisations and reach a sensible and appropriate conclusion.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, everyone likes a good wedding and it should be the happiest day of your life, but, as has already been discussed, we know that humanist marriages are not legally recognised and couples have to have a separate civil ceremony. Aside from the human rights implications and the fact that humanist marriages are recognised in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Crown dependencies, there is evidence that in Scotland, where 19% of weddings are humanist, the sharp decline in marriages has been reversed and the increase in divorce rates has fallen. So whether it is permissive or not permissive, does the Minister agree that it is good thing and a good time for England and Wales to catch up?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I agree with the noble Baroness that everybody loves a good wedding, and I have had two.

Baroness Burt of Solihull: So have I.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: As has she. I take on board exactly what the noble Baroness is saying. All I am saying is that all these points are being taken into consideration. We understand the comments that have been made in your Lordships' House today. Obviously we are making progress on this, but we must wait for the Law Commission review.

Baroness Whitaker (Lab): My Lords, the Government have spent a very long time considering this mild, progressive and very popular proposal. Where does the opposition come from?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, it is not a question of opposition; it is a question of making the law right and fair for everybody. It is not right to prioritise one sort of organisation over another sort of organisation. We need to make sure that all marriage ceremonies are fair for everybody.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): My Lords, I remind the Minister that the Law Commission in 2015 also said that to deny humanists marriage is fundamentally unfair. She did not read that bit.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, nobody is denying humanists marriage. Humanists and, indeed, any couple can make private, non-legal arrangements following a civil ceremony. What we want to do, and I am sure the noble and learned Baroness would agree, is to make sure that the law is right and that we take into account all possible considerations from humanists and many other groups which also want to see a change in the law.

Lord Tebbit (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that talk about getting England and Wales, the largest country of the United Kingdom, into line with the others is a lot of nonsense? Devolution is there to provide that the various parts of the kingdom can go their different ways. So why should we have to come into line with the others?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: And sometimes I agree with my noble friend.

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, I welcome my noble friend back to his place in the House—and to his activities, so watch out, particularly on Europe and humanism. Five years ago, I stood at this Dispatch Box and called for legal humanist marriages. There was support for that across the House, as there has been today. It is not acceptable that, five years and two reviews later, nothing has happened. I do not accept that marriage is complex, actually. If other countries can have humanist weddings, then I do not see why England and Wales cannot. My question for the Minister is: how can a Government who are in favour of choice and fair competition allow the vested interests of those who conduct marriages at the moment to sway what would be fair competition for humanists and allow all those people who want to have this type of marriage to have it?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, I do not feel that there are vested interests at stake here at all. Returning to the issue of marriage law, it is complex; indeed, in England and Wales it is more complex than in Scotland because we base our marriage law on the building rather than the celebrant, which makes it far more complicated. That is why we are doing this review. I hope all noble Lords will bear with us while we do the review, and I look forward to making progress in this area.

Inquiries Act 2005: Child Sexual Abuse *Question*

11.21 am

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reform the Inquiries Act 2005 so as to make special provision for the conduct of inquiries into child sexual abuse.

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab): My Lords, in begging leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper, I add that I have given the Minister notice of the supplementary that I intend to ask.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): And that she intends to answer. The Inquiries Act 2005 and the Inquiry Rules 2006 that underpin it provide a robust and effective framework for the conduct of public inquiries. We do not see a need to make special provision for conducting inquiries into specific matters such as child sex abuse.

Lord Campbell-Savours: My Lords, IICSA has selected the late Greville Janner as the only named individual strand in its inquiry into child sexual abuse, despite the fact that wholly exculpatory evidence vital to Janner's defence was never considered by IICSA when it took its decision. In that light, will the Minister support the proposition that the only way that justice can be done in this case is if all social services reports and criminal records relating to complainants, particularly reports on the main complainant who was named in the Beck trial in 1991, are considered by the inquiry before it proceeds any further?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, the House and the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, well know that it is not the role of government to interfere in statutory inquiries. Their independence would be undermined if the Government were seen to interfere in their conduct. The noble Lord may wish to note that the inquiry published on its website in April and May 2017 notices of determination regarding this investigative strand. These summarise submissions received by the chair and decisions subsequently taken, and they confirm the inquiry's position on this strand as being kept under review. The noble Lord is of course free to raise his concerns directly with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. It would be a matter for the inquiry chair and panel to decide how to proceed.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, what will the Government do to protect whistleblowers who expose child abuse and abuse in other areas but are subsequently hounded out of their jobs, lose their careers and often go into a lot of legal debt protecting themselves? Does she agree that instead of such treatment, these people deserve a medal for service to their country?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, I entirely agree that it is very important to protect whistleblowers. They can be sources of very valid and important information where crimes have been committed. The context of this Question does not allow me to provide any further information, so I hope the noble Baroness will agree that I can write to her.

Lord Empey (UUP): My Lords, it is one thing having inquiries and another implementing the recommendations. Is the Minister aware that the Hart inquiry into historical sexual abuse in Northern Ireland reported some years ago, recommended compensation and has unanimous political support in Northern Ireland, but that nothing has been done to help those victims, who are being re-victimised because of the political instability? I ask her to ensure that her right honourable friend in the other place does something to implement the Hart proposals so that the victims can be compensated before they die off.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I recognise the noble Lord's comments and will certainly take the matter back to my colleagues in the department and follow it up with a letter.

Lord Selkirk of Douglas (Con): Does the Minister accept that in sensitive cases of this nature, the interests of the child should always be paramount?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I do not think there is a Member of your Lordships' House who would disagree with that. It is fair to say that the IICSA inquiry under way at the moment has set up the Truth Project, under which it has so far been possible for 1,500 victims and sufferers to come forward to give their accounts of what has happened to them, and we expect that many more will join them.

Lord Cormack (Con): What is paramount, surely, is that justice should be honoured in all cases. Although I accept what my noble friend said about not interfering in inquiries already established, what is really behind the Question of the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, is the real concern throughout the country, and particularly in this House, about reputations that have been trashed without adequate evidence. I put it to my noble friend that it is therefore incumbent on the Government to have a separate inquiry into how those who have been accused of historical abuse and are now dead can have their reputations defended.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, we have discussed this topic many times over recent months, and I entirely understand where my noble friend is coming from. Of course, we recognise and have every sympathy in circumstances where people have been unable to clear their name, but at the moment, there are no grounds to justify a further review.

Local Authorities: Children with Special Needs Question

11.27 am

Asked by **Lord Lexden**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they provide to local authorities about the provision of support to children with special needs; and what assessment they have made of the cost to local authorities of appeals against their decisions.

Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con): My Lords, detailed guidance to local authorities about their responsibility to provide support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is set out in the *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*, and in a range of other guidance materials produced by the Department for Education. Local authorities' costs in relation to appeals will vary considerably depending on local circumstances and the nature of those appeals.

Lord Lexden (Con): I declare my interest as president of the Independent Schools Association, which works on behalf of more than 500 smaller, less well-known independent schools. Has my noble friend seen press reports that in the past four years, local councils have spent more than £100 million fighting parents of children with special needs who sought support, and that in nine cases out of 10 the local councils lost? This clearly warrants urgent investigation. Does not the high cost that some parents can face going to tribunals make it extremely difficult for many families to challenge unfair decisions?

Does my noble friend agree that, while some local councils recognise that in appropriate circumstances, a local independent school can be the best option, many other local authorities tell parents—quite wrongly—that an independent school cannot be named in an education, health and care plan? So will the Government review their 2015 code to help more parents who would like their children with special needs to go to an independent school, thereby strengthening the policy of partnership that the Government have with the independent sector, where some 80,000 children with special needs are now being educated?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I have seen the press report; it is right that local authorities respond appropriately to any special needs tribunal appeal—and in doing so they will inevitably incur some costs. The vast majority of cases for education, health and care needs assessments are concluded without the need to resort to tribunal hearings. As the House will appreciate, the system is designed to be person-centred and to ensure that families are properly engaged at all stages. We are investing £20 million more until March 2020 to improve the quality of information, advice and support available to families. On my noble friend's point about independent schools, he is absolutely correct that parents have the right to ask that an independent school, approved under Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014, be named on their EHC plan, as such schools are treated legally in the same way as maintained schools.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, everyone in this House will be familiar with the pressures on local government. Nevertheless, there is no excuse for the way in which, too often, local authorities and their local health providers fail to implement the education, health and care plans, and for the fact that the Children and Families Act is not working in the way that was originally intended. Will the Minister give a guarantee that more work will be done across departments to ensure that people get the rights they need, and, above all, that children get the kind of education and health support that makes it possible for them to live independent lives in the future?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The noble Lord makes a very valid point. Much work is going on in that area to ensure that local authorities and CCGs work ever more closely to ensure that the EHCs come through and are correct for each particular child—as each particular child counts. We have invested £391 million for local areas to support implementation since the Act came into force in 2014. This includes £252 million direct to local authorities to cover the so-called “new burden” of implementing the reforms, and a further £60 million from 2014 to 2018 for independent supporters.

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, when you have a system in which going to law to get your legal rights enforced has become the norm—which is what has happened here—is that not an absolutely clear sign that something is going wrong? If we are to continue with this system, we must put more money into it or at least ensure that the appeals system is not dependent on lawyers. If we do not do that, we are clearly failing—and, as the noble Lord, Lord Lexden, pointed out, we are making sure that those who do not have financial resource are effectively excluded from the state education system provision for these children.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I know that the noble Lord has strong feelings about this area, and so do we. But I say again that the vast majority of cases are concluded without the need to resort to tribunal hearings. Where families make an appeal, the local authority will need to judge how to respond, and, in so doing, must put the interests of the child or the young person first. Ultimately, it is for local authorities to make these judgments. This is a long-term rollout, so it is too early to say how well it is working, but we believe that we are definitely going in the right direction.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, earlier this year we had the shameful sight of parents crowdfunding legal action against cuts to SEN provision caused by councils whose own budgets have been cut yet again. There are certainly local authorities which could target scarce resources more effectively, but it would be wrong to let the Government dodge responsibility for the fact that there is inadequate SEN provision across the board, because they have sole ownership of that.

The Minister said in his Answer to the noble Lord, Lord Lexden, that councils have responsibilities under a code of practice. That is all very well, but local authorities have had their budgets cut by almost 50% since 2010, which makes it extremely difficult for them to meet their needs. The Minister made no reference to that. This is driven by the austerity policy, which was eviscerated brilliantly by the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, in the Budget debate in your Lordships’ House last week, when he called it, “economically illiterate and morally fraudulent”.—[*Official Report*, 13/11/18; col. 1828.]

What could be more morally fraudulent than parents being driven to the courts to seek the adequate SEN provision that their children so desperately need?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: It is not so much that they are being driven to the courts. The fact is that it is beginning to work well, to the extent that the local

authorities, in conjunction with CCGs and schools, are identifying what is required. Altogether, 5,460 appeals were registered in 2017-18. So the number of appeals is going up and demand is going up. It is varied around the country: Kent, for example, had 204 appeals. The point is that the load on local authorities is increasing. Yes, we recognise that there are strains, but the most important thing is to put the child and the young person first.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): Will the Minister look at the issue raised by the noble Lord, Lord Lexden, about independent schools, and make it clear to local authorities that children have equal rights with those at maintained and other schools?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I will certainly take that back and will also give a little more information about it. The local authority must, after consultation with the independent school, name the requested school unless specific criteria apply indicating that provision would be unsuitable for the young person’s needs. The school or institution named in the EHC plan must then admit the child or young person—so it is pretty clear.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): Perhaps I might take the Minister back to the Answer that he gave to my noble friend on the Front Bench. He mentioned the variability in the occurrence of appeals from local authority to local authority. That suggests the criteria against which special educational needs are being measured also vary from local authority to local authority—which I believe they do. Does he think that that is appropriate?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: It is certainly true. As I said earlier, the system is still relatively new and we will need time to fully bed it in. There are early signs that the system overall is working. We have given £391 million to local areas to support implementation of this. We are yet to ascertain why there is variability. For example, I know that in Bradford and Shropshire there have been very few appeals, but in Kent and Surrey there have been a lot. So there is quite a lot of work to be done to analyse the statistics. It may be something to do with the idiosyncrasies of the particular areas.

Lord Addington: My Lords, I apologise to the House. I forgot to remind noble Lords of my declared interests.

Matthew Hedges

Private Notice Question

11.37 am

Asked by *Viscount Waverley*

To ask Her Majesty’s Government, in the light of Mr Matthew Hedges, a British citizen, being imprisoned for life in the United Arab Emirates, how many times UK consular officials have met with Mr Hedges in the last six months, what consular assistance was provided during his detainment and trial in Abu Dhabi and what representations they are now making to the Government of that country.

Viscount Waverley (CB): My Lords, I beg leave to ask a Question of which I have given private notice.

Baroness Goldie (Con): My Lords, we are shocked and deeply disappointed by the verdict on 21 November and are raising it with the Emirati authorities at the highest levels. The Foreign Secretary is urgently seeking a call with Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed. The Foreign Secretary met the UAE ambassador to the UK this morning and is meeting Mr Hedges's wife Daniela today. Consular staff have met Matthew on six occasions, three before his recent bail and three while he was on bail.

Viscount Waverley: My Lords, there will be national and international indignation about the process and subsequent ruling. Is it the case that a primary purpose of our Government is the protection of citizens of the United Kingdom? Is the Minister satisfied that the Government have been sufficiently robust? Will they bring to the fore all endeavours, in the best interests of the Government in Abu Dhabi, but most particularly in those of Mr Hedges and for the standing of our Government?

Baroness Goldie: The United Kingdom Government take very seriously the position of any UK citizens abroad. We intervene at the request of any family with a member confronting difficulties in another country where that is possible. In addition to the support that I mentioned, Foreign Office staff have been in close contact with Matthew, his family and his lawyer. We will continue to do all we can to support them as they consider the next steps. As well as our ambassador constantly raising the issue, the Foreign Secretary, when he was recently in the Gulf, raised the case with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed on 12 November and with Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed on three separate occasions. Minister Burt has also raised it with Deputy Foreign Minister Gargash on a number of occasions.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Viscount for asking this PNQ at this vital time. I think everyone across the House will share his concerns. Matthew's wife this morning expressed concern about his health. Can the Minister confirm whether any representations have been made about his health? Will the Government ensure that he has adequate access to medical support? The other thing is that 120,000 UK citizens reside in the UAE and we have 11 universities represented there. Will there be any advice about the current situation or any support for those institutions?

Baroness Goldie: While I have no specific information about Matthew's health, I assure your Lordships that, if any requests are made by Matthew or his family, the Diplomatic Service will do its level best to relay them and to seek whatever support may be required in the circumstances. On the broader issues, the Foreign Office always monitors situations in other countries and will advise anyone who seeks advice of the assessment of travelling to them. In this case, the UK Government are in contact with the United Arab Emirates at the very highest level and are conveying in the starkest, bluntest possible terms the reaction within the United Kingdom to Matthew's situation.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick (Con): My Lords, is it not often the case, rather curiously, that British citizens convicted in Gulf courts turn out to have signed confessions in Arabic that they did not understand? Given that the UAE claims to have a transparent judicial system and that its Government are friendly toward the UK, is it not possible for the Government to point out to the UAE authorities, in a friendly manner, that British citizens facing trial in their courts require proper translation facilities and proper translation of documents?

Baroness Goldie: My noble friend makes an important point. There are standards of fairness and observation of human rights in this country that, within our structure of courts and court appearances, we take for granted. We assume that other countries would be prepared to do the same. I am sure my noble friend's comments will be noted. I have no specific information about the court environment that Matthew has had to face, other than that I believe it was left to an interpreter to explain to him what sentence the judge was imposing.

Baroness Northover (LD): We hear that the trial of this PhD student lasted five minutes and that no lawyer was present. The Government have mentioned severe "diplomatic consequences". Could the Minister elaborate on what they mean by this? Clearly, the safety and well-being of Matthew Hedges is the responsibility of the UK—and the UAE, which needs to be held accountable. What assurances are being sought that the case will be immediately revisited, that he will not be held in solitary confinement again or mistreated, and that he will be given full and appropriate medical assistance and free and fair family visitation rights?

Baroness Goldie: The levels of representation and exchange currently taking place embrace, if not all, certainly the great majority of the points that the noble Baroness raised. If Matthew, his wife Daniela or the family have particular concerns, the UK Government will do everything within their power not just to relay them but to address them with consular support in the UAE. The Foreign Secretary has repeatedly made clear that the handling of this case by the UAE authorities will have repercussions on the relationship between our countries. That relationship has to be built on trust, and the Foreign Secretary very much regrets that this position has been reached. On a personal level, he is doing everything he can to robustly and bluntly explain to the UAE the exact sentiment within the United Kingdom about this case.

Baroness Amos (Lab): My Lords, I declare an interest as director of SOAS University of London. The Minister will be aware that this case has caused considerable anxiety in universities up and down the country. What specific advice should we give to staff and students conducting research or other academic activity in the UAE?

Baroness Goldie: I repeat what I said earlier: we keep all our travel advice, including for the UAE, under constant review to ensure that it reflects our assessment of the risk to British nationals. We do not

normally update our travel advice in relation to the specific circumstances of every consular assistance case we are involved in, but we will do so if we assess that British nationals travelling or living in the area might be affected. Our advice to anyone proposing to travel to any country where there might be issues is to seek advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and to follow it.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, as the Foreign Secretary seeks to stiffen his sinews, can he reflect on the career of Palmerston and the Don Pacifico incident in particular, and do everything he possibly can to make the country responsible for the unjust imprisonment of this British subject realise that what it is doing will destroy the strength of the relations that we currently enjoy?

Baroness Goldie: As I indicated earlier, the Foreign Secretary certainly takes the view that this inevitably has an effect on the relationship between our two countries. That is a matter of great regret but it is also a matter of fact. That relationship has to be built on trust, and I have no doubt that my noble friend's remarks will be heard.

Lord Soley (Lab): My Lords, are the Government aware that the late Sheikh Zayed, who founded the UAE, did so on the basis that he wanted his country to move towards a constitutional monarchy underpinned by the rule of law? In that capacity, some years ago I gave a lecture there on the importance of a stable society, and the rule of law in underpinning a stable society. Can the Minister remind the UAE that incidents such as this undermine the memory of the original aims of the late Sheikh Zayed?

Baroness Goldie: I thank the noble Lord for making a very pertinent point, which, again, I am sure will not be lost on those who listen to it.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, does the Minister recall that Ministers in her own Government laid great stress on the building of closer relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE being crucial to the concept of a global Britain, in which we will pay less attention to Europe and much more attention to other close partners? If we now find ourselves in a much more difficult relationship with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, what does she think the implications are for the concept of a global Britain foreign policy?

Baroness Goldie: The concept of a global Britain is not just a positive one but an entirely achievable one, and in fact I would argue that in many respects Britain enjoys a global status as we speak. I think that we all feel for the personal circumstances of this family, who find themselves in a situation that they probably never dreamed could arise. We all want to ensure that that family are aware that we are thinking of them and that the United Kingdom Government, through the determined and very energetic endeavours of the Foreign Secretary, are doing everything we can to address the issue and, we hope, to bring some comfort to Matthew and his wife.

Financial Services (Implementation of Legislation) Bill [HL]

First Reading

11.48 am

A Bill was introduced to authorise the making of provision by reference to certain EU financial services legislation adopted on or before, or no later than two years after, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Bates, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Universal Sustainable Development Goals

Motion to Take Note

11.49 am

Moved by Baroness Suttie

That this House takes note of the progress made across government departments in integrating the Universal Sustainable Development Goals into domestic policy in preparation for the United Kingdom's Voluntary National Review presentation at the United Nations in September 2019.

Baroness Suttie (LD): My Lords, I am very grateful to noble Lords for agreeing to take part in this debate today. It provides a timely and important opportunity for the Government to report on progress made in implementing the sustainable development goals. It is also an opportunity to discuss and debate the processes for informing and involving other stakeholders in the run-up to the voluntary national review at the United Nations in July next year—just eight months' time. I refer noble Lords to my entry in the Register of Members' Interests and the capacity-building work that I have been doing in the Parliaments of Jordan, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, which fall under sustainable development goal 16—helping to develop strong and sustainable institutions.

In the current climate, it is good to be debating a subject on which there is broad cross-party consensus and which has been such a positive example of political parties working together to achieve agreed goals. Together we have achieved so much, but there is still so much to do to make these ambitious goals a reality. A great many noble Lords present in the Chamber this morning worked tirelessly over many years to achieve this commitment to sustainable development. The UK has been a recognised global leader in development, not least through its commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on development. The UK played a major role, too, in getting agreement on the sustainable development goals in New York in September 2015. Indeed, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, was co-chair, with the presidents of Liberia and Indonesia, of the high-level panel that produced an excellent initial report and which got the process off to a flying start. One of the key phrases from its report was, "Leave no one behind".

Unlike the earlier millennium development goals, the sustainable development goals are universal. In other words, these goals are for us all—for the UK as much as for Ghana, and for Germany as much as for

[BARONESS SUTTIE]

Tanzania. Successfully delivering the 17 goals here in the United Kingdom is an opportunity for us to lead by example. But the Government cannot deliver these goals alone. They can be achieved only by working in collaboration with the private sector, local government and academia, and with communities both within the UK and internationally, as set out in goal 17—strengthening partnerships to deliver the SDGs. Will the Minister agree that unless the Government do the job of integrating the SDGs into domestic policy priorities in a more coherent and structured way, there is a real risk of the UK being left behind?

The UK will present its voluntary national review at the UN in New York in July 2019. Next year's process will conclude with two days of discussion at the UN General Assembly at the end of September. This discussion will take place at the head of government level. The UK voluntary review will report on the progress achieved on the 17 goals, the 169 targets that underpin those goals and the 232 indicators that underpin the targets.

The UK report will, I imagine, consist of two parts and I would be grateful if the Minister confirmed that in his concluding remarks. One part will set out how the UK is helping to achieve these goals internationally, both through its bilateral development programmes and through its work through multilateral organisations. That is vital work and it is entirely appropriate that the Department for International Development should lead on it. Today's debate, however, is on progress achieved in the domestic implementation of these goals. Although it is always a great pleasure to have the noble Lord, Lord Bates, responding on behalf of the Government, I none the less wonder why a Minister from the Department for International Development is responding to a debate about the domestic implementation of these goals. Should progress on their domestic implementation not be the responsibility of the Cabinet Office?

A comprehensive action plan for the domestic implementation of policy within the UK would not normally come under the remit of DfID, and this rather suggests to me that the Government do not see progress towards the SDGs as a domestic priority. According to UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, the UK is performing well on just 24% of the 143 targets that are relevant to the goals' domestic delivery in the UK. For a further 57%, the performance is considered inadequate or there are gaps in the current policy approach. There is no time this morning to discuss all 143 targets—I am sure noble Lords will be pleased—so I will focus my remarks on just one or two areas of particular concern. Given that the theme of next year's review is empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality, I will address the overarching issues of poverty and inequality.

Sustainable development goal 1 is to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere. Clearly, the United Kingdom is a wealthy country in comparative terms, but the huge disparity of wealth in this country must continue to be a matter of great concern. Child poverty, increasing reliance on food banks, poor life chances and lack of social mobility should not be seen as acceptable in 21st-century Britain. It is shameful that UK has one of the worst rates of childhood food insecurity. It is equally unacceptable that so many elderly people,

often living alone, all too often struggle to make ends meet and to heat their homes properly in winter. Today's report from the housing charity Shelter shows that the number of homeless people in this country has risen by 13,000, or 4%, on last year's figures, which is equivalent to 36 more people becoming homeless each and every day in this country. The recent report from the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Professor Philip Alston, is extremely damning and should make us all take a step back and look at the realities of social division in this country. Can the Minister say in his concluding remarks what the Government understand to be implied by the SDG to end poverty in the UK, and what plans they have to monitor progress towards achieving this goal?

