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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

No party affiliation is given for Members serving the House in a formal capacity, the Lords spiritual, Members on leave of absence or Members who are otherwise disqualified from sitting in the House.

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House of Lords

Thursday 15 September 2016

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of St Albans.

Introduction: Lord McInnes of Kilwinning

11.07 am

Mark McInnes Esquire, CBE, having been created Baron McInnes of Kilwinning, of Kilwinning in the County of Ayrshire, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Dunlop and Baroness Goldie, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Introduction: Baroness Couttie

11.13 am

Philippa Marion Roe, having been created Baroness Couttie, of Downe in the County of Kent, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Lamont of Lerwick and Lord Astor of Hever, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Royal Assent

11.18 am

The following Acts were given Royal Assent:

Finance Act 2016,

Haberdashers' Aske's Charity Act 2016.

Home Ownership

Question

11.18 am

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to reverse the decline in home ownership.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government and Wales Office (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth) (Con): My Lords, the Government have halted the decline in home ownership and are committed to going further. We are supporting first-time buyers who wish to get on the housing ladder through our Help to Buy, shared ownership and starter homes policies.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab): My Lords, I draw the attention of the House to my entry in the register of interests: I am an elected councillor in the London Borough of Lewisham and a vice-president of the Local Government Association. When does the noble Lord think we will next see the levels of home

ownership that peaked around 2005? Does he agree with the comments of the Housing Minister, Mr Gavin Barwell, when he spoke about the need to build homes of all tenures and not focus on one single tenure? What are the implications of those comments for the starter homes programme?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, as I indicated, the decline in home ownership has been halted. In fact, there has in the last year been a slight increase in home ownership, though not statistically significant. I agree with my friend in the other place, Gavin Barwell, about the need for homes of all tenures. We are also focusing on helping to rent, as well as helping to buy. Certainly, one thing we are very much focused on is council house building, where our record stands comparison with the Labour Party's.

Lord Shipley (LD): My Lords, the Economic Affairs Committee's report in July on housing said:

"The Government's target of one million new homes by 2020 is not based on a robust analysis",

and "will not be enough". The Government turned their target into a commitment to build 1 million new homes by 2020 in the Queen's Speech, yet last month Shelter reported they would fall short of that commitment by 250,000 homes. What action are the Government planning to ensure that they fulfil their commitment and produce a total housebuilding programme that is fit for purpose?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, perhaps the most significant feature of the housebuilding situation is the budget commitment. We have increased the budget for housing for this Parliament. In fact, we have doubled it to £20 billion, £8 billion of which will help to deliver 400,000 affordable housing starts.

Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Con): My Lords, I must remind the House of my interests in the register, and a tenant of mine has just notified me that he has been able to be helped to buy his first home. Can the Minister assure me that these homes will be freehold and not part of an antiquated leasehold system which really means that people have only a very limited time in ownership of the property?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, as I indicated, we are looking at various tenures. I am pleased that my noble friend found through her acquaintance that we are getting on with this policy. We are committed to 200,000 starter homes in this Parliament. As I indicated, that is with a range of tenures. Some leaseholds, such as 999-year leases, should be long enough for most people in this House.

Lord Clark of Windermere (Lab): The Minister mentioned various government initiatives to encourage home purchase. Is the Government's position clear about the Help to Buy ISA? Can the portion of the finance from the Government's contribution to top up that ISA at the point of purchase be used towards the deposit for the house?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the Help to Buy ISA is helping many people at the moment: more than half a million people are making use of the scheme and 26,000 have already received the bonus. The bonus of £3,000, which is a considerable amount towards a deposit, is paid at the end of the process so it means an adjustment in the way that finances are organised.

Lord Best (CB): My Lords, would the Minister agree that we will never get to the 1 million homes if the Government insist that housing associations and others stick to home-ownership schemes rather than being allowed to do the affordable rented housing that they have traditionally done? Can we not get back to more of that, as well as the much-needed home-ownership schemes that we have heard about?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, as I indicated, the Government are committed to home ownership. We are making sure that money is provided to encourage that. Also, we are certainly committed to homes to rent, and have committed money to rent-to-buy schemes as well. We committed £661 million to a build-to-rent fund which should, over the life of the Parliament, guarantee about 6,000 houses in addition.

Baroness Sharples (Con): With a proposal for so many new buildings, what provision will be made for allotments?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I know that my noble friend is a great supporter of allotments. As I have indicated before, allotments are protected in relation to brownfield sites. We have committed that 90% of brownfield sites will have planning permission by 2020, but I am sure that she will be very pleased that allotments are protected in relation to that policy.