Directly connected to the goal of eliminating poverty is sustainable development goal 10 on reducing inequalities. According to UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development's report *Measuring up*, the UK is performing particularly badly in this area and it has been projected that, in four years' time, 1.5 million more children will live in poverty and the child poverty rate for lone-parent households—85% of whom are women—will have increased from 37% to 62%. Can the Minister say, in the context of fulfilling the targets in SDG 10, whether the Government are planning to introduce a comprehensive strategy to reduce child poverty?

It is more than three years since the 17 goals were adopted and, outside of the development community, awareness of their content and respective targets remains low in this country, which is deeply regrettable. I suspect that awareness that these goals also apply to this country is even lower. The run-up to the review next July provides us with an excellent opportunity to carry out a public awareness campaign. Does the Minister agree that the development education programme should be reinstated to promote awareness of the goals and to encourage debate about how they can be delivered in reality? Next year's review also gives us the opportunity to learn from the positive examples of other countries. According to the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the UK currently ranks 14th in the SDG index, so there are lessons to be learned from other countries as we approach the voluntary review next July.

In concluding, I would be grateful if the Minister gave reassurance today that the Government are still committed to implementing the SDGs domestically, here in the UK. Can he say how the UK is integrating the SDGs and the 2030 agenda across government—including with the devolved institutions, local government, civil society and the private sector—as part of the consultation process in advance of the voluntary national review report?

The adoption of the sustainable development goals in September 2015 marked a major step towards a global approach to making the world a better, fairer and more sustainable place for future generations. It would be deeply regretted if the momentum achieved three years ago were not maintained. This country has been a global leader in this process, and I hope the Minister gives reassurance today that we will practise what we preach and lead the way in delivering these ambitious goals in this country too. I beg to move.

11.59 am

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, I am sure I will not be alone in expressing real appreciation to the noble Baroness for giving us the opportunity to look at this issue again. The forthright and challenging way in which she introduced the debate was a model of what accountability should be all about.

We are not a model for the world, as the noble Baroness has made very clear. Sometimes there is a fundamental confusion about structures, processes and motivation. I have not, anywhere in my life, seen a structure, a process or a goal which in and of itself changed the situation. Some structures inhibit change while others facilitate it, but it is the motivation and determination of people that get results. What the Minister has to do is to persuade us that running right through the Government at all levels and in all the relevant departments—most of them are relevant—is a culture and a spirit of determination and stamina to get things done. That is crucial and it depends on leadership.

An awful lot of economic nonsense is being talked about how our current systems and priorities are ultimately in the interests of the poor because unless you have a strong, throbbing financial and economic system, there is no chance of generating the resources needed by the poor. Superficially, and in some ways quite realistically, that is a truth which cannot be avoided. It is right that we have to produce the cake before we slice it up and perhaps that has not been taken as seriously as it should have been in our political past. But it is not like that; for anyone who has worked anywhere near the front line, of course it is not like that. People who are grotesquely disadvantaged, certainly abroad but also in our own society, and are in a way institutionalised in their disadvantage and poverty, need specific help to start playing. There is sometimes talk of having a level playing field for everyone, but some people have to be helped to be fit to play on that level playing field. You must have specific poverty-orientated and disadvantage-orientated policies designed to put people in a position of self-confidence and give them the ability to carry things forward. Of course, education is absolutely central to that.

What also matters deeply in fulfilling the objectives of the development goals is justice. We talk too easily about how we want to see justice across the world, but justice has to be built. That means setting up quite an expensive agenda of preparing people in their education and professional background for playing the key part that is necessary within the judicial system. Sometimes I think that these matters should have been spelled out more clearly when we adopted the goals. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the goals got the universal support they did—they got an enthusiastic response from, and the endorsement of, a large number of people in this country—because they were going to tackle poverty and social injustice. They were going to produce statistics about not just economic growth and development but how ordinary people's quality of life would improve.

There are specific matters on which it would be good to hear the views of the Minister. Are the Government and their relevant departments focused on the poorest—the poorest individuals in different

countries, as well as the poorer countries in the world—or are they allowing themselves to be tempted in this aid programme and related programmes into saying, “We must generate growth”? Growth will not ensure social justice. We must have in place specific systems to balance economic growth and ensure that it works in the interests of everyone.

That will take great international economic co-operation. I hope that the Minister will tell us how that co-operation is going. A number of us are very concerned that one implication of Brexit and our withdrawal from Europe will be the undermining of the co-operation with Europe that has developed commendably through European programmes. What real, not theoretical, arrangements are being made to ensure that this is not lost? What about government departments? Is there enough liaison? Is there enough overarching leadership to ensure such liaison between individual departments?

What about NGOs? They have a rich tradition in this country. How far is their front-line experience being listened to? How far are they being drawn in as key players? Perhaps most importantly, are we ensuring in our approach the imperative of the countries we are supposed to be assisting being partners in all this? What part are we really giving them in the evaluation process—in working out whether what is being done is achieving what they are looking for? I hope the Minister can illustrate that point. Of course, civil society, not just government, needs to play a part in that evaluation process in those countries. Then, there is the question of how much the devolved Administrations are being involved and how much co-operation there is between them. Are positive outcomes of that being achieved?

On the issue of children, who are central to the challenge of development goals and their purpose, the Save the Children Fund reminded us that 60% of high-risk youngsters are being stunted in their educational and intellectual development. Some 40% are more likely to die before their fifth birthday and 15% are less likely to complete primary school. Girls in this group are 80% more likely to be married off as children. We have to face the realities of such issues. It is no good being seduced into looking at overall global statistics and saying that the record of growth is so much and that the record of achievement in getting homes and education for people demonstrates that we have made progress. We should be concerned about those who are excluded. Unless the excluded become central to our considerations in the development goals, we are failing.

12.10 pm

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lady Suttie on the comprehensive and powerful way in which she introduced this debate today.

I will start by quoting a sentence from a briefing I received this week, prior to this debate:

“Failure to act on climate change now will significantly increase the difficulty of achieving many other SDGs, and will have serious consequences for the stability of global financial systems”.

This sentence could have come from any briefing from any organisation campaigning on climate or environmental matters, but it did not—it came from the Institute and

[BARONESS WALMSLEY]

Faculty of Actuaries. It cheered me a lot, because it indicated to me that climate change has developed from being something that only a few biologists and physicists were worried about to a mainstream issue that rightly concerns people in all walks of life. And of course it should, because it is affecting all of us right now, and will affect our children and grandchildren even more in future. The actuaries are quite right that action on climate change can assist us in achieving many of the other SDGs, from education to poverty, from water and sanitation to equality. They also reinforce my view that we need to bring forward our climate change objectives, from 2050 to 2030. We have not much time, and giving permission for fracking is the last thing we should do.

The fact is that, even if we achieve the target of no more than a 1.5 degree rise in mean global temperature, given the rise we have already had, we will still have to face major negative climate events, changes in habitats, loss of biodiversity, poverty and mass movements of people. If we exceed that target, we will reach the tipping point beyond which we cannot stop it and, if that happens, I fear for the future of our species, as well as the rest of life on earth. So, even if we take a selfish point of view relating to our own species' survival, it is absolutely vital that we do everything we can to slow down and halt global warming. Every degree of change in global temperature makes it more difficult for the diverse life on this planet to survive. That should matter to all of us.

The interdependence between human life and that of other species was illustrated very well in an item on Radio 4 yesterday, when they interviewed a researcher who had identified a gene in a species of fish which enables it to repair faults that arise in its own heart. Her work on this may help us understand, and indeed treat, heart disease in human beings. We rely on other species not only for our food, our clothing, our shelter, our arts and culture, cleaning up the air we breathe and reducing CO₂ but for our health. The natural environment contributes to our well-being and mental health, as well as our economy. For these and many other reasons, we must halt climate change and not do a Donald Trump and stubbornly deny that it has anything to do with wildfires in Florida or, of course, flooding in Yorkshire. Can we hear about the Government's progress on action against climate change?

The interrelationship between the various SDGs has been well illustrated to me in visits I have made to other countries. On a visit to India with UNICEF—one of those frontline NGOs referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Judd, and of which I have the honour to be an honorary fellow—I was shown women earning money maintaining the pump on the village well or manufacturing sanitation products. Through this work, they gained dignity and earned money to send their children to school, and the village got clean water and sanitation. When the children went to school, as well as education they got access to clean, safe toilets and clean water, lessons in hygiene and soap to wash their hands before lunch, and a child measurement programme that measured their development and identified malnutrition. In the homes, I saw stoves that used gas produced by biomass from animals and human waste,

which prevented the women getting respiratory problems, which they used to get from burning smoky wood to cook indoors.

In Madagascar, I saw the devastation of vast areas of highly diverse primary forest caused by burning trees to make charcoal for cooking, in a country with more sunshine than you could ever hope for and the highest percentage of unique indigenous species in the world. Species such as lemurs and special kinds of woods on the red endangered list were being illegally exported to China, against the Government's best endeavours. The problem is that you cannot blame the people for using what is there to survive. They are some of the poorest in the world and need to cook, eat, shelter and provide for their families, so they will sell what they can, use whatever is available for cooking and overharvest endangered species for food or medicine, without realising that they are killing the goose that lays the golden egg. It is for developed countries such as ours to use the expertise we have to help them make the most of the riches they have around them, their unique habitats and biodiversity. But here in the UK we face many of the same things. In our case, 15% of our species face extinction, mainly because of habitat loss and climate change. We may not know the value of what we have lost until it is gone.

Many charities and universities are taking up the challenge. In Madagascar, we saw a project run by Kew Gardens, one of the world's leading botanic gardens working in plant conservation in this country and around the world. It is protecting a valley of primary indigenous forest using local labour, trained by expert botanists from Kew, to protect their environment. They earned some money for this, which alleviated their poverty and allowed them to avoid some of the environmental depredations. Kew needs money to provide the benefit of its experts to developing countries and to our own environment. In that respect, I am concerned that the government grant to Kew has been reduced. I wonder whether the Government can give me any hope that this situation might be reversed in the light of the work Kew does to help with the UK's contribution to SDG 15 on life on land, goal 13 on climate action and goal 11 on sustainable communities.

I also saw a UNICEF project where children were rescued from the streets, having been left there by parents who could not afford to feed them. UNICEF was educating, feeding and clothing them but also trying to reunite them with their families and help them to get work. Here in the UK, as my noble friend Lady Suttie mentioned, we have thousands of children in food insecurity, whose parents rely on food banks and on breakfast clubs and holiday lunch clubs at schools. Universal school lunches in primary schools has been a great success and contributed not only to children's nutrition and physical health but to their education and mental health. Will the Government expand that programme? Poverty is caused by low wages or employment or benefit uncertainty. The Minister might like to use this opportunity to explain the current status of the review of universal credit.

These few examples illustrate how interlinked the various sustainable development goals are, both here and abroad. Can the Government say what attention

they are paying to the links between action on the goals and the individual goals? Sometimes spending on one can bring dividends in several other areas. After I had written the above, I saw the WWF briefing and its recommendations to the Government for the voluntary national review. I was interested to see recommendation 3:

“The VNR should look at interlinkages between the goals, identify accelerators and develop plans to take them forward”.

All I can say is that I agree.

This brings me to where I think the UK has failed most seriously in the way the SDGs have been implemented at home. We are not alone on this earth; we are not the only country and we are not the only species, and although we should help other countries, we need to do it all at home as well. Goal 3 is good health and well-being. Goal 10 is reduced inequalities. In this country, we have a shocking level of poverty, as clearly illustrated recently by the UN’s rapporteur on poverty, and a high level of health inequality. We have a poor rate of perinatal mortality and child obesity and, as announced this morning, 10 times as many children suffering from type 2 diabetes than was originally thought. Finally, we now even have falling life expectancy. These two failures are closely linked. They are also linked to goal 1, eliminating poverty; goal 2, zero hunger; goal 4, quality education; goal 7, affordable clean energy; goal 8, decent work and economic growth; goal 11, sustainable communities; and goal 13, climate action.

I think I have made my point: the health of the nation is a whole-government responsibility. I have long proposed a special high-level Cabinet committee on the health of the nation to which all other departments must report when developing new policies. Do they contribute to the health of the nation, or do they damage it? If they damage it, the department should think again. I still hope that the new Secretary of State for Health, with his understanding that the NHS will not be sustainable unless we focus more on prevention of ill health, will eventually come to the same conclusion. If he is not persuaded by me, perhaps he will be persuaded by this debate, which will show where we are failing and why it would be in the interests of all our people, now and in the future, for us to take a holistic view of health and well-being.

The evidence shows that poor people do not eat well; they live in areas with higher air pollution, in houses which are often cold, damp and expensive to heat because they are poorly insulated. Because of their disadvantages, they achieve less in education and so are less well equipped with the knowledge of how to promote their own health and to get a good, stable job. Their access to junk food is high and their access to good public services is low. Their local authorities are so pressed for cash that they have had to close sexual health services, weight management services, drug, alcohol and smoking cessation services, swimming pools, sports centres and children’s centres. All these impact most on the poor and particularly affect their health—QED.

Will the Government now act to improve our performance against goals 3 and 10 by addressing goals 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11 and 13?

12.22 pm

Lord Hunt of Chesterton (Lab): Our thanks are certainly due to the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, for this important debate about integrating sustainable development goals across government departments. I declare my interests as an emeritus professor at UCL and chair of a small environmental consulting company that works in developing countries. I am not sure that as much progress has been made as some of the government rhetoric indicates—so I follow the remarks of previous speakers. More should definitely be done to state and explain these broad goals. This is the first essential for effective policy and more could be done. Having one department in charge—DfID—inevitably biases the process towards the views of that department.

There is no doubt that DfID’s focus on humanitarian and democratic objectives has been effective, in policy and in engaging the public in these aspects of sustainable development. But there has not been the same focus, as the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, also emphasised, on public information, public debate and joined-up policy in the many other areas, such as the environment, economic planning and long-term climate change, agriculture and energy. In the UK, these areas are jointly the responsibility of government departments and civil society—for example, professional, technical and commercial bodies, universities and many other organisations, including charities and donors.

The meteorological agencies around the world are an example of governmental bodies, and I was involved as chief executive of the Met Office. They did then, and do now, play an active role in helping government departments work towards sustainable goals: for example, in advising communities about weather extremes, floods and droughts, all of which are increasing as a result of climate change. But even technical departments of that sort, working with other environmental, medical and health organisations, have to work out how these environmental extremes affect health, the economy and the environment.

However, it has been disappointing to see in the last 10 years or more that in the UK, after 2010 the coalition Government and then the Conservative Government deliberately suppressed some of the integrated policy methods—particularly the one in which the Sure Start programme, which followed America, had been very effective. As I have seen, these were stopped in many villages and elsewhere in the UK. Equally, we had quite an effective system in Britain of regional economic initiatives. These were also immediately suppressed by the Conservatives when the coalition Government came to power. During a recent science committee meeting in the House of Lords, Rolls-Royce commented that, as a result of the demise of these regional economic initiatives, many companies that feed into big companies such as Rolls-Royce were not working so well. There has been partial reinstatement with local enterprise boards, but they are not as effective as what we had before.

International bodies and networks also play a leading role in the United Nations and intergovernmental organisations, and in international charities. Some of them have been very effective. We had a remarkable afternoon here in the House of Lords when Jimmy

[LORD HUNT OF CHESTERTON]

Carter came to describe his campaign for disease-free water, which he explained in his speech. The United Nations technical agencies have a long history of taking on more complex issues, regionally and globally. These agencies have also helped Governments with sustainable development, and have had a big role in feeding into the United Nations centre in New York. For example, the International Maritime Organization, which is based here in London—an NGO with which I am involved—supports and works with them. It recently took on the role of guiding the global shipping industry to reduce its carbon emissions, which of course significantly exceed the carbon emissions from aviation. Sustainable global policies should aim to reduce the volume of shipping, although this would probably impact on the global economy. The question of the economy and the environment has to be kept in balance at all times, but this new initiative by the IMO is a very important development.

A similarly important sustainable goal would be the limitation of vehicle emissions, which, even though it is being discussed, is not happening in the UK. In France, by contrast, there are road signs encouraging motorists to limit their speed in order to reduce emissions. In Britain, the signs on a motorway will tell you how fast you have to go to get to Bristol in 90 minutes, or whatever it is. That is why the UK is not raising this kind of sustainability goal. I have raised this question in Written PQs, with no satisfactory result.

Last week I was in Malaysia at a meeting of climate environment networks, in particular the Asian area of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They were reviewing the issues in Asia. For example, there are critical issues such as the loss of forests, which is affected by global warming and sea-level rise but also by logging when richer countries remove their trees. This is a very important question. It is not just everybody working together. One fears that some countries are taking resources, which is having a bad effect on poorer countries.

Another important development is increased disease in some Asian countries. It is a major issue that needs to be considered internationally. Another is the question of water. It was remarkable to hear at the meeting that water availability in the slum areas of big cities is about 20% of what it was 10 years ago. With a greatly reduced water supply in urban communities you have women queuing up to get water at 3 am. This is an issue that the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, emphasised.

The Asian Network on Climate Science and Technology has been set up in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, with support from the Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre at Cambridge. This has led to Asian scientists and technicians focusing on meetings in that part of the world rather than going to the United States or the EU. We need much more technical strength, solidity and co-ordination in the developing regions of the world. When you focus on that, you find that all sorts of developments are encouraged, which do not happen so well if all the technical people go and have their meetings in developed countries.

One network of technical groups has been very effective in looking at the effects of climate on urban areas. It is interesting that these networks have already

developed new approaches, such as restoring communities after massive floods and using computer-based planning networks for extreme weather conditions. Some of these methods are of considerable interest, even to developed countries such as the UK.

In conclusion, global collaboration and sustainability are an important part of the UK's policies, and we should work as closely as we can with all the networks of the world. As other speakers commented, the UK has big problems of its own and we should learn a lot from others.

12.32 pm

Lord Thomas of Gresford (LD): My Lords, I, too, congratulate my noble friend Lady Suttie on obtaining this debate and on the excellent and thoughtful way in which she introduced it. I shall focus on the 16th sustainable development goal which is to:

“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

What progress has there been that can be reported in integrating that development goal into domestic policy? There is some good news. My first point is about the Bribery Act 2010, which is currently undergoing examination by a Select Committee of which I am member. The proceedings are televised and available in print. Your Lordships will be delighted to know that witness after witness says that the Bribery Act has been a great success and provides a gold standard for the world. There are problems and bits and pieces about it that we are examining, but the general thrust is that the Bribery Act is a way in which we can show the world how to tackle bribery and corruption, so that is a very good thing and one in which we can be a model for the world.

The second thing we can be proud of is that we retain our strong and independent judiciary. When my noble kinswoman Lady Walmsley last year, I was concerned about the environment in Madagascar last year, I was concerned about the judiciary. It was quite extraordinary that if you wanted your case listed, you had to pay an official to get your case into the list. It was extraordinary that if a judge went from outside the capital to the countryside to deal with problems and cases that occurred in country courts, he had to pay his own expenses, and Madagascar is four times the size of the United Kingdom. There are grave problems with the judiciary and its independence in many parts of the world, but that is one thing of which we can be proud and which we can report to the world.

However, there are problems. The first—the difficulty in recruiting judges—was outlined by the Lord Chief Justice, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Burnett, last Tuesday in evidence to the Commons Justice Select Committee. He said that successive cuts to the justice system and dilapidated court buildings have undermined morale among the judiciary. He is concerned about the mood across the judiciary in the wake of the long history of underfunding of the court system and cuts to remuneration. He said that the courts are currently having problems recruiting High Court judges. It is true that judges were offered a 2% pay increase in 2018-19, their biggest pay rise in 10 years. That is

almost as meagre as the £5 we received recently. However, many younger judges were badly hit by changes to the judicial pension scheme three years ago, and consequently the remuneration for being a High Court judge, or indeed any judge, is not as great as it was. Who would exchange the freedom of the Bar for the constraints of the judiciary and its hierarchical structures for remuneration of that sort?

When it comes to access to justice, I have to point to legal aid. Sir Patrick Hastings, Attorney-General in the Attlee Government—his name re-echoes in Gresford, where he appeared for the mine owners in the Gresford Colliery disaster inquiry—introduced the Legal Aid Bill in the Commons in December 1948. He said:

“It is the charter of the little man to the British courts of justice. It is a Bill which will open the doors of the courts freely to all persons who may wish to avail themselves of British justice without regard to the question of their wealth or ability to pay”.—[*Official Report, Commons, 15/12/1948; col. 1.*]

On Tuesday, the Lord Chief Justice, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Burnett, pointed to the fall in legal aid, and in so doing echoed the noble and learned Lord, Lord Neuberger, the former head of the UK Supreme Court, who said in 2017:

“It is all very well for us to sing the praises of our legal systems, to congratulate ourselves on the high quality of our judges and lawyers, and to take pride in the popularity of the common law in international business. But we have a serious problem with access to justice for ordinary citizens and small and medium-sized businesses”.

Back in 2010, the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition Government made deep cuts in public services to help reduce the UK’s deficit. The Ministry of Justice was one of the departments hardest hit; it was not protected in any way. At that time it had a budget of £10.9 billion to administer the courts, legal aid, prisons and the probation service. By 2017 the budget was down to £7.6 billion and for 2019-20 it is projected to be £6.38 billion. That is using Treasury public expenditure tables in real terms. That is a fall of more than 40% in funding for the legal system of this country. The result is that, frankly, it is impossible to make a decent living at the Bar in certain areas of law: criminal law, family law and so on. Ultimately, there will be a knock-on effect in the recruitment of high-quality people to the judiciary.

I am not proud of those cuts to legal aid. The noble Lord, Lord Hunt, spoke a moment ago about the cuts of that Government—the suppression, as he put it, of various environmental programmes. We were told at the time that austerity would last until 2015, by which time the deficit would have disappeared. How wrong we were. However, I am proud of the Modern Slavery Act and of the equalities Act, which indicated Lib Dem involvement in that Government. The UK Government’s Global Fund to End Modern Slavery supports work to end the terrible exploitation of vulnerable people, including women and children. The UK became the first donor to the Global Fund to End Violence against Children and contributes funds to tackle online child sexual exploitation. So there are positive signs.

We face dangers in our society in the area that the 16th goal refers to. On money laundering, the British Government’s own anti-corruption strategy, published in December 2017, said:

“The UK’s role as a global financial centre is important to the country’s prosperity but can also be exploited by criminals. The 2016 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime notes that the UK is one of the most attractive destinations for laundering the proceeds of grand corruption and that professional enablers and intermediaries play a role in this. The National Crime Agency estimates up to £90 billion of illicit funds are laundered through the UK each year”.

That is a disgrace and something we need to tackle immediately.

The second danger, as I see it, is that of drugs, not merely in London but throughout the country, such as in my home town of Wrexham. Incidentally, Wrexham has received an accolade from Quentin Letts; talking about Jacob Rees-Mogg’s press conference this week, he said that the “diversity count” of the people who held it,

“was as low as Wrexham on a wet Friday night”.

I wondered: what had we done? Anyway, around two years ago, Mr Gavin Rodda, a bus driver, started noticing an increase in drug use and homelessness at the bus station in Wrexham. Spice and Black Mamba, synthetic cannabinoids that have also become rife in Britain’s prisons, were still legal at that time. A blanket ban on those has been put through but the drugs are still widely available. Mr Rodda said that addicts in Wrexham say they can buy Black Mamba for £5 a gram, which is cheaper than heroin, crack cocaine and even a packet of cigarettes. This hits at the fundamental basis of our country.

I should have liked to address your Lordships on the overseas interventions into British politics that we are facing, but I see that my time is up.

12.44 pm

Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Lab): My Lords, I should probably record that I am co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development. I also reference my entry in the register of interests, not least my position as vice-president of UNICEF.

The UN global goals for sustainable development were agreed in 2015, partly because our work was not done. The millennium development goals agreed in 2000 were perhaps right for the time—perhaps sufficient given what could be agreed then—but they were very targeted and simplistic. They were focused on particular aspects of education, health and access to water, and made only limited reference to, for example, gender inequality or climate change.

Although much progress had been made, even in areas where there had been substantial progress, such as reducing extreme poverty, the job was only half-done. So when the UK led the international consultation on what should replace the millennium development goals, it was agreed by everyone involved that there should be a much more comprehensive roadmap to the future that dealt not only with specific aspects of life that needed immediate attention, but other areas where the causes of extreme poverty, violence and despair were so deep that a comprehensive set of solutions was required.

We needed a set of goals that tackled peace and justice in strong institutions, as goal 16 does. We needed a set of goals that talked about resilience

[LORD MCCONNELL OF GLENSCORRODALE]
 against extreme weather events and natural disasters, and did not just try to pick up the pieces afterwards. We needed a set of goals that addressed gender inequality and economic inequality, as well as the crucial issue of economic growth and development, particularly in expanding cities in developing and middle-income countries across the world. The goals needed to be in context, so there was a summit on financing development in Addis just three months before. They also needed to be placed firmly in the context of the impact of climate change, so they were agreed just before—but implemented after—the summit on climate change in Paris in December 2015.

So for once, the world had thought about this in advance. We did not just write the goals on the back of an envelope, submit them to a meeting and then walk away with another set of warm words, without the actions associated with them. We actually had a set of goals that had been debated and agreed in a proper context, and that had an implementation plan. At the core of that plan was the system of voluntary national reviews and national strategies that each country was expected to adopt and then offer back to the UN. We have seen incredible progress in some areas. In just three years, 111 countries have presented their voluntary national reviews to the UN. Not all of them have been high quality and perhaps not all have even been as honest as they needed to be, but at least there is a system in place early in the 15-year programme for countries to start to assess the progress they are making and discuss it with their peers.

Most interestingly, we have seen across the world businesses adopting the sustainable development goals in a way that never happened with the millennium development goals. In my view, that has not yet happened enough in this country, but around the world multinational corporations in particular—in Japan, for example; others are headquartered in Europe—are adopting these goals as part of their business planning for the future, realising that dealing with the risks associated with climate change, conflict, extreme poverty and a world where an increasing young population do not have the skills and opportunities to make the most of their place in it, has to be central to any sustainable, successful multinational business in the 21st century.

In all these areas where businesses are coming on board and countries are producing and presenting their voluntary national reviews, the UK has slipped a bit behind the curve. However, I do not doubt for one minute the commitment of individual Ministers, particularly the noble Lord, Lord Bates, who will respond to our debate today, or the Secretary of State for International Development, who made an excellent speech at an all-party group event last Tuesday, where we launched an initiative to encourage parliamentarians to become more involved in the consultation on the voluntary national review.

If we look back over the past three years—unlike the period before that, when the UK was at the head of the international charge to get a set of ambitious goals agreed and a comprehensive planning and assessment process in place—we see that not all the DfID programmes agreed over that time have really embedded the goals at their core. They may have been appropriate to the

goals, but the bilateral programmes we agreed were not directly linked to countries' individual strategies. Even in DfID, we could probably have done more on that, but across the rest of government, not enough departments have embedded the goals into their single departmental plans. The goals have not been the subject of an effective cross-government scrutiny process.

The UKSSD report published this summer, *Measuring up*, which considered UK progress on the goals, was a pretty fair assessment of the lack of UK progress. We could all have done more, the Government included, to encourage more UK businesses to adopt the goals. We could have taken the approach of Japan, where the Prime Minister's office has led initiatives to get businesses to adopt these goals and take a sustainable approach to their development. Across all areas, the Government could probably have engaged more with civil society.

However, the Government have been distracted these past two years; I understand that and am willing, almost, to forgive it. We now need to use the voluntary national review as an opportunity to rekindle the process and re-establish Britain at the forefront of international and domestic action for these goals. To do that, we need not only the UK Government and Parliament to lead that charge; we need more local governments across the UK to do so too. I know that Birmingham City Council has recently formally adopted the goals and wants to see them at the heart of its preparations for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. That is a great objective and ambition for the city, but more of our cities, districts and counties across the UK could be adopting the goals and building them into their local planning.

The devolved Governments in Scotland and Wales—and, when they exist, in Northern Ireland—should be doing the same thing and should also be part of the voluntary national review process. We should be working with civil society and businesses across the UK to ensure that more of them integrate and embed the goals in their day-to-day work. If we do that, not only will we be able to present an honest voluntary national review next summer to the United Nations, assess our progress and engage people in that ambition; we can also rekindle the momentum here in the UK for our work at home and abroad to adopt, campaign for and achieve the goals by 2030.

There is a very good reason why a comprehensive set of goals was needed: the complexity of the modern world and of the challenges domestically in the UK. Look at somewhere such as the Philippines, where a typhoon or an earthquake can demolish 25 years of development in just 25 minutes. Look at the African Sahel and the complexity across the region of the challenges of migration, climate change, extreme poverty, violence and conflict. Surely the answer is a comprehensive programme of goals and targets that recognises that each country will have different priorities but that together, these solutions give us some of the answers to the challenges that we face. If we are to do that, we all need to demonstrate more urgency. We are three years into a 15-year programme. We are nowhere near far enough along that journey, globally or nationally.

In the words of Malala Yousafzai, who spoke in September 2015 at the General Assembly at the hour when the goals were adopted, and who stopped the

diplomats chattering on the General Assembly floor and asked them to listen for a minute: “Do not do what you have always done and agree these goals at a summit here and then walk away and leave them aside. Remember these goals, remember your commitments and implement them. Do not let us down”. Those words should ring in your Lordships’ Chamber today.

12.54 pm

Baroness Grender (LD): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lady Suttie on securing this timely and important debate, if only because I get to follow the real insight and context of the noble Lord, Lord McConnell.

The SDGs are an important part of the toolkit for us to scrutinise the work of the Government. I will focus my comments on goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and, within that, goal 11.1: to ensure by 2030,

“access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing”.

I echo my noble friend Lady Suttie’s concerns about the danger of losing sight of the domestic issue, while wholeheartedly agreeing that it was a proud moment when we achieved 0.7% of GNI for developing nations under the coalition—guaranteed, by the way, through a Private Member’s Bill from Michael Moore because the Conservatives in government refused to deliver it through government time. I suspect that when David Cameron signed up to these aims in 2015 and called for all Governments to be held to account for the implementation of the global goals, he was looking beyond our borders and thinking that others needed to play catch-up rather than him. Now, in 2018, he has departed for his £25,000 Marie Antoinette-style shepherd’s hut.

What a contrast with the communities in the UK that will fall far short of the original objectives when this Government deliver the voluntary national review in July 2019. As my noble friend Lady Walmsley said, just last Friday a UN rapporteur ended a two-week mission and concluded that this Government have inflicted “great misery” on their people with,

“punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous”,

policies. The report, which will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva next year, states that in the UK,

“poverty is a political choice”.

He said that about 14 million people, a fifth of the population, live in poverty and 1.5 million are destitute, being unable to afford basic essentials. These figures are taken from the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The IFS also predicts a 7% rise in child poverty between 2015 and 2022. Philip Alston, the UN rapporteur and human rights lawyer, said that it was his belief that this Government are in denial.

I see that the Government pushed back hard on the UN report, but Philip Alston is not alone in his findings. The recent investigation by two highly respected journalists at the *Times*, Rachel Sylvester and Alice Thomson, uncovered a similar story. As they have written in their columns and comments since, they were shocked by what they found in some communities: children going without meals, schools having to find shoes for children and the scandal that continues because of the lack of decent social housing, leaving

people on low or no incomes with little choice but to rent in the worst parts of the private sector. Their investigation highlighted the toxic combination of unscrupulous landlords and inadequate benefit for housing, which is pushing thousands of families into homelessness. They found that housing benefit does not cover rents in 95% of the country. Only yesterday, the Residential Landlords Association published a report citing the benefit system as the main cause of ending a tenancy and leading to homelessness. To be a low-income family in the UK—even in work—in the private rented sector is to constantly teeter on the brink of homelessness.

Last year, 123,130 children were in temporary accommodation, defined as statutorily homeless. Today, Shelter published its annual report on homelessness, revealing that 320,000 people are homeless in Britain. This amounts to a year-on-year increase of 13,000, as my noble friend Lady Suttie said. The estimate suggests that nationally one in 200 people is homeless. In London it is much worse: every night we see people sleeping out on the streets.

My noble friend Lady Suttie and I team up once a year to do an annual sleep-out for the charity Depaul, which helps young homeless people. It is only one night a year; she is a hardy Scot who can sleep while it is raining, while I am the soft southerner who always wakes up the minute it starts. For us it is a small reminder of what it is like to sleep out, but it is nothing like the danger, the insecurity, the toll on mental health, the substance abuse and the early death, which Dame Louise Casey and the noble Baroness, Lady Armstrong, worked so hard to eradicate and reduce in the late 1990s in the early days of the Blair Government. It is back, and it is like an epidemic.

This week the *Huffington Post* conducted an investigation which showed that the Government’s use of “snapshot” rough sleeper counts on just one night of the year in autumn were being used to provide data on the nationwide levels of homelessness. It did its own analysis, which showed that 33 of 326 local authorities in England recorded zero rough sleepers for 2017, including, for example, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, where street sleepers are visible throughout the year.

I appreciate that the Minister will be unable to answer on the 169 targets today, so if he is unable to answer my questions, in particular on goal 11.1, will he undertake to write and respond to the following questions? First, which stakeholders will be involved in drawing up the VNRs relating to poverty, statutory homelessness and rough sleeping? Secondly, given that a year ago my complaint about government use of statistics on homelessness was upheld by the UK Statistics Authority, what methodology will be used to report on homelessness as part of goal 11.1? Is the Minister satisfied that that will be an accurate reflection? Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself and making an assumption that that figure will even be used, so my third question is: will homelessness and rough sleeping figures be reported as part of the identified challenges when reporting this July? Fourthly, I was extremely concerned to learn in the WWF brief for this debate that as yet there appears to be no consultation plan in preparation for reporting in July. Given the significant

[BARONESS GRENDER]

need for partnership to deliver this, is the Minister concerned that the Government are leaving it a little late, and when will the consultation plan be made available?

The SDG global indicators are a noble intent, and the Government were right to sign up to them in 2015. But it is critical that partnerships are formed and challenging questions are asked here at home, particularly on a goal that promises housing for all when it is so obvious that right here, right now, we are falling far short of that objective.

1.03 pm

Lord Rogan (UUP): My Lords, like other noble Lords, I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, on securing this important debate today. But I must also thank her too. This is a timely reminder that there is a big world out there to be protected, not all of which is preoccupied by Brexit.

I appreciate that the view I am about to express may not gain universal support in this House, but at times I even feel sorry for former Prime Minister David Cameron. He will be forever associated with taking the United Kingdom out of the European Union, albeit by accident. However, Mr Cameron also did a number of things that may encourage historians of differing political persuasions to judge him more favourably. One notable achievement was his success in formulating the United Nations sustainable development goals—the SDGs—when in 2012, as British Prime Minister, he chaired a panel established by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to advance the post-2015 development agenda. As noble Lords will know, these goals had the collective aim of ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change in the period to 2030.

However, Mr Cameron not only helped to develop these admirable objectives but fought for them too. He told the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 that fulfilling the sustainable development goals would require “action, not words”. He reminded the leaders of developed countries that they should deliver on their overseas aid spending commitments. He also went a step further, telling the Presidents and Prime Ministers of less prosperous nations:

“Eradicating extreme poverty isn’t just something that developed country governments can do. There’s a deep responsibility on the leaders of all countries”.

Mr Cameron resigned from office fewer than nine months after delivering those remarks. Since then, for understandable reasons, the focus of Whitehall and, indeed, the wider British public, has been elsewhere. But despite these distractions, it remains vital that the United Kingdom remains to the fore of the effort to ensure that leaders across the world keep to the commitments that Mr Cameron rightly asked of them.

This is where I believe Brexit provides the United Kingdom Government, under a different Prime Minister in Theresa May, with a golden opportunity to lead the way. It is unquestionably the case that, after leaving the European Union, the United Kingdom will be in search of new alliances and new partnerships, and not just in the area of trade. We regularly hear the phrase “Global Britain”—noble Lords would rightly expect me to expand this term slightly to “Global Britain and

Northern Ireland”. As a nation, we need to expand our reach and our influence if we are to punch our weight in the years ahead. That means setting an example for others to follow. We must lead the way, and that must surely include the United Kingdom achieving the aim, as set out in the Motion of the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, to integrate,

“the universal Sustainable Developments Goals into domestic policy”.

The Motion reminds us that, in September 2019, the United Kingdom is due to deliver a voluntary national review presentation on progress towards this objective. That is only 10 months from now. It has to be said that the language used by the Department for International Development in its written evidence on this subject to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, provided just a few weeks ago, does not fill me with great confidence. The document said that the UK Government have,

“made significant progress towards some of the SDGs, and the UK has already met some of the targets”.

While I expect the Minister in his wind-up perhaps to scold me for my impertinence, this woolly language creates the impression that the Government are doing their homework on the school bus.

The President of the United States, Donald Trump, is constantly criticised for his so-called “America first” policy. He has withdrawn his country from a series of international agreements, he wants to build a big wall and fight trade wars, and he wants America to look inwards. In effect, President Trump has abdicated the position that his predecessors in the White House have traditionally held as the de facto leader of the free world. If the United States, in the short term at least, is refusing to set the standard for the nations of the world to follow, we in the United Kingdom and our allies must not be found wanting. We must stick to David Cameron’s commitments and implement the United Nations sustainable development goals with the minimum possible delay.

1.09 pm

Baroness Sheehan (LD): My Lords, I start by adding my thanks to my noble friend Lady Suttie for the skilful way that she set the scene. The universality of the sustainable development goals is neatly encapsulated as the “5Ps”: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership. Together with the overarching commitment to “leave no one behind”, they are designed to include us all. The noble Lord, Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale, spoke passionately about the process following on from the millennium development goals and the need for a more comprehensive approach.

This debate, as we have heard from speaker after speaker, is about delivering the SDGs on the domestic front so that life is more decent for our own people and there are no repercussions on other nations arising from our domestic policies. The noble Lord, Lord Judd, made the point very forcefully about establishing a level playing field for all if we are going to achieve these aims. I hope that, when the Minister comes to respond, he will recognise that it will not do for him to concentrate on the actions of DfID. The debate is

specifically on the Government's progress on embedding the SDGs into their departmental practices in a holistic and integrated way.

The UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, UKSSD, is a cross-sector network of organisations which are working together to drive action on the UN sustainable development goals in the UK. Its report, *Measuring Up*, which I believe the Minister is aware of, expresses a level of disquiet about the Government's lack of preparation for presentation of its voluntary national review, which will take place at the UN in July and September next year. I am concerned that DfID has been tasked with exercising overall control of cross-departmental delivery of the goals domestically. I have great respect for the Minister and the work that DfID carries out in delivering the 0.7% in the international arena, but its record of keeping tabs on ODA spend by other government departments has not gone so well. This does not bode well for DfID's role in monitoring delivery of the SDGs across all government departments.

Of the 111 countries which have already presented their VNRs—voluntary national reviews—to the UN General Assembly, the ones that have stood out have been those which deployed responsibility right from the top. For example, in Germany oversight lies with the office of the Chancellor, and in Japan it is with the Prime Minister's office. As the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, said, they have been leading from the front, including both the private and public sectors. The executive summary of the VNR report of the German Government to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2016 says:

"The State Secretaries Committee for Sustainable Development steers implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy and oversees the updating of its content. ... The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development monitors the German Government's National Sustainable Development Strategy ... The Council for Sustainable Development, an independent advisory council, promotes societal dialogue on sustainability. It consists of 15 public figures who ... represent the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development in its national and international dimensions".

My last quote from the report is as follows:

"The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is carried out within the framework of the budgetary and fiscal requirements of the Federal Government".

Will the leadership to deliver this agenda in the UK come from the very top? And will Secretaries of State take full responsibility for their departments' performance against relevant SDG targets? Will the framework to monitor, assess and incentivise action be put in place? Will we engage our civil society partners in a high-level advisory capacity to represent economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development, as asked by the UKSSD? The issue was raised by the noble Lord, Lord Hunt of Chesterton, who spoke of the useful expertise that lies in technical agencies. What is the plan to harness expertise of that nature?

The fact is that, four years on from the adoption of the SDGs, we have not produced anything that says we are taking this agenda seriously. This is poor performance from the country that was instrumental in bringing the UN document, *Transforming Our World*, in which the SDGs are embedded, to fruition and to universal acceptance. As the fifth richest nation, with an aspiration to cement the "Global Britain" brand on the international

stage, we must lead by example; the point was made in the debate by several noble Lords, but I particularly associate it with the noble Lord, Lord Rogan. We must lead by example and fix our fault lines at home—fault lines that the EU referendum exposed in dramatic fashion.

Where is the UK action plan to tackle goal 1, which is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere? Several noble Lords—the noble Baronesses, Lady Suttie, Lady Walmsley and Lady Grender, among them—have mentioned the report of the UN special rapporteur on poverty. He concluded by saying:

"Poverty is a political choice".

That is controversial, but he is right. In the recent Budget, the Government increased the personal allowance to £12,500, giving basic rate taxpayers an extra £130 per year. However, higher rate taxpayers will receive an extra £860 per year because the threshold for higher rate taxes was raised to £50,000. The Government had a political choice to make, and they decided they would give more to those who already had the most. If we had had an action plan in place, maybe other choices would have been made, and maybe it would be easier to sort out the disastrous implementation of universal credit.

We have heard numerous examples of why it is so important that the Government do not bury their heads in the sand but deal with the issues that noble Lords have outlined: homelessness and inadequate housing, eloquently brought to our attention by my noble friend Lady Grender; lack of access to justice, skilfully brought to our attention by my noble friend Lord Thomas of Gresford; and the threat to biodiversity and regression on policy to tackle climate change—a point made forcefully by my noble friend Lady Walmsley, whose example of fish that have a self-healing heart is one I will not forget in a hurry.

I will pick out a couple of examples that highlight some of the iniquities of our policy choices. SDG3 calls for us to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and has a target within it that addresses the training and retention of health workers in developing countries. But how do we reconcile delivery of this target with the withdrawal of support for training our own nurses in England? Where will we get nurses for our NHS? Not from the EU 27, we are told. Inevitably, they will come from developing countries.

Let us take one other example, goal 12, which is to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. One of the targets we committed to was to rationalise inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies. The UK Government, as a member of the G7, have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to phasing out these subsidies by 2025 and the UK, as a member of the EU, has committed to phasing out environmentally damaging subsidies, including those for fossil fuels, by 2020. However, the Overseas Development Institute recently calculated the UK's subsidies for fossil fuels at £13.3 billion per year between 2014 and 2016. Moreover, the ODI points to a lack of transparency and reporting on fossil fuel subsidies. The OECD confirms that the UK Government publish no official estimates of producer subsidies. Will the Government accept that they provide significant subsidies for fossil fuels and that such

[BARONESS SHEEHAN]

subsidies are completely inconsistent with their policies on climate change and the above international commitments? Will they change their policy so that UK Export Finance is not used to support fossil fuel exploration or the development of fossil fuel-based generation in other countries?

I have dwelt on this issue at some length not only because it dramatically highlights the conflicting policies of government departments but because it impacts heavily on SDG 14, which speaks to the health of our oceans. Plastics in our oceans are a risk not just to marine life but ultimately to human health as well. Most plastics are a by-product of crude oil. With the inevitable demise of the extraction and production of crude oil that we can look forward to, we can hopefully say goodbye to plastics that are harming our marine environment and develop more sustainable alternatives. Let us get on with putting in place the policies that will move us in the right direction. Spain has done so. Why cannot we?

To conclude, this debate has illustrated perfectly the beauty of the SDGs: they are universal. They span the Arctic to the Antarctic, the world's oceans and the lands that lie within them. They encompass the breadth and depth of human existence, so that all of humanity can share the common values of being able to live a decent life with comfort, dignity and opportunity to fulfil our potential. That same breadth and depth means that we have not been able to do justice to much of the agenda of the global goals. We have only scratched the surface. I am sure that this is a subject to which we will return frequently in the coming months.

1.22 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I too would like to thank the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, for initiating this debate. It is the universal nature of the SDGs that binds all countries together. All must seek to achieve them domestically and internationally. The voluntary national review is a vital tool in assessing progress and focusing our efforts where they are most needed. It is not a tool for Governments alone. The global effort to achieve the 2030 agenda must embrace economic, social and political action. Business and civil society have a responsibility to act.

As the excellent report from the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development group argued, we need to make the most of the opportunity the VNR gives us to establish how and where the Government and other stakeholders should focus their efforts. I know the Minister has welcomed that report, describing it as a, "very good contribution to the work that is going into the voluntary national review".

As the UKSSD says, there is an enormous amount to celebrate in the UK's progress towards the goals. But, as every noble Lord has said in this debate, we cannot be complacent. We still live in a society where discrimination and inequality exist. Climate change has presented us with many challenges, as highlighted by my noble friend Lord Hunt. As the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, stressed, the important point on the SDGs is their connectedness, which requires a collaborative approach. The noble Baroness gave an excellent example, which was also in the UKSSD report, relating to goals

2, 3, 8 and 10. We have a food system in this country that struggles to provide healthy, sustainable, diverse diets for everyone. We have high and growing levels of obesity and the highest levels of household food insecurity in Europe. As the noble Baroness said, we have only to look at the headlines this morning to see the problem: there are nearly 7,000 children and adults under 25 with type 2 diabetes in England and Wales—10 times the number reported before.

This debate is about what form the review will take. What are the Government doing to ensure it is effective? Since 2016, many other Governments have published their VNRs, and around 40 will publish theirs during the same 2019 forum as the UK. The format of those published so far has varied greatly, but the most recent UN guidance recommends that each VNR contains details of how progress will be reviewed regularly at national level. We have our Commons Environmental Audit Committee, which recently produced an excellent report to which the Minister gave oral evidence. I hope the Minister can confirm today that there will be a broader process to review progress annually and that it will include civil society. I hope details of that will be given in the VNR.

The Government have so far said that the review will be consistent with those presented by other countries and will reflect the UN guidance. Some 18 months ago, the Commons Environmental Audit Committee examined how the Government were implementing the SDGs and scrutinised the framework for national monitoring and reporting. It suggested that the Government seemed,

"more concerned with promoting the Goals abroad", and had,

"undertaken no substantive work to promote the Goals domestically or encourage businesses, the public sector and civil society to engage with the Goals".

DfID, an excellent department, is committed to the SDGs, but is it appropriate for the domestic agenda? Many noble Lords have made that point. The Government have argued that "the most effective way" to implement the SDGs is to embed them in Whitehall departments' single departmental plans. As my noble friend Lord McConnell asked, what real progress has been made on that? Where is the co-ordination? We now have a task group at Whitehall level, but where is the evidence that that is working?

The key point I want to emphasise in today's debate is that the UN guidance also mentioned a stakeholder engagement plan identifying key stakeholders and methods of engagement—not just online, but all methods—to ensure that all stakeholders contribute and that their contributions are properly gathered. The UN says that all sectors and levels of government, civil society, private sector, trade unions—I have previously emphasised strongly in this Chamber that trade unions get missed out whenever there is a publication on progress on the SDGs—Members of Parliament and human rights institutions should be considered. How has Parliament been engaged in the SDG process? Are the outlined plans all we have?

In evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee last October, the Government highlighted several ways in which they were engaging

with business in the VNR process. They were also talking about a roadshow going around the United Kingdom. Will the Minister tell us whether that roadshow has started? We do not have a huge amount of time. We all know that the Government have been preoccupied with other matters, but this is a serious agenda. It requires a much more positive impact. For me, the Government's process so far has simply not been proactive enough.

The Commons committee argued that raising awareness and encouraging engagement would increase the number of people and organisations able to contribute to meeting the SDGs. That is the fundamental point. It is not simply the actions of government that will result in our achieving the 2030 agenda but the actions of business. And what will prompt business? It will be their employees and trade unions. Trade unions operate not just domestically but globally, and some of the global trade union federations have had a positive impact in terms of goal 8 on employment standards. So let us see a much more proactive approach from this Government.

How does the Minister respond to the recommendation that the Government should work with the national media to launch a national campaign to raise public awareness and to make the public realise that this is not simply about ODA or the 0.7% aid target, important though those issues are, but about how we all have a responsibility to build a better world, which means positive action from all of us? It is not simply a matter for the Government.

Finland's VNR emphasises the need for private initiatives, separate from government efforts. Can the Minister tell us whether the Government will be encouraging the private sector to develop its own strategies? We have heard local government mentioned in the debate. It already drives local improvements and developments, and already aligns with the SDG targets. Earlier this month, Birmingham City Council, with cross-party support, became the first council to approve a motion recognising the role of local authorities in achieving the sustainable development goals.

The VNR process and report need to engage with and reflect progress at the regional and devolved levels. Scotland and Wales both have different but progressive approaches to delivering and tracking the SDGs, and their experiences should be incorporated throughout the voluntary national review process and report. Can the Minister give us any further information on the commitments that he made on mechanisms for consulting Parliament and the devolved Administrations on their areas of specific responsibility, and can he give us a commitment that that will include local government? Can he also give me a commitment that he will meet trade union representatives, particularly from the TUC, to discuss how they can play a role both domestically and internationally in delivering the SDGs?

1.32 pm

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Lord Bates) (Con): My Lords, I join others in paying tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, for securing this debate. It is an important contribution to meeting the objectives of the SDGs

and the voluntary national review—namely, that there should be consultation with parliaments. I thank her on behalf of the Government for making her time available for that purpose in this debate.

The noble Baroness referred to certain critical areas where she urged further action, although she recognised that the UK is respected as a global leader in development—a view that was widely shared in many of the contributions. We can be proud of that: UK aid is a badge of hope around the world. The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, highlighted the contribution made by David Cameron at the high-level panel in drawing up the goals—a point made also by the noble Lord, Lord Rogan.

The efforts of the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, in this area as co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sustainable Development Goals have been hugely influential in placing the goals in context. He made a significant point about the Addis summit on financing for development. Several noble Lords mentioned that this is not something that Governments can do alone; as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, said, it has to be done in collaboration with civil society, private companies and other Governments.

The noble Lord, Lord Hunt of Chesterton, recognised that we could learn a great deal from each other. In fact, I came to this debate from an excellent meeting at The Oval cricket ground with the Commonwealth heads of statistics, who have come together to share expertise and knowledge on how better to collect and use data for measuring the SDGs. There were some fascinating contributions on what is being done, particularly from some of the small island states such as Samoa. Also highlighted at that meeting was a point made by the noble Lord, which is the contribution of our expertise. In that context, he was referring to the Met Office, as I know personally from the work that it has done and continues to do in the Caribbean in forecasting major disasters. However, in this context, it is the incredible work done by the Office for National Statistics, which is at the heart of producing data in this area. Its expertise is a real prize for this country.

Before I turn to the many specific questions raised in the debate, perhaps I may follow the model of the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, and explain a little of the rationale behind the SDGs. We were all left with choices about what to do when the SDGs were drawn up. Some countries decided to dedicate a department to look after them and to appoint one person to be responsible for them. However, the SDGs cover a great breadth and touch every aspect of our political, economic and social life, as many speakers have said. Therefore, our judgment, which we set out in our agenda 2030, published at the beginning of this process, was that, rather than having SDGs as the responsibility of one department, with other departments perhaps shuffling their responsibilities on to that department, it would be better to ensure that all government departments were responsible for meeting the goals and targets in their specific area. We felt that the effort should be co-ordinated in a domestic setting by the Cabinet Office. Oliver Dowden, with whom I work very closely, has been responsible for this, and in fact we are both giving evidence to the Environmental

[LORD BATES]

Audit Select Committee for its report on this issue. Oliver Dowden is responsible for co-ordinating the work at the Cabinet Office, but the policy leadership sits within DfID.

I take on board some of the criticism about whether I am the right Minister to respond to this debate. Having had the week that I have had, I would have been thrilled to make way for other Ministers who wanted to respond. However, as the DfID Minister with responsibility for supporting our Secretary of State, Penny Mordaunt, on this issue in the department, and as the spokesman on Treasury matters in your Lordships' House, I hope that I can respond to some of these issues.

The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, referred to Penny Mordaunt's position and I would like to press that a little further. I was pleased that he remarked on how persuasive, powerful and passionate she was at the all-party parliamentary group event on 13 November. While I was at this Dispatch Box responding to the Budget debate, she was speaking at that event along with Richard Curtis. He does a tremendous amount to raise awareness of the goals internationally and in urging us to do more domestically.

Penny Mordaunt has been asked by the Prime Minister to be the Cabinet lead on the sustainable development goals, and it is right that we have a policy lead and a Cabinet-level voice. In addition to being Secretary of State for the Department for International Development, she is also the Minister for Women and Equalities. Many noble Lords touched on that important point about equality, and gender equality in particular. Therefore, she has a double role, which makes her the ideal person to ensure that government departments live up to their commitments.

Let me be clear about what those commitments are. The first thing that government departments have to do is to identify ownership within the department of the specific goals that fall within their policy remit. They must then report on progress towards those goals in their annual report and accounts. Responses from the annual report and accounts—the high-level summaries—are collated by the Cabinet Office and published. Then, crucially in terms of government, is how they work. Government effectively works through two mechanisms—two levers. One is the spending review, which will take place next year. The other is the single departmental plan, which is the strategy. The strategy must set out how the department will achieve the declared ambition of the Prime Minister and of this Government to meet their obligations under the sustainable development goals.

The process by which we will undertake this review is that we have been consulting with external stakeholders already. I pay tribute to the work of business in particular, and the work of organisations such as the UK branch of the UN Global Compact, whose events I have spoken at. There was a road show around the UK encouraging businesses to hardwire this into their planning. That was a useful exercise. The noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, talked about the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, which is now beginning to hardwire into its thinking—out of enlightened self-interest, I suggest—the need to adhere to those goals.

I will return to the contribution of the noble Baroness, which was significant in a number of regards. It highlighted the interconnectedness and the interlinkages to which she and the noble Lord, Lord Collins, referred between different goals. She talked about climate, which trips across goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. Some people say it should actually be all of them, but those deal specifically with the environment. They of course will have cross-government responsibility. You cannot say that Defra alone is responsible for meeting our climate ambitions, although it leads on that along with BEIS. It is something that touches every aspect of government. Therefore, the goals in the single departmental plan must reflect that from each of the domestic departments.

On the voluntary national review, a website is available which I have highlighted. I know that the noble Lord, Lord Collins, said, "Not just electronically", but there are many mechanisms by which people can feed into this review and tell us what they are doing—because it is not just about what the Government are doing.

I will make one further contextual point. I felt this very strongly at the excellent event at which the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development presented its report on measuring up. There are two ways that we can approach this. On the one hand, the Government can do their standard thing, which is to defend to the hilt their record on meeting every single objective, target and measure. They will have an argument for it, and we have skilled civil servants who can do that. Or we can say, "Listen. This is going to be done by more than one Government. This is long term. We are talking about 15 or 25 years for a lot of these targets. There will be lots of different political compositions". Already, within the UK, it is not just a Conservative Government. There are devolved Administrations, local authorities and trade unions of different complexions as well. Therefore, if we are to address this, we need to go into it with a slightly more grown-up approach. We should say that we believe passionately that the SDGs represent a template for a good society that has been agreed internationally by all 193 member states of the UN General Assembly, and that we will work towards their implementation domestically and internationally.

If we take that approach, if someone wants to produce a score card and tell us that we are succeeding in one area such as access to clean water but we are not doing as well in another area—the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, mentioned housing—so be it. That is the benefit of having a measure. Before we had the SDGs we did not have any coherent measures. Therefore, we should not be afraid but should try to keep the debate at that level, where it seeks to recognise that this is a template that, I hope, successive Governments in this country and around the world will commit themselves to seeking to implement.

I always enjoy the contributions of the noble Lord, Lord Judd, in this House. Often I am too busy listening to him to take note of his remarks. But I noted one particular point that he made when he began. He challenged us to persuade him and the House that there is a culture and spirit of determination to get things done in these areas. I have tried to set out what our approach is on that. He also made a great comment that echoed something said by the noble Lord, Lord Rogan, which was to remind us that the excluded must be

central. At the heart of this, what made these goals different was the statement that no one would be left behind.

I am very proud of what the Government have done over the past year under the leadership of our Secretary of State, Penny Mordaunt. She came to the department with a passion that those with disabilities should not be on the fringes of our consideration but central. One manifestation of this was an outstanding global disability summit, which we hosted in July. Many noble Lords were able to attend that. We simply brought to bear the convening power of the UK to draw attention to that issue, which was an important point.

The noble Lord, Lord Thomas, also reminded us that, while we have a lot of work to do, a lot of good work has been done. He talked about the Bribery Act being a gold standard internationally. If we are to have good governance in peaceful and inclusive societies—he mentioned in that context SDG 16 in particular—it is clear that we must have transparency. People in a country should be able to see where the money that comes into the country has been spent—money that is meant for them. Transparency and tackling of bribery is very important.

The noble Lord, Lord Rogan, touched on that again when he said that there was a responsibility not just on us but on individual leaders within those countries to do all that they can to ensure that the SDGs are met. He also mentioned the Equality Act and the Modern Slavery Act. When my time on the Front Bench is done, what I will be most proud of is working with our now Prime Minister on taking what is now the Modern Slavery Act through your Lordships' House with the incredible amount of work that went on, done by many people in this House, to shape the legislation into its ground-breaking form.

Many noble Lords mentioned climate, particularly the noble Baronesses, Lady Walmsley and Lady Sheehan, and the noble Lord, Lord Collins. The voluntary national review findings will be presented to the UN high-level panel by Penny Mordaunt next year, so it makes sense that she continues her leadership through that process. There will be a submission of the main messages to the UN by 17 May; submission of the full report to the UN on 14 June; presentation of the voluntary national review at the high-level political forum between 16 and 18 July; and then the first heads of government level review of the sustainable development goals at the UN General Assembly in September. I should also point out that the Prime Minister has been asked to be the climate resilience champion at the UN Secretary-General's climate summit next year. That will be a moment to raise this issue up the international agenda.

The noble Lord, Lord Hunt, asked us to learn from others, and I have referenced some of those points. The noble Lord, Lord Rogan, talked about the importance of setting an example, and we are conscious of that. As we go into the voluntary national review, we are trying to do things that are slightly different. What that needs to contain has been set out for us—the five goals that will be the particular focus of next year. That changes from year to year, and we will address that. One difference about the way the UK is doing this, as well as the volumes of data and statistics that come with this issue, is that we want to demonstrate an inclusive approach whereby we capture not just what

the Government or even the devolved Administrations are doing but what is happening in civil society. That is crucial to delivering on these targets.

Therefore, I am happy that the government website we opened for feedback on UK sustainable development goals, which is easily accessible, has had 36 responses from civil society organisations so far. They include the Salvation Army and Stonewall, and academic institutions such as the University of Wolverhampton. Some really good responses have come in. The time to review the responses from civil society was going to conclude in November, but we have managed to move it to January. Until 11 January 2019, organisations can let us know what they are doing and what impact they are having in this area. That will give more time for engagement.

I am happy to give an undertaking that trade unions are an important part of our national life and should be consulted. The specific way in which we have gone about that is for the government departments responsible for specific goals to reach out to their stakeholders, including of course trade unions, and seek their opinion on what more they should be doing to reach the targets.

I hope that, in that brief summary of what has been an excellent debate and contribution to the voluntary national review process, a number of things have come out. The first is that it is not the responsibility of one party or one Government, but the responsibility of us all. Also central to this is the ambition that we not only achieve these goals but, in so doing, leave no one behind. That is a pledge which we continue to be committed to and will continue to work with others towards, and I know that all noble Lords who contributed to this debate agree with it as well. I thank again the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, for giving us the opportunity to make those comments.

1.53 pm

Baroness Suttie: My Lords, I thank all noble Lords who have taken part in this thought-provoking debate today. It has left some questions unanswered, but it has also revealed some areas where more is being done than perhaps some of us were aware. That might be an issue of government communication. I also thank the Minister for his characteristically courteous and detailed response. Many of us will want to study it in more detail and look at some of the responses that have been given here today, not least about the website, because it appears that a lot is being done but there is a communication issue, because civil society and NGOs, et cetera, do not feel they are being involved to the degree they should be. Having said that, I again thank the Minister for his very detailed reply and thank noble Lords for taking part in this important debate today.

Motion agreed.

Gosport Independent Panel *Statement*

1.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord O'Shaughnessy) (Con): My Lords, with permission I will repeat an Oral Statement made by my right honourable friend the Secretary of

[LORD O'SHAUGHNESSY]

State for Health and Social Care on the Government's response to the report of the Gosport independent panel. The Statement is as follows:

"In June this year, the Gosport independent panel published its report into what happened at Gosport War Memorial Hospital between 1987 and 2001. It found that 456 patients died sooner than they would have done after being given powerful opioid painkillers. As many as 200 other people may have had their lives shortened, but this could not be proved because medical records were missing.

The findings in the Gosport report are truly shocking, and we must not forget that every one of those people was a son or daughter, a mother or father, or a sister or brother. I reiterate the profound and unambiguous apology on behalf of the Government and the NHS for the hurt and anguish that the families who lost loved ones have endured. These were not just preventable deaths, but deaths directly caused by the actions of others. It is a deeply troubling account of people dying at the hands of those who were trusted to care. I pay tribute to the courage of the victims' families and their local MP, the Member for Gosport, and their work for and commitment to the truth. Without their persistence, the catalogue of failures may never have come to light.

Along with the Prime Minister, I have met Bishop James Jones, who chaired the panel. He made it absolutely clear that what happened at Gosport continues to have an impact and places a terrible burden on relatives to this day. The failures were made worse because whistleblowers were not listened to, investigations fell short and lessons failed to be learnt. We must all learn the right lessons from the panel's report and apply them across the entire system.

As Bishop Jones writes in the report, relatives felt betrayed by those in authority and were made to feel like 'troublemakers' for asking legitimate questions. The report says:

'When relatives complained about the safety of patients ... they were consistently let down by those in authority—both individuals and institutions. These included the senior management of the hospital, healthcare organisations, Hampshire Constabulary, local politicians, the coronial system, the Crown Prosecution Service, the General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council'.

The panel heard how nurses raised concerns as far back as 1988, but were ignored or sidelined. More than 100 families raised concerns over more than two decades, but were ignored and patronised. Frail, elderly people were seen as problems to be managed, rather than patients to be helped. Perhaps the most harrowing part of the report is that which makes it clear that, if actions had been taken when problems were first raised, hundreds fewer would have died at Gosport. People want to see that justice is done, policies are changed and we learn the right lessons across the NHS. I will take each of those in turn.

First, on justice, between 1998 and 2010, Hampshire Constabulary conducted three separate investigations. None of the investigations led to a prosecution. The panel criticised the police for their failings in the investigations and their failure to get to the truth. Families said that they felt police had not taken their concerns seriously enough or investigated fully. Because

of Hampshire police's failures, a different police force has been brought in. A new external police team is now independently assessing the evidence and will decide whether to launch a full investigation. It must be allowed to complete that process and follow the evidence, so that justice is done. Much has improved in the NHS since the period covered by the panel's report, but we cannot afford to be complacent. What happened at Gosport is both a warning and a challenge.

I turn to the reforms that have been made and the reforms we plan to make. First, the Care Quality Commission has been established, an independent body that inspects all hospitals, GP surgeries and care homes to detect failings and identify what needs to be improved. Next, we have set up the National Guardian's Office to ensure staff concerns are heard and addressed. Every NHS trust in England now has someone in place whom whistleblowers can speak to in confidence and without fear of being penalised. We have established NHS Improvement, a separate, dedicated organisation, to respond to failings and put things right, and the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch now investigates safety breaches and uses them to learn lessons and spread best practice throughout the NHS.

These are the reforms that the Government have already made, but we must go further. Motivated by this report, we will bring forward new legislation that will compel NHS trusts to report annually on how concerns raised by staff have been addressed, and we are working with our colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to see how we can strengthen protections for NHS whistleblowers, including changing the law and other options.

Next is the question of drug prescription. Central to the deaths at Gosport was the prescribing, dispensing and monitoring of controlled drugs. Since the period covered by the report, there have been significant changes in the way that controlled drugs are used and managed, and syringe drivers are no longer in use in the NHS. However, in the light of the panel's findings, we are reviewing how we can improve safety. Further, from April next year, medical examiners will be introduced across England to ensure that every death is scrutinised by either a coroner or a medical examiner. Medical examiners are people whom bereaved families can talk to about their concerns to ensure that investigations take place when necessary, to help to detect and deter criminal activity, and to promote good practice. The system will be overseen by a new, independent national medical examiner and training will take place to ensure consistency of approach and a record of scrutiny.

The reforms we have made since Gosport mean that staff can speak up with more confidence and that failings are identified earlier and responded to more quickly. The reforms we are making will mean greater transparency, stricter control of drugs and a full and thorough investigation of every hospital death. Taken together, they mean that warning signs about untypical patterns of death are more likely to be examined at the time, not 25 years later.

However, as well as these policy changes, there is a bigger change, which I turn to now. Just as with the reports into Mid Staffordshire and Morecambe Bay, the Gosport report will echo for years to come and the

culture change that these reports call for is as deep-rooted as it is vital. There has been a culture change within the NHS since Gosport, but the culture must change further still. One of the most important things we have learnt from the report is that we must create a culture where complaints are listened to and errors are learned from, and that this is embedded at every level in the NHS. What happened at Gosport was not one individual error; it was a systemic failure to respond appropriately to terrible behaviour. To prevent that happening again, we need to ensure that we respond appropriately to error—openly, honestly, taking concerns and complaints seriously, seeing them as an opportunity to learn and improve, not a need for cover-up and denial. I want to see a culture that starts by listening to patients and their relatives and by empowering staff to speak up. That starts with leaders creating a culture that is focused on learning, not blaming; a culture that is less top-down and hierarchical, with more autonomy for staff, and which is more open to challenge and change. We need to see better leadership at every level to create that culture across the NHS.

Today marks an important moment. Lessons have been learned, will be learned and must be applied. The voices of the vulnerable will be heard. Those with the courage to speak up will be celebrated. Leaders must change the culture to learn from errors, and we must redouble our resolve to create a health service that is a fitting testament to the Gosport patients and their families. I commend this Statement to the House”.

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

2.02 pm

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for reading out the Statement updating the House on government actions since this appalling tragedy was reported to the House in June. As the Statement says, the Gosport report was “truly shocking”, and once again our thoughts, sympathies and condolences go out to the families of the 456 patients whose lives were shortened. Those families campaigned for so many years to find out what happened. We also again pay tribute to these relatives for their courage, tenacity and persistence in seeking the truth, and to the panel, with particular thanks for the calm and compassionate leadership of the chair, Bishop James Jones, for its unstinting work in uncovering the injustice and for listening to and hearing the families’ concerns.

It is important to remind ourselves of the panel’s conclusions. First, there was a disregard for human life and a culture of shortening the lives of a large number of elderly patients. Secondly, there was an institutional regime of prescribing and administering “dangerous doses” of a hazardous combination of medication not clinically indicated or justified. Thirdly, relatives were constantly let down by those in authority in the hospital when they complained. Fourthly, senior management, the local constabulary and politicians, the coroner system, the CPS, the GMC and the NMC all failed to act in ways that would have better protected patients and relatives.

We welcome the commitment to strengthen protections for whistleblowers and for new legislation to compel NHS trusts to report annually on how concerns raised

by staff have been addressed. Has a detailed programme of work for this been drawn up? When does the Minister envisage that legislation on these new powers will be introduced? However, much of the Statement today is about work in progress on the actions and measures that were announced when the report was published, and it is important that we receive regular updates in the future. In his June Statement, the Minister referred to the introduction next April of medical examiners to ensure that every death is scrutinised by either a coroner or a medical examiner, and yesterday’s Statement repeats this commitment. Can the Minister advise the House on progress on this? If they are to be employed by acute trusts, how will their independence be maintained and how will they link into the mortality reviews and the Learning from Deaths guidance? Has consideration been given to basing them in local authorities so that their remit can be extended to primary care, nursing homes and mental health and community trusts? What additional resources are being provided to fund these new posts?

When the report was published, the House welcomed the urgent establishment of a hotline and of counselling being made available to all those who had lost loved ones and were affected. Are these important provisions still available and will they continue to be provided? What further support is being provided? Also, in addition to the 456 patients given opiates without appropriate prescribing or as a result of the prescribing practices at the hospital, sadly, 200 more patients were referred to in the report whose clinical notes or medical records had gone missing. The panel considered that these patients had been similarly affected. What progress has been made by the workstream set up to further investigate this appalling situation? How many more cases have been substantiated as a result of this?

On the question of oversight of the use of opiates in the NHS, is the Minister satisfied that it is now tight enough to prevent incidents such as this happening again? We welcome the promise of a further review on how patient safety can be improved when prescribing and dispensing medicine, aimed at detecting inappropriate prescribing. Can the Minister give us further details of how this review is to be conducted, including the full remit and timescales?

In June, the Minister also promised a “fresh impetus” to moving forward on the need to streamline professional regulation following the report’s condemnation of the inadequacies of the GMC and NMC regulators who failed to act in ways that would have better protected patients and relatives. What progress has been made on this work?

Finally, we come back to the key issue of patient safety and the need to build a patient safety culture in the NHS. Does the Minister consider that additional legislation is needed to keep patients safe? Is a new independent body now required to pick up and take forward the remit of the former Patient Safety Agency, so unwisely abolished by the Government?

The Statement ends by underlining the cultural change that needs to be driven across the NHS to achieve openness, transparency and learning rather than blame and the cover-up of mistakes and incidents, and of course we agree with that. For all the awfulness

[BARONESS WHEELER]

of its findings, the Gosport panel report has managed to ensure that the carers and relatives of loved ones and staff have been listened to and heard. We on these Benches pledge our full support for the measures which will ensure that what happened at Gosport never happens again.

Baroness Jolly (LD): My Lords, I join the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, in thanking the Minister for an update of this situation and I too pay tribute to the relatives and the whistleblowers in this awful scandal. I am sure that many noble Lords will remember how the Shipman scandal absolutely rocked the NHS back in the late 1990s. The learning which came out of that was meant to incorporate right across the NHS robust clinical governance structures. It is really quite ironic that the things which were put in place to deal with the Shipman case seem to have fallen apart completely as regards the particular issue of Gosport.

Whistleblowers need to be confident that there will be no danger of their being bullied. I am sure that other noble Lords will have had NHS employees ask to talk to them about whistleblowing issues. One of the saddest days I can remember was when I was sitting in the Royal Gallery talking to a very senior manager in an NHS trust who was trying to raise his concerns. In the end he resigned because he felt that he had been bullied into doing so. He was going to take his expertise elsewhere. There is learning that should come from that.

I welcome the Freedom to Speak Up initiative and the work from the National Guardian's Office. What progress has been made in embedding the operation of that scheme? If it is still in train, when might it be embedded? What consideration has been given to a similar scheme for whistleblowers who work in the care sector? This has got the NHS sorted but, at the moment, there is no way that care workers who work in care homes or other care establishments can effectively blow the whistle.

Lord O'Shaughnessy: I am grateful to both noble Baronesses for their comments. I join them in expressing both my sympathy for the families of those affected and my admiration for and gratitude to Bishop Jones and his panel.

The noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, asked a number of questions to which I will attempt to respond. First, she was right to reiterate the shocking nature of the panel's findings and the systemic problems that were found. The noble Baroness, Lady Jolly, talked about the Shipman case. Part of the problem here is that, in some senses, people were alert for a Shipman-type event but not for a different type of event; it is almost always the case that when things go wrong, they go wrong in a different way. That is why we need a different approach from simply focusing on the actions of one person.

The noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, asked about legislation. We are considering whether the right route would be through the draft health service safety investigations Bill, which is coming through Parliament at the moment, or other routes. Her request for regular updates is a good one; by the time we next report on

such an update, I will be able to update her on the type of legislation we intend to use. I am grateful to both noble Baronesses for offering to support us through that process.

Clearly, the medical examiners' policy is critical to making sure that we do not suffer these problems in future or that bad behaviour—you can never rule it out—is spotted and dealt with quickly. They will come in from April 2019. In the policy design, we considered whether they should be sited with local authorities but felt that they would be better sited in trusts, so they will work in trusts, there will be provisions to deal with conflicts of interest in particular, and they will report directly to a national medical examiner. That will be their reporting line, so they will have that professional responsibility.

We will support this scheme with more money—about £30 million. It will start with hospital deaths but will roll out over time to all deaths. Clearly, as was said by the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, interaction with the Learning from Deaths programme, which will move from acute mental health and learning disability deaths into a primary care setting, will be critical. We need to bring these programmes together; her point was well made.

We expect that the medical examiners' system will lead to 140 more coronial inquests each year where there is suspicion of something being not quite right. That reflects both the likelihood of problems existing in the system now and the benefits that we can get from the scheme. I hope that the scheme will get strong support from all sides of the House.

Of course, support for the affected families continues; they are still going through this process and the police assessment and investigation is moving forward. We do not believe that there are further cases on this scale but we need to remain vigilant at all times, precisely as my right honourable friend the Secretary of State said yesterday. We must make sure that we do not just think that we have solved it but keep deepening our attempt to change the culture.

The noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, asked about medicine prescribing. At this point, the intention is to have an internal review, but we would be happy to receive evidence from all parties—noble Lords, stakeholders and others—to make sure that we can improve prescribing and look for patterns of bad behaviour. E-prescribing has been rolled out across the country, which gives us the ability to investigate unusual prescribing patterns. Improved computing technology can help us to do that as well; we are talking to the MHRA about that because it is concerned with medicine safety.

The noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, asked about professional regulation reform. The Secretary of State is aware of it. There is a long history of great support in this House for it; I am afraid that I have not got anything particular to say to her about that at this time, other than that we are aware of the support and need for reform in this area.

Finally, the noble Baroness, Lady Jolly, asked about whistleblowers. She is absolutely right that this issue is critical, which is why we are working with the business department. The good news is that speak-up guardians,

as they are sometimes known, are now in place in trusts across the country. The bad news is that, despite being banned, gagging clauses are still in operation; again, my right honourable friend said that he is determined to stamp that out. I take the noble Baroness's point about looking at the care sector; it is a good one. I will make sure that it is considered explicitly in the work that we are doing with the business department.

Once again, I thank both noble Baronesses for their support. I know that we are all determined to make a difference.

Bombardier

Statement

2.15 pm

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House I shall now repeat a Statement made today in another place by my honourable friend the Minister for Business and Industry. The Statement is as follows:

“Following Bombardier’s announcement that it plans to reduce its workforce by 490 employees at its Belfast aerostructures site, I have this morning spoken to Michael Ryan, its chief operating officer of aerostructures and engineering services. I have arranged a follow-up meeting with him later this afternoon. This follows the announcement from the company earlier this month that a further 5,000 staff from its global workforce will need to leave the company over the next 12 to 18 months.

I understand that the employee consultation period of 90 days has now been triggered. During this time, Bombardier will be doing what it can to mitigate the number of compulsory redundancies required, including considering the possibility of voluntary redundancy packages. I recognise that this is unwelcome news for the Belfast workforce and their families. It is regrettable that they face further uncertainty at this time of year, but Bombardier is a private company and the Government have no role in its commercial decisions. My top priority has been to emphasise our support for Bombardier’s high-quality UK workforce now and in the future.

The Shorts factory in Belfast employs around 4,000 skilled workers, with almost a quarter of those working on the A220, the new joint venture with Airbus. It also supports a supply chain of hundreds of companies and many more jobs in the UK. It is in all our interests that Bombardier’s Belfast facility is successful. Last year, when the joint venture was announced, both Bombardier and Airbus made a number of important commitments to me, including that wing manufacturing will continue in Belfast, that the treatment of UK sites and suppliers will be equal to that of other Bombardier and Airbus suppliers, and that the strategy will be one of building on existing strengths and commitments, not plant closures, taking opportunities to increase sales of the C Series across the globe. These commitments still hold true.

The announcement yesterday is part of a five-year transformation plan that covers the global business. This is a long-term strategy, designed to increase the competitiveness of the company. It is, of course, deeply unsettling, for the workers at the Belfast facility, and the Government will work closely with Bombardier to

minimise the uncertainty and help them to prepare for the future. The Government are also working closely with the Belfast facility on its longer-term competitiveness. In the global aerospace market, this is driven by embracing new technology. This year, the Government invested over £20 million in R&D at the Belfast plant to develop new products and improve efficiency.

The Government will continue to work closely with the company, the unions and the devolved Administration to support the company and to support manufacturing sectors that we can be proud of. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities’ redundancy service offers its support to employers, workers and those impacted during a redundancy situation”.

2.18 pm

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Vere, for repeating the Statement.

Bombardier’s presence in Northern Ireland is vital to the economy there, representing as it does 8% of Northern Ireland’s GDP and about 40% of the Province’s manufacturing output. The company employs 4,000 people across Northern Ireland as a whole, so this announcement will be a devastating blow, and not only to the families who will be directly affected in the run-up to Christmas—an estimated 20,000 jobs throughout the UK are part of the company’s supply chains. Many such employees and their families may also be affected by the company’s decision.

I am sure noble Lords will recall that last year the company was under attack from President Trump, who attempted to impose tariffs of nearly 300% on Bombardier when the company was accused by Boeing of dumping its C Series jets in the US market. Will the Government join me in paying tribute to the way in which Bombardier’s unions, primarily Unite and GMB, worked closely with Michael Ryan and Bombardier’s management team at that time to fight those absurd dumping allegations?

I am sure your Lordships’ House will be disappointed that the same spirit of co-operation appears not to have been the case today; we understand from Unite that the unions were not made aware of the extent and scale of the job losses that management are now contemplating. Will the Secretary of State meet the unions to discuss how to work together on these issues?

The 490 proposed job losses are just the latest in a long line of redundancies by Bombardier: there have been over 1,700 since May 2015. The company has said that these job cuts are part of a global drive to cut costs, but it is true that a disproportionate number of the 5,000 Bombardier jobs to be cut globally will be cut in Northern Ireland. It is over 10% of the workforce there.

I agree with the Government that it is in all our interests that Bombardier’s Belfast facility is successful. However, I was struck by the comment in the Statement that when the joint venture between Bombardier and Airbus was announced,

“a number of important commitments”, were made to the Government,

[LORD STEVENSON OF BALMACARA]

“including that wing manufacturing will continue in Belfast, that the treatment of UK sites and suppliers will be equal to that of other Bombardier and Airbus suppliers, and that the strategy will be one of building on existing strengths and commitments, not on plant closures, taking opportunities to increase sales of the C Series across the globe”.

What has gone wrong here, precisely? Were the Government led up the garden path? Were these binding commitments, and can the company be held to them? According to the Statement, the Government clearly believe that these commitments still “hold true”—whatever that means. It is certainly not a very legal term. What precisely will the Government do about it?

I have a number of further questions for the noble Baroness. What recent discussions have the Government had with Bombardier regarding its global restructuring plan? For instance, it has been reported that as a result of Bombardier’s redundancies in Northern Ireland, production jobs could be created in Mexico and Morocco. What assessment have the Government made of these reports, and will they make strong representations to Bombardier on that issue?

It is estimated that there are a further 60 aerospace-related firms in Northern Ireland. What assessment have the Government made of the resulting impact on these businesses of the decision to make redundancies? What discussions has the Secretary of State had in Northern Ireland about securing alternative inward investment into Northern Ireland? Are there any government contracts in the offing, for instance?

When steel sites were being closed a few years ago, steel task forces were set up with government aid. What provision will be put in place for advice and support to Bombardier employees and families affected by this round of redundancies? Will any additional government funds be provided outside the current block grant and the special DUP-designated funding—if that is being retained—to help reskill any workers who will lose out?

Bombardier represents 8% of Northern Ireland’s overall GDP and the aerospace industry contributes £1.3 billion to the Northern Ireland economy. It is a significant slice of activity there. What steps are the Government taking to ensure these vital industries are protected in the long term?

Presumably, the Government will review its investment of over £20 million in research and development activity at the Belfast plant, which, according to the noble Baroness, was there to develop new products and improve efficiency. Can she say how much of that is in doubt now, and what steps will be taken to make sure that value of money is secured?

Baroness Randerson (LD): My Lords, I start by thanking the Minister for repeating the Statement. This is a very significant development, because Bombardier is one the biggest employers in Northern Ireland. This is very sad news for the whole of Northern Ireland.

Earlier this month, Bombardier announced that it would have to cut 5,000 jobs across its global operations. Of that, 3,000 would be in Canada. It seems to me that, for a very small country, the number of jobs being cut in Northern Ireland will have a disproportionate

effect. It also seems that the loss of 500 jobs, which is a considerable number, does not reflect the assurances the Government said they received from Bombardier when they made their investment in research earlier in the year.

It is a particularly bitter blow for east Belfast, where the company is based, and especially for the workers and families who will be directly affected. It is of great importance, because these are well-paid, highly skilled workers in a relatively low-paid economy. At the moment, Northern Ireland is in a particularly uncertain situation; our whole economy is uncertain, but Northern Ireland’s is more uncertain than the rest.

Bombardier’s struggle to bring in orders for its C series jets was almost certainly exacerbated by the threat of punitive US tariffs which hung over the company for several months. What are the Government doing to defend the rules-based international trade system in the Trump era? Can the Minister tell us if they are still hopeful for a trade deal with the US that benefits UK businesses?

The Government could have a vital role to play in helping these workers reskill and retrain in the face of a rapidly changing labour market. What steps are officials in Northern Ireland taking in this regard, and have the Government considered supporting people with, for example, an endowment, or an individual learning account which they can use at any stage in life to access further education or training?

The Statement says that the Government have no role in Bombardier’s decisions, as it is a private company. But that overlooks entirely the leverage given to them by the £20 million that they invested in the company this year for research, and to help it improve efficiency. Can the Minister explain what efficiencies they anticipated as a result of this investment? From time to time, the word “efficiency” actually means cutting jobs. Was there a clear agreement about job security when that money was invested?

There is, of course, a big supply chain in Northern Ireland which is also affected. Can the Minister give us an estimate of the value of that supply chain, and the number of jobs involved? Will the Government undertake to have meetings with any of those in the supply chain whose companies and jobs will be affected? Finally, the Statement refers to the joint venture with Airbus. Can the Minister assure us that Airbus is still in a good position, despite these job cuts, with its partner?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I thank the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, and the noble Lady, Baroness Randerson, for their contributions. A number of issues were raised, and I will cover as many as I can. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, that it was very good that we managed to fend off the tariffs coming from the US. I pay tribute to the work done by the unions, and to the Prime Minister, who was instrumental in making sure that Bombardier was not hit by these very significant tariffs, which would have had a very difficult impact on its business.

Over the coming days, we will meet with Bombardier—I think the first meeting is this afternoon. We will encourage the company to work with the unions; I am disappointed to hear that it did not. We are at the very

start of a 90-day consultation period, which will obviously include numerous meetings with the unions, employees and, indeed, the company.

On the comments in the Statement about the commitments that have been given, these are not at all inconsistent with what is happening. My understanding is that different parts of the business are responding in different ways to the global markets for their respective products. Certainly, the Airbus-Bombardier joint venture is proceeding successfully—that is about a quarter of the workforce in Belfast—and there is no reason to suspect that there will be any job losses at all there. Our ongoing discussions with Bombardier are very good, because it is a key part of the aerospace growth partnership, which meets to discuss the aerospace sector as a whole. The department has a budget of £1.98 billion to invest in R&D over a 13-year period to support the growth of the sector and its transition to new technologies.

On parts of manufacturing going to Morocco and Mexico, that is indeed the case. Some of that involves less-skilled workers and less highly manufactured parts, but what we need to do is to make sure that the R&D is there and that the skilled employment exists to allow those jobs to come back as technology moves on. That is where we are putting our money.

We are confident that the Northern Irish Government have the resources to support the workers to retrain or to find work, but it is important that we understand that we do not currently know who will lose their jobs. We do not know whether that will be compulsory or voluntary, so it is very difficult to talk about retraining or new jobs for these people until we know who they are.

The Government will not be reviewing the £20 million that we contributed to Bombardier in conjunction with Invest Northern Ireland, because it was R&D spending. We have to be clear that research and development is the Government priming the pump. I am afraid that the engine has to run itself, but it is our job to make sure that we put seed funding into projects that we know will be a step change to coming new technologies.

Turning to some of the detail from the noble Baroness, Lady Randerson, obviously I cannot commit right here, right now about a trade deal with the US, but she will doubtless be reassured that we will be looking to create as many new trading relationships as we possibly can. That will certainly have benefits when it comes to future tariffs. Regarding the supply chain, again, it is too early to tell because we do not know where the jobs will come from, what elements of the business will be downsizing and what the consequences will be for the supply chain. It might be that the manufacturing elements are slightly overstuffed as technology has improved, and that the impact on the supply chain will be very small because there will still be products going through it. Until we understand that a bit more, I do not think that we can comment on it.

2.31 pm

Baroness Seccombe (Con): My Lords, messages of this type are always unsettling, but at this particular time of year I feel for all the employees of Bombardier in Northern Ireland. However, people tell me that aerospace is a huge global industry. If there is work to be done in this industry, Bombardier should benefit from this development. Am I right in thinking that is true?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My noble friend is completely right. The Government firmly believe that the aerospace sector is one that we really need to be involved in. Wings are manufactured by Airbus and Bombardier, as we have heard. We have engines from Rolls-Royce, aerostructures from Spirit, Bombardier, GKN and Melrose, and advanced systems from Safran, UTC, Thales and GE Aviation. The total turnover of the aerospace sector is £33.5 billion. It supports direct employment of 124,000 people and indirect employment of 167,000 people. The average salary is £41,000 a year. We know that growth is coming in the sector. It is estimated that we will need 35,000 new large passenger aircraft over the next 20 years. They will be greener, quieter and more efficient. It is very important that the Government involve themselves in the sector and put their money into the right projects that need research, so that we can be a major part of creating those new aircraft.

Lord Rogan (UUP): My Lords, I welcome the news that the Minister has been so proactive in this matter. As has been stated, it cannot be stressed too strongly how important the highly skilled jobs from Bombardier are to the Northern Ireland economy. As mentioned in the Statement, this year the Government invested more than £20 million in research into new projects and efficiency. This is a positive development. Would the Minister consider whether, by offering extra aid and finance, more jobs could be maintained?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, as I mentioned, there is a very significant pot that amounts to about £150 million a year. The Government are always open to hearing any applications from companies such as Bombardier for some of this money, on the understanding that it is for research and development. That of course includes jobs in those sectors. It is to make sure that those companies are fit for the future and able to take part in the global aerospace industry.

Lord Empey (UUP): My Lords, in her Statement the Minister mentioned that her department would be working with the devolved Administrations. For the second time today, I say to her that her right honourable friend in the other place the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland must understand that, in this situation, two parts of government have a responsibility. The devolved part of government has responsibilities for training and other areas of economic activity, such as new developments and new plants. I had the privilege of handling the Bombardier issues for many years. We invested a lot of money in the C Series wing plant and various other things.

My anxiety about this is that things will start falling between the cracks. There has been a very good relationship over the years between the Governments in Belfast and here with the company and the unions. They have been trying to work together. We know that it is a tough market. We have already said that aerospace is one of the United Kingdom's great success stories, but it is particularly important in our circumstances. Yet again, the absence of the devolved Administration is a risk that has to be taken into account. The Government's policy is one of saying, "We are doing

[LORD EMPEY]

our best to bring the devolved institution back and this is our objective”, but nothing is happening and nothing will happen in the immediate to short term because there is no initiative, drive or effort being made, as far as I can see. I appeal to the Minister to reflect to her right honourable friend in the other place that my anxiety is that there is nobody directing their local departments. Therefore, a large slice of what could be done could very well be missed out. That is something we have to watch very closely.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The anxiety so clearly outlined by the noble Lord, Lord Empey, is common to many Members of your Lordships’ House. I will certainly make sure that my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland looks at *Hansard* and takes his comments on board.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, the United Kingdom in effect leads the world in wing design and wing construction. It is one of our areas of excellence. Bombardier has just posted remarkably high profits. Is there any indication that it is trying to move some of this knowledge and skill to places such as Mexico?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Lords, there is no indication that it is trying to do something like that. The UK is a very important hub for the more high-spec and high-tech ends of wing design and wing manufacture. On profitability, Bombardier is not just about aeroplanes; it is also about trains. We know that you cannot look at overall profitability and say, “Okay, it’s all profitable. Surely these sorts of things don’t have to happen”. That is not the case. This is a massive company with many billions of pounds-worth of revenue. While it is true that its profitability has improved, it is nothing like where it should be, given the amount of capital invested in it. If the five-year transformation plan works it will put the company on a firmer footing.

Displaced Children

Motion to Take Note

2.38 pm

Moved by Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale

To move that this House takes note of the numbers of children displaced from their homes internationally, and the actions undertaken by the Government, the European Union and the United Nations to support them.

Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful for this opportunity to raise this vitally important subject, particularly at this time of year. My entry in the register of interests contains a number of interests that might be seen to be relevant, including my position as vice-president of the United Nations children’s fund, UNICEF.

There are close to 30 million displaced children around the world today—in 2018, towards the end of the second decade of the 21st century. Approximately

half of those children are refugees or asylum seekers. The other half are internally displaced within their own countries. Those who are refugees, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, and those seeking asylum, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, have some guarantees under international law and some protections from the international agencies, but time and again we see countries turn their backs on those laws and protections and refuse to adequately finance the humanitarian response required when these children spend sometimes many years in camps. Children who are internally displaced do not even have those rights or the possibility of being covered by international law or by the humanitarian response, because the responsibility for them primarily lies with the nation state and the Government of the country in which they live, even if that Government are part of the problem that has led to the children being displaced in the first place.

Millions of these children are unaccompanied—without their parents or guardians, older friends or relatives. Many of them travel thousands of miles before they find a new home. Almost all live in fear of one kind or another. It is sometimes estimated that up to 7 million more, have been displaced by extreme weather events and natural disasters, such as the recent tsunami in Indonesia. These children not only live in fear of violence and abuse, but many of them experienced it before they left and experience it on the way, in some cases time and again. The impact of this displacement and trauma on their personal development, on their education, on their health and perhaps most critically on their mental health is almost incalculable.

Some are survivors of boats that have capsized in the Mediterranean. I met young lads in Sicily 15 months ago who were among the few survivors from a boat that had capsized. Not only had they travelled thousands of miles to get to the boat, not only had they spent time in a detention camp in Libya and seen horrors there, not only had they been through the frightening experience of being on a boat that capsized, but they had struggled to swim and get on to a rescue boat as others drowned alongside them in the sea. The mental trauma that they experienced—not only the boat capsizing or the fear of the boat capsizing but the trauma that they carry with them when they land in Italy, Greece or somewhere else—is stark and has a massive impact on their condition.

There are children in Bangladesh currently living in fear of being returned to Rakhine state in Myanmar. They have already seen horrors that no child should ever see and now face the prospect of being sent back home, with the endorsement of the international community, to fear such violence again. Some children from Syria have now spent five, six or seven years in refugee camps across the border in Iraq, Turkey or Jordan. Yes, there is some form of health service and schooling, but temporary schooling is not schooling—education is more than that. These children have been there for almost all their primary school years, or more than their secondary school years, and many will never recover that missed opportunity.

I could go on and list a number of other examples. More than 50% of the refugees currently in northern Uganda are children, from South Sudan and elsewhere.

There are children freezing and starving at the moment in Greece, a European Union country, who have made their way—sometimes unaccompanied, sometimes because their parents died in the water on that trip from Turkey across that small gap, the Mediterranean Sea—to be stuck in Greece because that country cannot deal with the capacity issues of their applications and the European Union does not want to know any more. All this should make us very angry: this is 2018; this is the 21st century. These children are the global scandal of our time and the international response—not just the national response in individual countries—lacks urgency, depth, real commitment and resources. We in the UK are in a position to do more about it and we should.

On 10 and 11 December there will be an inter-governmental conference in Morocco on the global compact for migration. The result of a commitment in 2016, when the New York declaration for refugees and migration was agreed at the United Nations, was to have a UN General Assembly decision on a global compact for migration—safe, orderly migration—and the position of refugees by the end of 2018. This summit must be more than words, more than people turning up and just making the set speeches that they prepared before they left. It must be about those of us in the developed world listening to those in the developing world, where most of these children come from. It must be about those who are not currently involved in conflict really understanding what it is like to live in conflict, what it is like to flee from it and fear having to go back. It must be about reinforcing global rules.

I am strongly in favour of creating safe routes, or safer routes, and protecting children along the way, but they also need to have the global rules that were put in place a long time ago to guarantee their rights whenever they arrive at their destination, chosen or otherwise. There has to be a proper global partnership between what we used to call the rich world and the poor world, between the developed and the developing world, between different continents—because these children travel over continents and between continents as well as across countries. My first question to the Government is: will the UK be represented at this intergovernmental conference at ministerial rather than official level, unlike with some recent events of this sort? Will we agree to endorse and adopt that global compact, should it be agreed at the intergovernmental conference in Morocco on 10 and 11 December?

Ever since a visit to refugee camps and displaced person camps in Iraq a couple of years ago, two children I met have stuck in my mind. One was a story of hope, I suppose: a young lad called Ahmed who, when I asked in a classroom what his ambitions were, first told me that he had come from Mosul and was internally displaced. He had no rights in the international system apart from the provisions that we and others were trying to make available through UNICEF and others. He then told me that not only did he want to do well in school, but he wanted to become an engineer and go back to Mosul. He wanted to go home and rebuild the city he had come from. Later that day I met a young girl called Safa, whom I have mentioned in your Lordships' House before. She had come from Syria and had been in the camp at that point for three or four years: she is probably still there. She was very

confident, 11 years old, able to talk quite coherently about her experience, her family's experience and the suffering they had seen, but when I asked her how she was doing at school, she burst into tears. The thing that really got to her was that her grades had gone down: that was what really mattered to her in terms of her personal confidence, her as an individual, where she could go in life.

I want to talk briefly about those who are displaced, because we have to keep those who are already displaced in our minds and not forget them. It is too easy, when they are not in the headlines, just to forget that they are there. There was a commitment over recent years to create a global Education Cannot Wait fund. I know that the UK made an initial contribution, as others did, but the targets of that fund have never been met: it is not yet a sustained international commitment. It seems to me that we, as a champion of education internationally, could do more to promote that fund and make sure that it succeeds in providing the kind of education required in these camps, for these children, over so many years. My next question to the Government is: what is our ongoing commitment to education funding for those children in refugee and IDP camps? What are we doing to convince others to make a bigger contribution too?

That education is worthless if the children are not safe. We, like many other European partners, have expertise. Those in northern Europe, western Europe and some parts of central and Mediterranean Europe as well have many decades of experience of child protection systems. They have sometimes let children in this country down, but in the main, if they are implemented properly, they provide a good example to the rest of the world. I would be interested to know today what we are doing to assist those who are trying to protect children when they are in refugee or IDP camps from the sorts of predators that exist in those locations—both inside the camps and those who might traffic them elsewhere.

The second question that I want to raise is: what happens to those on the move? Fifteen months ago, I met Nikki in Sicily. She had run away from Nigeria and would not want me to tell the House today what the circumstances were, but she was desperate to move for all sorts of reasons. She was very afraid of some things and was pregnant when she left Nigeria. When she arrived in the detention camps in Libya, she was six months' pregnant and spent a couple of months there. When she was eight months' pregnant she got into a boat without a lifejacket, along with 250 others, to go across the Mediterranean Sea and arrived in Sicily. I do not think any of us can imagine her experiences along the way—at every border or every time the traffickers stopped and she was passed on to somebody else—or what she experienced even as a pregnant woman in the detention camp in Libya, which we are partly financing.

We therefore have an obligation as we have been part of, and will probably continue in some way to be part of, the European response to that crisis of migration across the Mediterranean. We have an obligation to do more to ensure that the routes which people follow are safe. We need to do much more to ensure that the

[LORD MCCONNELL OF GLENSCORRODALE]

conditions are safe for people to live inside those Libyan camps where there are Libyan security forces, if we can call them that, and to which the Libyan coastguard is returning people—and that they are properly assessed and assisted rather than just abused and rejected. I would be interested to know more about what the Government are doing to learn the lessons of recent years and to improve that relationship with Libya, which has been central to the European strategy.

The third thing I want to raise is the position of those who might move in the future. I do not want to repeat all the arguments made in a previous debate in your Lordships' House today. However, if we are to ensure that there are fewer children fleeing violence, war and conflict or fleeing starvation, poverty and ill health in the future, then the sustainable development goals surely are that driving force which will allow us, and others, to contribute to greater prosperity at home. That will mean that fewer children have to be on the move in the future, for whatever reason. In relation to this, goal 16 on peace, justice, strong institutions and human rights has to be central. I welcome very much the Government's recent doubling of the UK's contribution to the UN peacebuilding fund but we have to ensure that these children are protected at home—that they have the rights so that they are not forced to run. We could also do just a little more with our technical expertise to help build resilience in those places where extreme weather events result in millions being displaced.

Finally, if we are to adopt new immigration laws in this country as we leave the European Union over the coming months, surely we can do something about our family reunion laws. Surely we can find a way so that more children—they have to scrape their way across the Sahara and somehow find their way across the Mediterranean, then when they get to Europe must battle to get to Calais and find their way over here—can legally come to this country and be reunited with their families without having to go through all that trauma and horror.

In the 1960s, the images of children in Vietnam being bombed by the Americans caused international outrage. In the 1970s, the images of children in Soweto being massacred by apartheid South Africa caused international outrage. In the 1980s, there were colour pictures—perhaps showing this for the first time so vividly—of children starving to death in front of our eyes in Ethiopia during the famine, and they caused international outrage and action. Surely in this decade and this century the position of these children, which is the global scandal of our times, can cause that international outrage and then we can do more, faster and more effectively, to help them.

2.54 pm

Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, on securing this debate. It is especially timely since it is just a day after we celebrated World Children's Day, when we should be thinking, as he said, about how we ensure that all children have rights, wherever they are and whatever their condition.

I shall focus my remarks today on the implications of displacement for street children. What do I mean by “street children”? They are children who live or work on the streets most of the time, either on their own or with other children or family members. They may live or work on the streets only some of the time, but their time on the streets is important to them. As the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, said, children can be displaced for a variety of reasons. The appalling scenes of people fleeing conflict with their families are strong in the mind but we need to think of what happens after that, as he said. Any event such as this can cause children to be displaced and on the streets for the whole of their young years and adolescence.

The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, cited the example of the tsunami but I have in mind that of northern Nigeria, where the Fulani herdsmen are migrating southwards because of desertification and have lost their grazing land. That has caused not only families to move and children to be displaced but some interfaith conflict. There is so much that needs to be resolved.

A frequent reason for children to be displaced is that of the economic demands made by their family—indeed, it can be the result of family breakdown itself. As the noble Lord said, a major cause of the displacement of children is conflict, which can be anywhere, any time. There is conflict such as the internal conflict in South Sudan, where violence has raged for the past five years. Over 1 million people have fled the country—many to Uganda, as the noble Lord said—and 2 million have been internally displaced. I welcome the signing of the peace agreement this summer but so much more needs to be done to make it a reality. The noble Lord was right to point out the duty of the international community to take action, so the UK, as a member of the troika alongside the US and Norway, has a vital role to play in encouraging the parties to observe the peace. So of course do the members of the African Union, and the UN more generally, but in the meantime 72% of children in South Sudan are out of school and girls are more likely to die in childbirth than to complete secondary school.

Wherever children live, they should be treated equally and protected from people and policies that can harm them. The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, referred to international laws and he is right to point out that they work only if individual states sign up to them. The major international agreement for children is of course the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the most universally accepted of all UN human rights instruments and the most comprehensive in its promotion of children's rights—civil, political, economic, social and cultural—informing other human rights standards through a framework of state responsibilities, applicable to all children within the jurisdiction of those states which have signed up.

To assist in the interpretation of the rights under that convention, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issues general comments from time to time. In June last year, the Committee adopted *General Comment No. 21 (2017) on Children in Street Situations*. That provided Governments with authoritative guidance on how to ensure that they offer the same human rights protection to children in street situations as they

do to any other children within their jurisdiction. It was the first time that children in street situations had ever received this level of recognition, and been explicitly recognised as rights holders under the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

The analysis behind the general comment was based not only on what we might call the usual way of doing things, which is to have research and submissions by states, civil society and academia; it was also informed by research collected by the Consortium for Street Children, which worked with member organisations around the world and used a new process of listening to the children themselves and asking them to identify the areas for action. General Comment 21 urges states to develop comprehensive, long-term national strategies on children in street situations, using a holistic child-rights approach. This means that children in street situations should be treated as active agents in their own lives and involved in decision-making. They should not be viewed or treated as merely victims or delinquents.

Last week the AGM of the All-Party Group on Street Children took place. I am one of its co-chairs. We heard from NGOs in several countries about their work with street children. They emphasised the importance of the support provided by DfID for NGOs working in the field and how much the UK commitment to 0.7% was welcomed and respected. I appreciate that DfID profiles set out how its country programmes contribute to delivering the UK aid strategy. Will the Minister say how DfID takes account of the importance of targeting the needs of street-connected children in drafting those profiles? There was also a general welcome for UK government support in protecting children worldwide, whether the country qualifies for official development assistance or not.

The work of DfID and the FCO can, and should, play a strong leadership role in promoting children's rights around the world. I would like to give a flavour of three of the presentations we heard from NGOs last week and ask the Minister to respond to a question related to each country. Alfred Ochaya is the director of the NGO SALVE in Uganda. SALVE stands for "support and love via education". He and his colleagues work to help children gain access to education and stop living on the streets. One often hears about discrimination against street children, one aspect of which takes place in education. Often, street children are offered places at schools so far from where they spend their time that it is impossible to take up that place. SALVE tries to help them have an education. Alfred spoke in particular about the damaging effect on street-connected children of the way in which the "idle and disorderly" law is applied in Uganda. Have the Government had discussions with the Ugandan Government about reform of this law and its punitive application to street-connected children?

Catherine Scerri is deputy director of Bahay Tuluyan, an NGO in the Philippines that provides a variety of programmes aimed at preventing and responding to the abuse and exploitation of children. She spoke about how the pendulum is now swinging from protection to repression as a consequence of the President of the Philippines' methods of addressing gang violence and drug trafficking. Have the UK Government had

discussions with the Government of the Philippines on the importance of not stigmatising street-connected children and not condoning violence against them?

The third country is India. Sanjay Gupta is the director and founder of CHETNA, an NGO that works for the empowerment of street and working children in Delhi and neighbouring states. It engages in training authorities to protect street children and in empowering the children to advocate for themselves. Although it is not possible to know the exact number of street children in India, a quarter of a century ago UNICEF estimated that it was 11 million. More recently it has been estimated at 14 million, and even that is expected to be a wild underestimate. I am aware that since 2015 DfID has not given traditional aid to India, instead providing world-leading expertise and private investments aimed at boosting prosperity, creating jobs and opening up markets for UK businesses. How does DfID take account of the importance of targeting the needs of street-connected children in determining how UK aid will be allocated in India?

Last week, the Foreign Secretary gave oral evidence to the International Relations Select Committee of this House. It was a contribution to our current report on UK foreign policy in changed world conditions. It is a world where the international rules-based system is increasingly being undermined. The Foreign Secretary's evidence is publicly available online on the House of Lords website. I was pleased to hear him say:

"We believe very strongly in the rules-based international order and in multilateral institutions".

He went on to say that the UK has the ability to shape the,

"world order—not to control it but to shape it",

and:

"Because we are the country that, alongside the United States, was largely responsible for the current world order, I think people will be looking at us and asking what we are going to do to protect the values that all of us here believe in so strongly".

I believe he is right. It is essential that in working to shape the world order in such difficult times and to protect the values we espouse, we should do all we can to ensure that children displaced from their homes internationally have their rights observed and supported.

3.05 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, listening to my noble friend Lord McConnell and the noble Baroness, Lady Anelay, I am struck, not for the first time by a long chalk, by how fortunate we are to have two such people in our midst in this Chamber. They have both won respect across the House, irrespective of party, and the contribution that the noble Baroness made as a Minister was evidence of somebody who took what she cared about in this context and what she believed was important into action in so far as that was possible—and I think we all appreciate that.

My noble friend Lord McConnell is tireless on these issues. It is very difficult for an old hand like me to follow two such people because their information is so much more up to date and first-hand than mine. I have a wealth of information, but it comes from previous years. However, some principles continue to apply.

[LORD JUDD]

As I listened to them, and indeed as I prepared my own thoughts on the debate today, I kept remembering that, as we are constantly reminded, we are the fifth-wealthiest nation in the world. If that is the case and if we have a conscience or any sense of social responsibility, there should be no question but that on these issues we should be a world leader. It is not just about what we say but about what we do—and that of course means that we have to look at our own position here in the UK. I find it quite incredible that when these youngsters, who have been through nightmares of the worst order, manage to get here and are allowed to stay, we do not see that re-establishing family relationships for them is absolutely crucial. It might even save money, because in the end it might be much less expensive to ensure that some kind of family support is there for them in their predicament in this country.

We are going to be debating the efforts of the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, next Monday, and it seems to me that between now and then the Government ought to brush up their arguments on this front. We need to know what they are doing to try to establish some way in which these young people can have some kind of family context in this country. This is of course all related to peace, stability and security. We want people who feel secure and confident and who are not alienated. That is where I think sometimes we have to think a bit more ambitiously about what we can positively do to help them in their predicament. It is important to do so before they become prey to extremists and others.

I try to keep in touch with the NGO community because I know from my own experience of working in that area that NGOs have first-class insight and experience that is very difficult for anyone else to challenge. I have been asking them what they feel about the issues before us today. One thing that Christian Aid, my old organisation Oxfam and others have been emphasising is that 50% of all internally displaced people are women and 40% are children. This increases in specific conflicts such as the DRC, where 60% of IDPs are children. Just think of it—60%. Some 17 million children are internally displaced due to violence in conflict, with many more displaced due to disasters. There were 2.18 million new internal displacements in the DRC, coming second only to Syria, yet the DRC has one of the most chronically underfunded crises. Only 20% of countries with data on conflict-related IDPs disaggregate this by age, compared to 56% for refugees.

In the DRC, towards the end of 2017, armed groups were occupying schools in South Kivu, Tanganyika and the region of Kasai, putting the education of 64,000 children at risk and increasing the risk of their joining armed groups. In 2016 the UN verified 2,334 grave violations against children in the DRC, including recruiting 492 children for armed groups. In Syria, acute malnutrition in children shot up in Ghouta from 2.1% in January to 11.9% in November, and infant deaths due to a lack of food were reported for three months from October to December. In Yemen, 75% of IDPs are women and children, with children severely at risk of missing out on education. In 2016, 45% of marriages recorded involved girls under the age of 15. Those are some of the realities with which we are confronted.

So what are front-line workers recommending to us? They are reminding us that they are calling on the UN Secretary-General to commission an independent expert report on IDPs, to create a global focus on the issue, to garner good practice and to engage with states with high levels of IDPs. They welcome the UK Government's commitment to the global plan of action, GP20, and their support of a high-level panel for IDPs, but they urge the UK to ensure that an independent expert report is commissioned as part of the high-level panel.

IDPs face the same vulnerabilities as refugees but do not have the protection of refugee status. They are more likely to be displaced to host communities where it is harder to identify them. Humanitarian crises with large numbers of IDPs are chronically underfunded compared with those in which there are high levels of refugees. IDPs struggle to access services such as education, health and food, which are woefully lacking in IDP camps. Where they can access these services in host communities, it is often to the breaking point of the services and the detriment of host communities, who are often in poverty themselves.

I can think of no more immediate and urgent situation than that of the crisis of the Palestinian displacement. I take this opportunity without qualification to put on record—here I speak with first-hand experience—the tireless, imaginative, selfless work undertaken by UNRWA. The decision by the President of the United States to slash the US contribution to the work of UNRWA was one of the most wantonly irresponsible and wicked things done by a leader in recent years.

What are we thinking of? Do we really want to encourage extremism and increase the likelihood of instability and chaos in a situation where people have already suffered too much? Of course not—but if we do not, education in particular is crucial for deprived communities. There has been tremendous emphasis in recent years on primary education, early school education and, perhaps, secondary education—but university education is also vital for deprived people. We surely want them to be able to fulfil their potential and become leaders in their own right. We should not make higher education the preserve of others, when higher education for them is terribly important.

One other practical point needs to be emphasised. UNICEF and others are calling for improvements in data collection and monitoring of IDP children. One difficulty in devising policy is that there is so little reliable analysis and information about their plight—the noble Baroness spoke powerfully about that.

I come back to my starting point. We are the fifth-wealthiest country in the world. If we want to be respected and remain a world leader, whatever we do about Brexit, it is in the sphere of moral leadership that we should be demonstrating our commitments and priorities—not by asserting power but by asserting values, standards and example. That is what we need, and we need it strongly and with vision from our leaders. I thank my good and noble friend Lord McConnell most warmly for having given us the opportunity to have this debate.

3.19 pm

Baroness Morris of Bolton (Con): My Lords, I am most grateful to the House for allowing me to speak in the gap to ask a specific question, and I promise to be brief. First, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale, on his powerful and moving introduction to this important debate.

In my travels—I declare my interest as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to Jordan and the Palestinian Territories—I have seen the misery and heartache of children far from home and, too often, alone and frightened. Like the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, I met a young man who survived the horrors of a boat that sank in the Mediterranean only by holding on to the bloated corpse of someone who had died. I can only imagine what those horrors must do to somebody in the future.

However, I have also seen the great things that have happened, especially in education, which is important not just for the future of these children and young people but to bring some form of normality to lives that are far from normal. I pay tribute to all those working so hard to provide education—the NGOs—and particular tribute to all that DfID does, of which we should all be incredibly proud. That is not to say that more cannot always be done.

Many of these young people travel alone, but many are separated from their families as they flee from horror. I cannot imagine what it must be like to lose your child, but to lose them far from home when they are already traumatised must be unbearable. I ask the Minister: what help is given to these parents, themselves vulnerable and seeking refuge, to help find their children?

3.21 pm

Baroness Sheehan (LD): My Lords, I add my thanks to those of other noble Lords in thanking the noble Lord, Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale, for bringing this debate to the Chamber. His concern for internationally displaced children patently runs deep.

The debate is timely. We heard from the noble Baroness, Lady Anelay, that last Tuesday was World Children's Day. In addition, last Friday, I attended a commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Kindertransport. The vision of one man, Sir Nicholas Winton, led to the safe evacuation of 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi Germany and the then Czechoslovakia. Families in Britain volunteered to open their homes to these children. The British people showed generosity then and, given the chance, they would do so today. The fact is that local authorities are willing and able to host many more refugee children than the Government will allow them to. At the event last Friday, some of those authorities, such as Hammersmith and Fulham, and Brighton and Hove, were able to restate their offer to house 100 child refugees each. Many others also indicated their willingness.

Over two years ago today, the Calais Jungle camp was demolished. On demolition, unaccompanied children from the camp were dispersed across France into hastily set up centres. In February last year, these centres were closed, and children were forced to leave them and sought help and shelter where they could. Vulnerable

children were at the mercy of ruthless traffickers. The tragedy is that we in this House had succeeded in getting the Government to accept some of these lone children under the Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act 2016. The numbers that the Government undertook to take dwindled from an expected 3,000 to just 480. If the Minister is able to give the figures, how many of the Dubs places remain unfilled?

Surely, in the year we commemorate Britain's role in helping children escape Nazi Germany, we can do the same for desperate children here in Europe today. At the very least, we should meet our legal obligations. We have heard the numbers: of the 68 million people displaced worldwide, over 50% are children. Many remain in their own countries, and we have little data on the plight of those estimated 17 million children. However, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre has argued that internally displaced children face problems accessing education in the same way as refugee children in UNHCR camps. Millions of children lose out on education after spending their whole childhood in places where hope is at a premium.

I am reminded of a young Sudanese boy I met in the Jungle camp in France. He was three when his family fled their village in North Darfur. He lost both parents and lived in the Kutum refugee camp near Khartoum. He was illiterate; he had never been to school—there was no school. He could not read or write Arabic, let alone English, and had very little spoken English.

He decided to leave the camp aged 14 because it was a dangerous place and there was no hope. He said that he took the decision to leave knowing it would be a dangerous journey, but he would rather die trying for a better life than die in that camp. Now he, Ismail, is in Dublin, where, after months of wandering around France, he was finally accepted as an asylum seeker and has refugee status. He is going to school and his future is transformed. In Ireland, I am pleased to say, he has no risk of removal now that he is 18. He would have been at risk of removal here in Britain and I hope we will look at that again and again, and try to change it. He is working hard and will be an upstanding citizen. He wants to do good.

Is Sudan a place to which we are forcibly removing people? Ismail is certain that if he had been returned to Sudan he would have been killed, because returnees are persecuted. On my recent visit to Sudan in September, I asked to visit the Kutum camp. I was told it would be too dangerous. I expect it was not a suitable camp to take a western parliamentarian to—it is too dangerous for me but not for a young child. The point is that, if the camp had been half way decent, with some hope built in for those for whom it represented sanctuary, he would never have left. Had there been the precious opportunity of education that so many people cherish, he would have remained.

Investment in refugee camps in regions where conflict has decimated the lives of many innocent civilians would pay huge dividends; it would reduce the push factors that force people to risk such dangerous journeys in their quest for a life without danger, and give them a little hope of a decent future. Does the Minister agree that much greater investment in bettering refugee camps

[BARONESS SHEEHAN]

and supporting exemplars such as the Bidi Bidi camp in Uganda will pay huge dividends, not just for the people who have to use them but for us here in Europe?

It is unfair that developing countries bear the brunt of supporting refugees. Poor countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon host the highest number of refugees. According to the World Economic Forum, 84% of refugees live in developing countries. If poorer countries can do so much, why can we not? We are a rich country, as the noble Lord, Lord Judd, said. We are the fifth richest country in the world, and we are a generous country, but our Government are making the wrong moral choices and sending the wrong message on immigration, in words as well as in deeds. Terms such as “swarms” and “queue-jumping” are unworthy of our leaders.

So far, I have concentrated on child refugees who have reached our shores, because I hope we can find the means to do our bit in helping them. Will the Minister accept that we should do all we can to help those who are destitute and near us? Will she accept that the Government’s reason for not helping child refugees already in Europe—because they feel it will create a pull factor—is without any factual basis?

In the time I have left, I will turn to displaced children further afield. The UN’s global compact on refugees proposes changing the way in which the burden and responsibility for refugees and migrants is shared between countries. However, it is being undermined by the US’s refusal to continue to support it. What representations have we made to the US Government to encourage them not to undermine this important work? Are we giving it our full support in the UN General Assembly?

The tragedy in all this human suffering is that it is often manmade. The conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan, the suffering of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the misery that is Yemen were all inflicted by men in power. Some of these we cannot influence. But in other areas, our strong voice and stance against such wrongdoing should make a difference. Why do we continue to sell arms to a pretty hideous regime such as Saudi Arabia when it uses them to bomb innocent women and children? It is clear that our processes to stop this happening are not working. Why are we unable to exert pressure on the Burmese generals and the de facto moral leader of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi? The return of Rohingya people would be much easier if the Myanmar Government would accept independent observers to ensure they return in safety and dignity. Dignity means they should be granted citizenship. Why do we not use the leverage we have?

3.30 pm

Lord Touhig (Lab): My Lords, the House is indebted to my noble friend Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale for securing this debate, which allows the opportunity to highlight the plight of some of the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings, displaced children.

This year is the 80th anniversary of one of the most extraordinary acts of commitment to human rights in history: the decision of this country to take in some 10,000 Jewish children rescued from the Nazis—a point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Sheehan. Our noble friend Lord Dubs—I say this because I am sure the House will agree that Alf Dubs is a friend to all, on

all sides of this House—was one of the children rescued. The noble Lord cannot be with us in person today, but he is here in spirit, I am sure.

Taking in the Kindertransport children was one of the finest acts of human kindness in the great history of our country. Last week 1,000 people, including some 60 survivors of the Kindertransport, met at the Friends meeting house and called on Britain to once again take in desperate, homeless, stateless children. They remembered how in just one year Britain offered sanctuary to 10,000 children rescued from certain death. Now they call for us to take in 10,000 children over the next 10 years. In a statement after last week’s gathering, my noble friend Lord Dubs and others said:

“As former child refugees ourselves, we believe the UK government should give more children at risk the same life-saving opportunity that we had... Children seeking asylum have left their homes, their countries, their friends and families. They continue to live in unsanitary and unsafe camps or on the streets because the alternative is war, conflict and persecution. They have no other choice. But we do have a choice”.

Britain has taken important steps to help young refugees, but we have taken in just 240 children, while Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria have taken in 20,000. I echo their plea to rescue these children. I hope and pray that our Government will listen.

We have known for decades that the impact of bad things that happen in a child’s early years will be devastating throughout adult life. My noble friend Lady Massey, whom I have the honour of serving alongside in the Council of Europe, is writing a report addressing the health needs of adolescents in Europe. In her draft, she reminds us that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child notes that,

“achieving children’s right to health is dependent on the realization of many other rights”,

in particular the condition in which people are born and where they live. My noble friend is right to argue that, to address the health needs of adolescents, we need international strategies to be implemented at national, regional and local level. She argues that addressing the health needs of adolescents is imperative, not only for the present generation but for the future.

UNICEF estimates that of the 65 million people currently displaced from their homes worldwide, around 30 million are children—a point made in the opening remarks of my noble friend Lord McConnell. I am sure that the House will agree that this is horrifying, but the human stories behind the displacement are far worse. It is the responsibility of government, the European Union and the United Nations to look at the wider causes that have led to this crisis. When there are more displaced people around the world than at any time since the Second World War, we must ask how diplomacy, conflict resolution and a failure of human rights have contributed.

Equally importantly, we should consider how our foreign policy impacts on the lives of refugees today. Be it Syria, Yemen or Myanmar, we must work with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions to end the violence that has led to the unprecedented displacement of people. We must focus the UK’s foreign policy on peace and development, and in the states that have hosted the greatest numbers of refugees—be it Turkey, which has taken in some 3 million people, or

Lebanon, which has taken in 1.5 million—we must offer our support. What steps are the Government taking to ensure that countries are able to cope with the levels of displaced children and adults that they have received?

Sustainable development can alleviate the exact conditions that lead to displacement—a matter which the House discussed earlier today in a very good debate. Although the Government need to target action on the biggest drivers of poverty and inequality, they must act on climate justice, which could become one of the greatest drivers of forced migration.

We should also recognise that many—indeed, most—refugees are internally displaced in their own country. The United Nations introduced its guiding principles on internal displacement 20 years ago. Can the Minister explain how the Government support displaced children who remain in their home country?

Britain is party to a series of commitments made at the 2016 world humanitarian summit on internally displaced people, and it is vital that we ensure these commitments are met. Accepting a fair share of displaced children and offering a home to some of the world's most vulnerable is a proud British tradition. It is the moral option in the spirit of international law and we should embrace it.

To those displaced children who find a home in the UK today, we must offer a warm welcome—not the hostile environment which it appears the Government have previously indicated to be their policy. Displaced children and refugees are not migrants. It is not right that those who have been forced from their homes by famine and war be met by anything short of open arms. Would we not want that for our children if they were in these circumstances? Too often the displaced children who reach the United Kingdom find themselves separated from the one aspect of their life which remains familiar to them—their family, the most important aspect.

Rules around refugee family reunion can be restrictive and confusing. Often, when left with the choice of staying in a dangerous situation or embarking on a dangerous journey to the UK, parents are left lost and separated from their children. Family separation, as well as language, can soon become a barrier to integration. The opportunity for displaced children to learn English is crucial. Unfortunately, the Government have cut funding for ESOL by over £100 million since 2010, and I understand that the recent integration strategy promised no new dedicated funding for ESOL. Will the Government ensure that all displaced children are given the necessary opportunities to learn English?

The current arrangements for housing are far from perfect and I encourage the Government to review them. Earlier this year, it was reported that in Glasgow the contractor Serco decided to evict up to 330 refugees, many of them children, until political pressure and protests led it to pause the move. That is a disgrace and a stain on this country's reputation.

Those who flee and find a home in the United Kingdom, be they adults or children, deserve a domestic agenda that treats them as a positive attribute for Britain, recognising that they can and will make a contribution. We have a responsibility to help the world's most vulnerable, and few groups are more in jeopardy than displaced children.

Finally, under the current arrangements, Dublin III provides an essential route to settlement in the UK. Can the Minister assure the House that under all circumstances post Brexit the United Kingdom will remain in Dublin III or an equivalent? We have a chance to do something to help the most vulnerable. Just think: if it were our children, would we not want somebody to help them?

3.39 pm

Baroness Stedman-Scott (Con): My Lords, I too thank the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, for highlighting the important issue of displaced children in this debate, and for his eloquent and powerful introduction. He gave us permission to be angry about the situation. I do not think we need permission. There cannot be a person in this Chamber at the moment who is not angry at some of the things that we have heard, and which continue.

This debate, coming just two days after Universal Children's Day, which aims to improve child welfare and mark children's rights to protection from violence and discrimination, is both timely and poignant. Whether refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced, the numbers of children who have been forced to flee their homes by the horrors of conflict, violence and persecution are genuinely shocking and outrageous. Some 30 million children around the world are forcibly displaced today—more than at any time since the Second World War. Children make up a disproportionate number of the world's refugees. They represent less than one-third of the global population but a staggering 52% of the world's refugees today. A further 17 million more children are thought to be displaced inside their own countries.

But these big numbers do not convey the human horrors that no child should have to experience. We have heard case studies today. They are witness to violence and destruction, the fear and uncertainty of sudden night-time flight, the loss of friends, family and home. Once displaced, there is a risk of being preyed on and enslaved by smugglers and traffickers, of falling victim to child labour, sexual exploitation, child marriage or captivity. Each child has a story of individual, unthinkable tragedy.

I know that this is an issue close to the heart of many of the noble Lords here today, as it is to the British public who have time and again shown their compassion and their support for building a better future for children exposed to such horrors. Many noble Lords have said that we do a lot but should we do more? Of course we would like to do more. I cannot commit to that, as noble Lords will appreciate today, but I have no doubt that our Government are listening and will do what they can. Noble Lords are right to keep pushing, though, because we want to do everything in our power to help them.

That same unswerving support is at the heart of the UK's continuing commitment to receiving and protecting displaced vulnerable children by offering them refuge here in the UK. That includes our commitment to transfer to the UK 480 unaccompanied children who have already made dangerous journeys into Europe—more than 220 have already been relocated, and efforts do

[BARONESS STEDMAN-SCOTT]

not stop to ensure that the rest are relocated. We will also resettle 3,000 vulnerable refugee children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa by 2020; some 900 have already been resettled. This is in addition to the commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees under the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme. As of June 2018, a total of 12,851 people had been resettled in the UK since the scheme began, around half of them children.

It is important that we go where the need is greatest, but that does not stop at our borders. All around the world, the UK is at the forefront of responding to disaster, conflict and crisis, and our resources are focused on meeting the greatest need, concentrating our efforts on reaching the most vulnerable.

Our first, response priority is on preserving life and providing immediate support. In Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin, for example, where an estimated 1.9 million people are internally displaced, UK aid has treated 25,000 children for severe acute malnutrition and ensured 260,000 infants, pregnant and nursing women have received essential nutritional supplements. In Bangladesh, we are helping to vaccinate more than 350,000 vulnerable Rohingya children from an outbreak of deadly diphtheria.

Our £175 million Mediterranean migration response includes a £10 million refugee children fund for Europe to provide safe accommodation and we have vaccinated thousands of children against preventable diseases and provided hygiene kits, safe shelter and aid to vulnerable children in Libya. We have also committed £10 million to UNICEF to tackle violence, abuse and exploitation of children on the move in Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. And just last month, the UK announced a major new aid package to Yemen to screen 2.2 million internally displaced children under five for malnutrition, with urgent treatment for 70,000 of the most vulnerable.

We do not take all things at face value, and we know that often the deepest wounds of conflict are invisible to the eye. Prolonged exposure to conflict, violence or fear and the anxiety and uncertainty that come with displacement mean most, if not all, children will experience some form of distress or trauma that has a long-term impact on their well-being and development. That is why the UK has recently committed to setting up the first donor group on mental health and psychosocial support, leading the way in pushing for a greater focus on responding to the effects of conflict on children. It is why we are matching pound for pound public donations up to £500,000 to War Child's Learn to Live campaign, providing psychosocial and wider support to 3,000 children traumatised by war in the Central African Republic. Noble Lords are challenging us all the time to do more. One of the ways we can is to make our budgets go further by doing match funding, which I hope is something we will continue. Just yesterday, 21 November, the International Development Secretary announced more than £11 million in new mental health and wider support for thousands of children in Jordan and Lebanon affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria.

I am sure all noble Lords have been appalled and angered by the situation with child slavery. Equally insidious, and often equally hidden from view, is the borderless scourge of forced labour, modern slavery

and human trafficking. Last year the Prime Minister launched the global call to action to eliminate this crime. A new package of UK programmes is now focusing specifically on child slavery across Africa and Asia. It includes support for up to 400,000 girls and boys at risk of slavery in the Horn of Africa and along dangerous migratory routes in Sudan and Ethiopia. Further support in conflict-ravaged parts of Africa will educate children on the perils of person trafficking, while a programme across six Asian countries will tackle the risks of bonded labour and clamp down on child trafficking.

We want to build a better tomorrow for young people who are displaced, and education is critical in that. Noble Lords have all raised the issue of the importance of education. The impact of conflict and displacement on children's education can be devastating. More than one-third of children affected by crisis do not complete primary education and two-thirds do not complete secondary education. With each successive year of education lost, the human, social and economic costs rise. Access to education in conflict and emergency settings can mean the difference between a future of exploitation and one of hope. Helping to give children the tools to rebuild their lives will one day help them to rebuild their countries as well—a point made by the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, in his powerful speech.

Our new education policy, which was published at the start of the year, sets out how we will target support for the most marginalised, including children affected by conflict and crisis. This is supported by specific initiatives, including an additional £212 million for Girls' Education Challenge to ensure that almost 1 million marginalised girls receive a quality education, such as 20,000 girls in refugee camps in Kenya. The No Lost Generation initiative has helped more than half a million vulnerable children displaced by conflict from Syria and Iraq. Those children have access to education in host countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, as well as being provided with safe spaces, counselling and medical and psychological care. The UK is a founding member and one of the largest donors—£30 million—to Education Cannot Wait, which focuses on education in emergencies and aims to reach 8 million children by 2021. In Uganda, the UK has played a key leadership role in developing the first ever education response plan for refugees and host communities. The plan has set an ambitious target of supporting just over 550,000 learners per year over the next three years.

At the same time, the UK remains at the vanguard of work to shape and reform the international architecture for responding to the needs of displaced children. This includes steps to improve safeguarding standards across the aid sector, following the deeply disturbing revelations of abuse and harassment earlier in the year. We continue to work through and alongside some of the key institutions worldwide to support displaced children, including the UN Children's Fund and UN Refugee Agency, EU systems, local and international NGOs and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, where UK support has helped to secure \$2 billion of new funding designed to help host countries respond to large influxes of refugees.

We have pushed throughout to ensure that the two new global compacts uphold the principle of the best interests of the child at all times. My noble friend

Lady Morris described a parent losing their child. I have lived in a house in which someone lost their only child and it was terrible, but to be somewhere with no support services and see your child go is beyond belief. Unless we tackle conflict and violence at the heart of displacement, our interventions will only ever address the symptoms. That is why more than 50% of DfID's budget is now spent in fragile and conflict-affected states. We have launched a five-year national action plan to put women and girls at the heart of preventing and resolving conflict, and we have dedicated more than \$10 million a year to the UN Peacebuilding Fund to deliver often high-risk projects in fragile countries in order to prevent escalation and rebuild peace.

We aim to meet immediate, life-saving needs; help to heal the hidden scars of conflict; open the door to a brighter, more constructive future; and improve the way the world works together, which is very important, so as ultimately to tackle the underlying causes and try to build a world where children are not forced from their homes by violence, persecution, conflict and fear.

I will now take some time to answer the many questions which have been put to me. If I do not respond to them all, I give my word that I will write to ensure that they are answered. I turn first to the conference in Morocco. We are hoping for attendance at ministerial level; indeed, we hope and pray that that happens. But without mentioning the word that perhaps we will forget for today, we have big legislation to deal with and Ministers may be required to be present.

The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, asked about Libyan detention camps. We are providing £5 million of humanitarian aid in Libya to improve conditions. We continue to lobby the Libyan authorities to improve conditions but it is clear to us that a political resolution is essential. I have with me a *Guardian* article that talked about the UK funding Libyan detention centres that abuse children. Without going into chapter and verse, the facts were incorrect. That is not the case.

The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, spoke about refugees in Greece and the EU response. We are not planning further humanitarian support in Greece because large amounts of EU funding are available. The UK is playing a leadership role, supporting Greece and Turkey in implementing the EU-Turkey deal. I want to pay a real compliment to the Salvation Army, which established a presence in Greece a year before this crisis arose. It has done a sterling job of supporting individuals. Our support also increased the number of safe accommodation spaces for unaccompanied children in Greece. We will continue to do more. I will flesh out my points in writing to the noble Lord, rather than using up everybody's time now.

Mental health is a big issue for young people both in this country and abroad; many of them have had a terrible time. It is important to address their mental and psychosocial needs. We will establish the first donor group, as I said, and match War Child aid. The Secretary of State has also announced a new programme on this issue in Lebanon and Jordan.

The UK is one of the largest donors to the refugee crisis in Bangladesh, especially through vaccinations, as I said. No returns of Rohingya people have taken place and the Bangladesh Government have respected

the principle of voluntary returns. We will continue to make representations to both Governments to make sure that this continues.

I have talked about the importance of education; many noble Lords have raised it. I have also outlined the funding that we will put into it. My noble friend Lady Anelay gave me three questions to answer—some homework for me. There are an estimated 100 million street children worldwide. That figure is shocking but yesterday, we confirmed that we will match donations to Street Child's "Count Me In" appeal pound-for-pound. I would like to see more of that. DfID recognises that children who live and work on the streets are among the most vulnerable in the world. One of the four objectives of the UK aid strategy is tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable. If I may, I will write to my noble friend to answer the rest of her questions.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, made an important point about how fortunate we are to have people of such quality in this Chamber, such as the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, and my noble friend Lady Anelay. We are fortunate to have the noble Lord too; he continues to share his wealth of experience with us, for which we are grateful.

None of us is happy about the US's decision to cut UNRWA funding, which is devastating for the Palestinian people, but what it does in terms of funding is up to it. At the end of the day, we have increased our funding to try to alleviate some of the shortfall there.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, and the noble Baroness, Lady Sheehan, asked about the remaining Dubs places. We are filling them as quickly as we can but we want to do a proper job and not rush.

I will have to write letters to a number of noble Lords, whom I thank for their contributions and for the time they spent preparing for the debate. I can confirm that the UK will remain steadfast in its commitment to supporting the needs of displaced children around the world. We cannot do enough but we must make sure that we do as much as we possibly can.

3.59 pm

Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale: My Lords, this is the third year in a row when I have submitted a balloted debate on this topic just before Christmas, and I am delighted that I was successful in being able to lead this debate today, for the first time in those three years.

I am very grateful to the Members of Your Lordships' House who have contributed this afternoon; there may have been few of us, but we made up for what we lacked in quantity in the quality, passion and detail of the debate. I am also very grateful to the Minister here this afternoon, the noble Baroness, Lady Stedman-Scott, for her attempt to answer as many questions as possible and for treating the subject very seriously in her response.

As I said earlier, I think this is the single biggest scandal in the world today. It is something that will shame generations to come if we do not deal with it. I think we have demonstrated today that, in the UK, we can make a difference. I am grateful for that opportunity.

Motion agreed.

4.01 pm

Sitting suspended.

Brexit: Negotiations

Statement

4.30 pm

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Evans of Bowes Park) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I will now repeat a Statement made by my right honourable friend the Prime Minister in another place. The Statement is as follows:

“With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on our negotiations to leave the European Union. Last week I set out the details of the draft withdrawal agreement, which will ensure our smooth and orderly departure when we leave the EU on 29 March next year. I also updated the House on the outline political declaration that set out a framework for the future relationship we want between the UK and the EU.

Last night I met with President Juncker in Brussels to work through the details of the full political declaration on this future relationship. We had good discussions in which I was clear about what we need in order to ensure the best possible deal for the United Kingdom. We then tasked our negotiating teams to work through the remaining issues. As a result, the text of the political declaration has now been agreed between the UK and the European Commission. I updated the Cabinet on this progress this morning.

The draft text that we have agreed with the Commission is a good deal for our country and for our partners in the EU. It honours the vote of the British people by taking back control of our borders, our laws and our money, while protecting jobs, security and the integrity of our precious United Kingdom. It ends free movement once and for all. Instead, we will introduce a new skills-based immigration system based not on the country people come from but on what they can contribute to the UK. It ends the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the UK. We will make our own laws in our own Parliaments, here in Westminster and in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and they will be adjudicated on by UK courts. And it means an end to sending vast sums of money to the EU, so we can take full control of our money to spend on priorities, including our long-term plan for the NHS, to which we have committed to spending over £394 million more per week by 2023-24. Just this morning I was able to announce a major new investment in primary and community care worth £3.5 billion a year in real terms by 2023-24.

The text we have now agreed would create a new free trade area with the EU, with no tariffs, fees, charges or quantitative restrictions. This would be the first such agreement between the EU and any advanced economy in the world, which will be good for jobs. The EU said that the choice was binary—Norway or Canada. The political declaration recognises that there is a spectrum, with the extent of our commitments taken into account in deciding the level of checks and controls.

Crucially, the text we have agreed also has an explicit reference to development of an independent trade policy by the UK beyond the partnership with the

European Union, so we would have the ability to sign new trade deals with other countries and capitalise on the opportunities in the fastest-growing economies around the world—and we would be able to get on with this, negotiating deals during the implementation period and putting them in place immediately afterwards. The deal would mean we leave the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy.

Let me be absolutely clear about what this would mean for fishing. We would become an independent coastal state, with control over our waters so our fishermen get a fairer share of the fish in our waters. We have firmly rejected a link between access to our waters and access to markets. The fisheries agreement is not something we will be trading off against any other priorities. We are clear that we will negotiate access and quotas on an annual basis—as, for example, do other independent coastal states such as Norway and Iceland.

The trade agreement with the EU would also cover services and investment that will go further than any other recent EU agreements, and it would secure new arrangements for our financial services sector, ensuring that market access cannot be withdrawn on a whim and providing stability and certainty for our world-leading industry. We would also have a cutting-edge agreement on digital, helping to facilitate e-commerce and reduce unjustified barriers to trade by electronic means. And there would be strong rules in place to keep trade fair and ensure that neither side can unfairly subsidise its industries against the other.

The text we have agreed with the European Commission also includes a new security partnership, with a close relationship on defence and tackling crime and terrorism to keep all our people safe. There would be a surrender agreement to bring criminals to justice, no matter where in Europe they break the law, and there would be arrangements for sharing data, including on DNA, passenger name records and fingerprints. The new security partnership would also ensure close co-operation between our police forces and other law enforcement bodies. And we would continue to work together on sanctions against those who violate international rules or commit atrocities, and there would be joint working on meeting cybersecurity threats and supporting international efforts to prevent money laundering and the financing of terrorists.

Finally, as I set out for the House last week, the draft withdrawal agreement will ensure that we transition to this new and ambitious future relationship in a smooth and orderly way. It will deliver a 20-month implementation period so that we have time to put our new future relationship in place and so that businesses have time to prepare for it. It will protect the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU, so they can carry on living their lives as before. It will ensure a fair settlement of our financial obligations—less than half what some originally expected—and it will meet our commitment to ensure that there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland and no customs border in the Irish Sea.

The text we have agreed is explicit about the determination of both sides to avoid the backstop altogether by getting the future relationship in place

on 1 January 2021 and, in the unlikely event that we ever did need the backstop, to ensure that it is quickly superseded by either the future relationship or alternative arrangements. As part of this, there is an explicit commitment to consider facilitative arrangements and technologies which could avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. I am grateful to my right honourable friends the Members for Chingford and Woodford Green and for North Shropshire for their ideas on this. Preparatory work on alternative arrangements to avoid the backstop would begin before we leave, enabling rapid progress after our withdrawal.

I want to be very clear about the stage we have reached in these negotiations and the scale of what is now at stake. We have an agreed text between the UK and the European Commission. This text is today being shared with the leaders of the other 27 member states ahead of the special EU Council on Sunday. The negotiations are now at a critical moment and all our efforts must be focused on working with our European partners to bring this process to a final conclusion in the interests of all our people. Last night I spoke to Prime Minister Sánchez of Spain. We have been working constructively with the Governments of Spain and Gibraltar in the negotiations on the withdrawal agreement and we want this work to continue in the future relationship, but I was absolutely clear that Gibraltar's British sovereignty will be protected and that the future relationship we agree must work for the whole UK family. Today I met Chancellor Kurz of Austria, which currently holds the EU's presidency. Later today and tomorrow I will be speaking to other European leaders ahead of returning to Brussels on Saturday.

The British people want Brexit to be settled. They want a good deal that sets us on a course for a brighter future and they want us to come together as a country and to move on to focus on the big issues at home, such as our NHS. The deal that will enable us to do this is now within our grasp. In these crucial 72 hours ahead, I will do everything possible to deliver it for the British people. I commend this Statement to the House".

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

4.38 pm

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness for repeating the Statement: I suspect we will see her again on Monday with a further Statement.

The last week has been full of highs and lows, not least for our embattled Prime Minister. Even when the proverbial white smoke appeared last Wednesday evening, two departing Cabinet Ministers and their friends in the ERG quickly snuffed it out. Now, with today's unexpected Statement from the Prime Minister, the Government are repeating what they do best—they are living in the moment. The Prime Minister has often talked about the JAMs, those "just about managing". Truth be told, this Statement is just about managing to get through another week.

What have the 19 extra pages today offered us? If we are honest and forensic about it, very little. I will acknowledge some progress in a couple of extremely important areas. Many noble Lords will remember the passionate speech of my noble friend Lady Sherlock during the Second Reading of the EU withdrawal Bill.

In a few short minutes, she highlighted the significant challenges facing families as a result of our withdrawal from the EU. I welcome the inclusion of paragraphs 57 and 58; at last, the Government have recognised the importance of this. But it still is not agreed and, after two years, all that the Government can offer is:

"The Parties will explore options for judicial cooperation in matrimonial, parental responsibility and other related matters".

That is still work in progress.

Similarly, my noble friend Lord Hunt of Kings Heath led a cross-party effort to amend the Nuclear Safeguards Bill to ensure continued UK co-operation on medical radioisotopes. We therefore recognise progress in the inclusion of paragraph 71, with co-operation, "through the exchange of information on the supply of medical radioisotopes".

However, this is so far from the detailed, precise and substantive document previously promised by the Government. It somehow manages to list dozens of aspirations for the future UK-EU relationship without any feeling of aspiration or optimism. Far from providing citizens and businesses with certainty, it kicks the can down the road. It neither delivers the deal promised by the Government nor the one that Parliament would have mandated, had Ministers accept the Monks amendment to the withdrawal Bill. My noble friend Lord Monks brought forward his amendment to assist the Government; had they gained a mandate from and genuinely engaged with Parliament for the negotiations, the Prime Minister would not now be scrabbling around, desperately trying to get Parliament to support her deal.

Today's extended declaration continues to point to a blind Brexit, which is likely to leave our country less prosperous, less secure and less influential around the globe. Being generous to the Prime Minister, it should at least buy her extra time to try to bring together a divided Conservative Party, which is really what this Statement is about. Just think: at the last election, it was those voting for my party who were told that it would be a coalition of chaos.

According to the document, which is not even certain to get approval from the EU 27 on Sunday, we will be outside the customs union and the single market after the transition period. But despite their importance to UK businesses, we have absolutely no idea about the nature of our future relationship with those entities. I have come straight from a meeting with Northern Ireland businesses and farmers. It is clear, in talking to them, how it has been hugely damaging for the Government and the Prime Minister to talk up the prospects of no deal. They are facing the impacts already. We may eliminate tariffs on goods but, however unprecedented, provisions on services will be subject to "exceptions and limitations".

The security section alarmingly confirms that we will be outside the European arrest warrant after the transition, as well as a number of other vital EU schemes and databases. Yet we have no idea which aspects of them we will be able to replicate or to what degree this will keep UK citizens safe. I would have thought that, as a former Home Secretary, surely the Prime Minister would know the importance of these systems. There are so many questions left unanswered; we are addressing just a few here today.

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

For example, while paragraph 9 confirms that work will start on a data-adequacy decision as soon as possible after exit, this is not consistent with the Government's stated desire for an agreement with the EU that goes beyond the adequacy framework. Can the Leader of the House confirm whether this ambition has been dropped or if it remains?

Paragraph 24 refers to three of the agencies—the European Medicines Agency, the European Chemicals Agency and the European Aviation Safety Agency—that the Government recognise are of value of the UK. But all the declaration offers is that we will consider regulatory alignment and that we,

“will explore the possibility of cooperation”.

What does that actually mean? Are we seeking to somehow gain membership, or do the Government intend to set up parallel agencies, with the costs and bureaucracy involved in that, and will that be by primary legislation?

I am also disappointed that the document does not appear to include anything on the onward movement of UK citizens living in the EU—the Leader of the House is talking to her Ministers again, but I shall press this point, which I have raised with her a number of times before. I hope she caught the first part of what I was saying about the onward movement of UK citizens living in the EU. Your Lordships' House was assured by the noble Baroness that this would be a key part of the second phase of negotiations. Can she confirm whether the Prime Minister or the UK negotiating team formally requested the inclusion of onward movement rights in this document? If so, where are they, and if not, why not?

The Leader of the House will understand the concerns of Gibraltar. She referred to that in her comments today. Can she update the House about the conversations the Prime Minister has had with the Prime Minister of Spain? I wonder whether the Prime Minister of Spain is more encouraging in private telephone calls than he is in his public declarations ahead of upcoming elections.

Standing on the steps of Downing Street, or at the Dispatch Box in the other place, the Prime Minister talks of a deal that upholds the national interest. Even if this political declaration were to be delivered in full, there is no way that these arrangements can serve the best interests of this country. I have no idea whether the talented negotiators on both sides of this debate will approach future talks with a positive spirit and will use the best endeavours which are so frequently referred to in the declaration document, but if the Brexit process has highlighted anything, it is the incompetence and efficiency of a divided Government.

I have one final question for the Leader of the House. Paragraph 145 notes that, based on the preparatory work, the UK and the EU will agree a programme for the next set of negotiations. I think we all hope that the Government will take a little more care in those arrangements and that preparation than they did before the referendum. Will the noble Baroness share with the House the lessons learned by the Government as a result of the Article 50 process and perhaps give an indication of how past mistakes, including David Davis's capitulation on sequencing, will be avoided?

Baroness Ludford (LD): My Lords, I, too, thank the Leader of the House for repeating the Statement. There was a hope that an expansion of the political declaration would deliver enlightenment, but going from seven pages to 26 has illustrated even better how thin and inadequate our prospective future relationship is as impotent rule takers. The claim that we will make our own laws in our own Parliament is one of the deceptions that I mentioned the other day. We will in fact obey EU laws if we want decent access. This political declaration shows how there is no better deal than remaining in the European Union with a full voice and a great deal of influence. That is why we definitely need a people's vote to give the opportunity to choose to remain in the EU.

It is notable how many uses there are in this document of considering options or exploring options with a view to identifying opportunities where something is in mutual interest to the extent possible. How long is a piece of string? This document does not answer that question. It is simply aspirational, not operational, and there are many gaps.

We are supposed to expect that the combination of at least a single customs territory—the political declaration talks about building on a single customs territory—and the alignment of rules can coexist with an independent trade policy, an end to free movement and an end to the jurisdiction of the ECJ. I shall come back to that latter point. This is an unstable and dishonest pretence that the package can deliver all those things.

Paragraph 28 of the draft states that,

“the extent of the United Kingdom's commitments on customs and regulatory cooperation ... would be taken into account in the application of related checks and controls”,

and that there can be,

“a spectrum of different outcomes for administrative processes as well as checks and controls”.

That is not what the Chequers White Paper promised. It promised to,

“avoid the need for customs and regulatory checks at the border”—that is, all checks—and said it would,

“enable products to only undergo one set of approvals and authorisations in either market, before being sold in both”.

You do not need checks at the borders if that is the case. It promised to,

“protect the uniquely integrated supply chains and ‘just-in-time’ processes that have developed”,

over the last 40-odd years. I heard the Prime Minister claim in the other place that this political declaration represented frictionless trade. It does not; that is a completely groundless assertion. There will be border checks.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, mentioned, paragraph 24 talks about exploring,

“the possibility of cooperation of United Kingdom authorities with Union agencies such as the European Medicines Agency ... the ... European Chemicals Agency ... and the European Aviation Safety Agency”.

This is a very long way from the Chequers White Paper, which claimed that we would get participation in key agencies. That is not what the political declaration says. The same is true for Europol and Eurojust, where again there was a claim that we would get participation

in those security agencies. Perhaps the Minister could explain the gap between the Chequers White Paper and what is in the political declaration. Working together to identify the extent of co-operation is not participation.

Perhaps the Minister could also explain how she envisages the financial services markets, as the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, mentioned. Currently there is a huge gap; one of the reasons Jo Johnson resigned is that 80% of our economy is not covered, while one of the reasons lots of City people oppose the deal is that equivalence in financial services is very weak indeed.

We also have a very thin promise on judicial co-operation, matrimonial and parental responsibility and related matters. I sit on a sub-committee of the EU Select Committee that has spent a great deal of time on this matter. I am afraid that the thin nature of the two and a half lines in the political declaration on this issue is testament to the lack of attention the Government are paying to this.

In the section on intellectual property, I see no reference to the Unified Patent Court. The Government put a lot of effort into securing the life sciences section of the UPC to be in the UK, which obviously plays to our strengths in that sector. Can they give us an assurance that Britain will be able to stay in the unified patent regulation and in the court even if we are outside the EU?

On the European Convention on Human Rights, there is an interesting contradiction in the declaration. Paragraph 7 refers only to the UK's,

“continued commitment to respect the framework of the European Convention on Human Rights”.

What does that mean, as opposed to a commitment to the convention? Later, though, in paragraph 83, there is a reference to,

“continued adherence and giving effect to the ECHR”,

so I hope that paragraph 7 is just a slip of the pen. Perhaps the Minister could reassure us that there is a full commitment by the Government to stay a member of the ECHR.

Lastly, on ending the jurisdiction of the European court, the declaration says that the arbitration panel must refer any question of the interpretation of union law to the ECJ for a binding ruling. Then, it says:

“The arbitration panel should decide the dispute in accordance with the ruling given by the CJEU”—

that is, the binding ruling. If a party fails to comply, the other can seek financial compensation or suspend the rights and obligations under the agreement. How is that ending the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I thank the noble Baronesses for their comments and shall try to cover the points they made. They both mentioned new arrangements in judicial co-operation in certain areas, particularly in relation to matrimonial matters and parental responsibility. I can also say that the UK intends to accede to the Lugano convention and looks forward to discussing its application with the EU and other contracting states in due course.

The noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, asked about financial services, and the political declaration indeed contains important detail about co-operation. In particular, we have agreed to consultation mechanisms relating to the adoption, suspension and withdrawal

of equivalence decisions. It also notes that both parties will keep their respective frameworks under review to ensure that they can continue to function effectively for both sides. We have agreed to negotiate new arrangements for financial services that provide for greater co-operation and consultation than is possible under existing third-country frameworks.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, talked about a blind Brexit, but in fact the political declaration sets out a clear vision for the UK's future relationship with the EU and provides instructions for negotiators that will deliver a legal agreement by the end of 2020 covering an economic partnership, a security partnership and specific agreements on cross-cutting co-operation.

Both noble Baronesses talked about our security partnership, and the political declaration provides for UK co-operation through PNR, Prüm, Europol and Eurojust in future, but also ensures that the UK and EU's future relationship will deliver capabilities approximate to those currently enabled by relevant EU mechanisms. The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, asked in particular about the European arrest warrant. Again, the declaration is clear that effective and streamlined surrender arrangements will be established, akin to the European arrest warrant and the EU's arrangements with Norway and Iceland.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, also asked about the adequacy framework, and we have always said that we believe that the EU's adequacy framework provided the right starting point for the arrangements that the UK and EU should agree on data protection, but that, reflecting the strength of the relationship, we wanted to go beyond an adequacy arrangement. We will therefore continue to consider additional arrangements, including co-operation between regulators, so our ambition remains.

The noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, asked about the ECHR, and I can say once again that we are committed to the framework of the ECHR.

Both noble Baronesses asked about agencies. Where we want to continue co-operation with EU agencies—I think that the EMA and ECA were mentioned—we will certainly work with our European partners to explore it. If we have such a relationship, we have also made it clear that we will make an appropriate financial contribution.

I assure the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, that we continue to push for onward movement for EU nationals. Unfortunately, the EU did not want to include that in the political declaration, but we intend to return to it during the detailed talks on the future arrangements. In terms of next steps, once the political declaration has been endorsed by the Prime Minister and leaders of the EU member states, we will move from negotiating under Article 50 to negotiating under Article 218 of the TFEU. That can legally begin only once the UK has left the EU.

The noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, asked about building on the single customs territory. What we mean by that is that in designing our long-term arrangements, we will make use, where appropriate, of what we have included in the withdrawal agreement. For example, we want to ensure that no tariffs, quotas, or checks on rules of origin are maintained for what is provided for under that agreement, but the text is also

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK]

clear that whatever is agreed in our future partnership must recognise the development of an independent UK trade policy.

The political declaration also recognises that the UK may choose to align with the EU's rules in relevant areas and that the application of checks and controls will depend on the UK's commitment, including on the level of alignment. It recognises that both sides wish to be as ambitious as possible, but obviously we need to agree the balance of that as part of the forward negotiations. Once again, I must say to my Liberal Democrat colleagues that we will not be having a second vote. We have already had a people's vote, and they voted to leave the EU.

4.59 pm

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): Would my noble friend accept that when it comes to the ambitious new trade agreement which this document outlines—which is a very welcome and promising prospect—after 46 years of our two systems growing together and becoming entangled, the process of disentanglement, unwinding and building the new opportunities is bound to take considerable time? Would she accept that some of the impatient demands for more rapid solutions are quite inadequate in dealing with that situation? It has been said that the withdrawal agreement is a halfway house. Would she agree that if we can be allowed to get to that halfway house, this does indeed show the path that opens to the completion of our situation, which will be very much stronger than we have today? Could she explain why, when it comes to the international trade negotiations, this document just has a mention that this can be developed, whereas the withdrawal agreement is much more specific and talks about negotiating, signing and ratifying agreements which will come into force as soon the transition is over? Would she just reassure us that that, too, is part of the prospect in the future, which on the whole is greatly to be welcomed?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I thank my noble friend. I can certainly reassure him that the withdrawal agreement includes a legally binding commitment that ensures that both sides will use best endeavours to negotiate the detailed agreements he was talking about that will give effect to the future relationship, so that they can come into force by the end of 2020. We are obviously extremely pleased that the political document makes it very clear that whatever is agreed in relation to our future partnership with the EU must recognise the development of an independent UK trade policy, and of course during the implementation period we will be able to sign, negotiate and ratify our own trade agreements.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): I thank the noble Baroness for the Statement. I agree with those who say that this is a highly aspirational document. I lighted upon a sentence which says that, “a fair and appropriate financial contribution”, will be made. Perhaps the noble Baroness could say something about how long she thinks it would take to flesh that out. It took Baroness Thatcher five years to

get to a fair and appropriate financial contribution. How many years does the noble Baroness think it will take this negotiation?

Secondly, could the noble Baroness be very kind and now reply to the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, about paragraph 134, on dispute settlement? It really is an important point and I am afraid that on Tuesday the noble and learned Lord, Lord Keen, did not get it quite right. It makes it quite clear that the European Court of Justice, which is described in this document that we are going to sign as,

“the sole arbiter of Union law”,

will in fact have an absolute grip on any disputes. That is the only reading of paragraph 134 that you can possibly make. And of course all these agreements will be European Union law, or they will be worthless. So could she comment on paragraph 134, please? It is a pretty important point.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: On the noble Lord's first question, I answered it in my reply to my noble friend's question when I said that we intend to have the future relationship come into force by the end of 2020. On the noble Lord's second point, only the CJEU can bind the EU on the interpretation of EU law, so we have agreed that where a dispute raises a question of interpretation of EU law, the arbitration panel can refer this question to the CJEU for interpretation. What it cannot do is ask the CJEU to resolve the dispute. That will always be done by the independent arbitration panel. An ability for the CJEU to provide an interpretation of EU law is not the same as resolving disputes. The EU has been clear that that must fall to an independent arbitration panel. This respects the principle that the court of one party cannot resolve disputes between the two.

Lord Reid of Cardowan (Lab): My Lords, first of all, I find this a comprehensive and interesting list of subjects for future discussion—but that is all it is. I caution the Minister against overselling it as something else. That—the misrepresentations—was part of the problem with the original referendum. For instance, the noble Baroness says:

“It ends the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the UK”,

but this declaration does no such thing. It is not a deal, even leaving aside the fact that the 27 others have not agreed it yet. Even when they have agreed it, it will not be a deal; it will not be an agreement—or rather, it will be an agreement to look for an agreement at some future stage. So will the Minister please not oversell it?

On the European Court of Justice, I am not a lawyer—as I have said, that is neither a boast nor a complaint—but I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Hannay. What the Minister says is just not true. She is inadvertently misreading this. Not only does paragraph 132 say:

“The Parties will base arrangements for dispute settlement and enforcement on those provided for the Withdrawal Agreement”, but paragraph 134 says:

“Should a dispute raise a question of interpretation of Union law, which may also be indicated by either Party, the arbitration panel should refer the question to the CJEU as the sole arbiter of Union law, for a binding ruling”.

Crucially, it then goes on to say:

“The arbitration panel should decide the dispute in accordance with the ruling given by the CJEU”.

So it does not give just a ruling, it gives a binding ruling, which the arbitration panel must decide in accordance with the ruling given by the European Court of Justice.

I am not asking for a legal answer at present. All I ask is that Ministers be very careful that they do not try to oversell this as somehow a deal that has been done and agreed. It is a framework for future discussion, kicking the can down the road; that may be necessary but it is no more than that, so I ask the Minister not to misrepresent it.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I think I was clear; I hope I was. I said that it sets out a clear vision and is a framework for the future relationship between the UK and the EU, and that it provides the negotiating instructions that will aim to deliver the full legal agreement by the end of 2020. We are on both sides committed to turning this into a legally binding treaty as soon as possible. In relation to the noble Lord's points about the CJEU, I gave the answer to the noble Lord and I can only say again that an ability for the CJEU to provide an interpretation of EU law is not the same as resolving disputes.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, I hope we can accept that this is a reasonable framework. I hope the Prime Minister will feel that Mrs Pike has satisfactorily pricked Captain Mainwaring's ego. However, I ask my noble friend to say to the Prime Minister that it would probably be very helpful indeed if, at some stage in the next two or three weeks, she would speak to the nation on television to explain exactly what we are proposing to do and that this is, indeed, the only realistic Brexit that is in prospect.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am not sure whether my noble friend was watching the television at the weekend, but the Prime Minister was on television quite a lot. She will most certainly be continuing to sell this deal, as indeed will all members of the Government. I am sure she will be interested in his views on how she can best do this.

Baroness Liddell of Coatdyke (Lab): My Lords, in paragraph 38 there is a reference to the financial services sector, going back to the issue of equivalence which is mentioned in the withdrawal agreement. Since the referendum, the financial services sector has said again and again that equivalence is not good enough to maintain an industry with the international reputation that we have here in Britain. At the very least, the Governor of the Bank of England has said that enhanced equivalence is needed. Tens of thousands of jobs rest on this, not just in the City but in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Bristol and throughout the United Kingdom. Will the Minister please go behind some of the waffle that is in this to give reassurance? Businesses not four miles away from here are making plans to relocate. That has to be stopped.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I hope I can reassure the noble Baroness when I say that we have agreed to negotiate new arrangements on financial services that provide greater co-operation and consultation than is

possible under existing third-country frameworks. For existing regimes, the EU and UK have agreed to move quickly to progress equivalent assessments during the implementation period and, crucially, both sides will endeavour to conclude decisions on granting equivalence by the end of June 2020—which is a major step forward in providing clarity for the industry about a smooth transition to our new relationship.

Lord Wigley (PC): My Lords, I have been able to read this in some detail since this morning. Apart from the general waffle and aspirations—which one would have hoped would have been finalised after two and a half years—the overwhelming factor is the underlined need to rejoin organisations that we are leaving, including agencies dealing with medicines, chemicals and aviation safety, and to get ongoing co-operation on science, youth, culture, education, civil protection and space. We are reinventing things that we are leaving. Why do we not just stay there and get the benefit? The cost of applying to all these will mount up and take away most of the savings we get. We seem to be going around in a full circle to end up where we started.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: The noble Lord may recall that the British people voted to leave the European Union, and we are delivering that. In response to the noble Baronesses, I said we want to maintain co-operation with certain EU agencies. We will work with our EU partners over the coming months to explore the most effective ways to do that. If we do so and, depending on the level of the relationship, we have also said we will make a relevant contribution.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): My Lords, I echo the wise words of the noble Lord, Lord Reid of Cardowan. I ask the Minister please not to oversell. This is not the load-bearing framework that the treaty authors had in mind. This is an aspirational text, neither prescriptive nor proscriptive. The negotiation will take place under Article 218, which means that, on the other side of the table, if one member state objects to something we want, that thing does not happen. Remember too that its scope is far wider than the Ukrainian or Canadian arrangement. The idea, as the Minister just said at the Dispatch Box, that we intend this treaty to come into force by the end of 2020 is absurd. That is unthinkable. It takes on average four years to negotiate these things. Then there is the problem of ratification and, if one country does not ratify, it does not happen. Please do not oversell. The only certain thing is that we face five, six or seven years of uncertainty.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: Before our withdrawal in March, both sides will undertake preparatory work to enable negotiations to begin as soon as possible. There will be a clear programme to deliver the ambitious timetable, which will be set out in the withdrawal agreement, to ensure that both sides will use their best endeavours to bring into force a detailed future relationship. Because of the possibility that the noble Lord raises, we also have the backstop, the extension to the implementation period. There are best endeavours from both sides to achieve this ambitious relationship, which is in both our interests.

Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (LD): My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Reid, missed his calling. He may not be a lawyer, but he made a pretty good imitation of one. I do not really think that the noble Baroness was able to respond. I will not repeat the points he made, other than to point out that this document says we will take back control of our laws and end the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. These assertions are made without any qualification. If you look carefully, you will see that paragraph 134 says circumstances may arise where the United Kingdom chooses to invoke the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. That is wholly contrary to the impression this document seeks to give.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I have already responded to these points and have nothing further to add. The ability of the CJEU to provide an interpretation of EU law is not the same as resolving disputes.

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, there is a certain Alice in Wonderland aspect to the exchanges we have heard. A lot of the questions from ardent remainers—I am not criticising people; I am an ardent leaver—have complained about the extent to which there will still be some jurisdiction from the European Court of Justice over what we can and cannot do in this country. That seems a bizarre position for someone who is in favour of us remaining in the European Union to adopt.

Does the noble Baroness also share my dismay that, whenever in this unelected House a reference has been made to the 17.4 million people who voted to leave, there has been an audible groan? That is the first time that there has not been. It is not a good position for an unelected House to groan about a referendum of this unprecedented scale.

Finally, my noble friend Lord Reid is absolutely right—I agree with him, as I have done on most things throughout our pretty long political life—that this is a framework and it should not be oversold. However, after March next year we will be entering negotiations not as a member state of the European Union, subject to all the restrictions involved in being one of 28, but as an independent sovereign country able to make within this precious Parliament—the other part rather more precious than this one, I have to acknowledge—the laws that the people in our country are obliged to obey, and if they do not like the people making the laws, they will be able to throw them out, unlike the system under which we are living at present.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I agree with the noble Lord and thank him for his positive comments.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (UKIP): The Statement says that there will be,

“a fair settlement on our financial obligations—less than half what some originally expected”.

The amount of that fair settlement is already well known but I hope that the House will forgive me if I ask how much it will be and when we will hand it over. Will it be after the many pious hopes in this Statement have been fulfilled? I very much hope that we will not hand anything over until that happens.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: As the noble Lord said, the financial settlement will represent a fair settlement of our obligations as a departing member, and it has been agreed in the context of the implementation period and our future relationship. I believe that it is within the range of £34 billion to £38 billion.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, the tone of the declaration and the tone of the Prime Minister’s Statement are remarkably different. The political declaration talks about,

“the values and interests that the Union and the United Kingdom share”,

arising from,

“their geography, history and ideals anchored in their common European heritage”.

The Prime Minister’s Statement is about how we bash them on this and reassert control on that, and absolutely nothing positive is said about the need to co-operate, the fact that, as these are our neighbours, we are fated to co-operate closely with them, and that that we cannot have the sort of absolute sovereignty that the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth, talked about two days ago in which we tell them what we want and they have to give it to us. Is there anything positive in the noble Baroness’s notes about the future relationship with the European Union and how important it is to the future of this kingdom?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am afraid that I completely disagree with the noble Lord. We have been very clear in saying that we want a positive, strong and deep partnership with the European Union in the future, and I am afraid that I do not recognise his characterisation of the approach we are taking.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe (Con): My Lords, I am glad to see progress in the latest documents in a number of places: for example, on fisheries, on electronic trade facilities, on digital, on medicinal radioisotopes and on future governance. But, assuming that the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration are agreed, what leverage will the Government have in getting timely agreement on the free trade partnership and the associated treaty, thus avoiding the backstop, which seems to suit other member states more than us? We will have paid a lot of money, given up our ability to charge tariffs, accepted the regulatory level playing field and made generous provisions on things such as security—all of which are good—but how will we ensure that we can get the negotiations to end in the timely way that my noble friend described?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: As I said in response to a number of questions, the withdrawal agreement includes a legally binding commitment that ensures that both sides will use best endeavours to negotiate the detailed agreements that will give effect to the future relationship so that they can come into force by 2020. In the unlikely event that a party considers that the other has not negotiated in good faith, the complaining party could bring a complaint under the process established by the withdrawal agreement.

Lord Lansley (Con): My Lords, can I put it to my noble friend that, while not overselling the political declaration, neither should she undersell it? It was not given to the Prime Minister to satisfy either remainers or leavers in full. The point was to deliver the Brexit for which people voted while minimising the economic

and other harms to this country. In that context, does she agree that this framework gives us a basis on which to achieve that to a significant extent?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: Yes. I am very happy to agree with my noble friend.

House adjourned at 5.20 pm.

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