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab): My Lords, is not the problem the price of land for housing? How can we justify a hectare of land being sold outside London, in the provinces, for £12,000 or £15,000 an acre which when it receives planning permission can be worth £2 million, £3 million, £4 million, £5 million or, in some parts of England, £6 million a hectare? Is that not the real blockage in housing development in the United Kingdom?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Lord is right that one of the issues is supply. That is why we are focusing very much on housebuilding, whether for purchase or for rent. He is also right that one considerable challenge we have is in relation to the price. That is why we have committed £20 billion, as I indicated, and doubled the budget for housing over the length of this Parliament.

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, while the price of land continues to increase so rapidly, landowners have much less incentive for immediate development, particularly if they are negotiating with local authorities over their desire for more affordable housing requirements. Will Her Majesty's Government take further steps to tackle land-banking, so that we can get more houses up more quickly?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the right reverend Prelate rightly draws attention to land-banking, which I have indicated before is a very real issue. We are looking on a weekly basis at the prices of land, post the Brexit vote. A levelling off of prices is indicated but it is too early to draw many conclusions. One consequence if prices are levelling off is that it will make it easier to tackle the problem of housebuilding.

The Countess of Mar (CB): My Lords, how many of these affordable homes have been allocated to rural villages and hamlets, to enable young people who are either already working in the countryside or would like to do so to afford houses near where they work?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Countess draws attention to a particular problem in relation to rural areas. I confirm that the starter home policy is available to rural areas, as is the affordable housing policy. It is open to people in those areas to make use of those and I certainly encourage them to do so.

Brexit: Scotland

Question

11.26 am

Asked by Lord Wallace of Tankerness

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Ministers and officials of the Scottish Government regarding the implications of the referendum vote to leave the European Union, since the Prime Minister's visit to Edinburgh on 15 July.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Scotland Office (Lord Dunlop) (Con): The Prime Minister is clear that the Government will work closely with the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations to ensure that the interests of all parts of the United Kingdom are properly taken into account. Discussions have already taken place between UK and Scottish Government Ministers and officials. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union first spoke to the First Minister on 20 July and underlined the importance that the Government attach to engagement in Scotland.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness (LD): My Lords, the Government have rightly expressed their support for a continuing soft border with the Republic of Ireland, yet they also appear to want to control freedom of movement from the European Union. In trying to square that circle, what assessments have the UK and Scottish Governments made of the increasing number of immigration offenders travelling to Scottish ferry ports from Northern Ireland, and how do the respective Governments intend to address any consequent financial and operational pressures on Police Scotland?

Lord Dunlop: The First Minister of Scotland was before the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee yesterday. I think she said that there have been extensive ongoing discussions between the Scottish and UK Governments and that she was

very optimistic that the discussions could make progress. I am sure that the issue raised by the noble and learned Lord will feature in those discussions.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister agree that if the First Minister of Scotland accepts the Brexit referendum as binding, she should also accept the Scottish referendum as binding? Will the United Kingdom Government make it clear that we would not agree to another Scottish referendum in the foreseeable future?

Lord Dunlop: The noble Lord will know that the SNP has announced a listening exercise in Scotland—and if it were listening, I think the first thing that it would do would be to take “indyref 2”, as it is known in Scotland, off the table. It is absolutely clear from all the recent opinion polls that the majority of Scots do not want it. Just as important is that business does not want it either, because businesses can see that it is damaging to investment and the economy. So I totally agree that it should be taken off the table.

Lord Lang of Monkton (Con): My Lords, does the Minister agree that, even if an independent Scotland eventually gained access to the European Union by meeting the deficit requirements—which at present it cannot conceivably meet—and being able to afford the premium, it would be giving up an open export market in England that takes 50% of its exports in favour of a market in Europe that takes only 15%?

Lord Dunlop: My noble friend is absolutely right. Scottish exports to the EU are 15% and Scottish exports to the rest of the UK are 64%. Over the summer, the Secretary of State and I held a huge number of engagements with stakeholders across Scotland—I think that there were 53 in total—and the clear message from business is of the importance of the UK’s single market.

Lord Bruce of Bennachie (LD): My Lords, would the Government consider including Scottish civil servants in the UK negotiating team? Will the Government also consult widely across all sectors in Scotland to try to secure a deal in the best interests of Scotland, bearing in mind that for the majority of us, independence is not the best option?

Lord Dunlop: The noble Lord is absolutely right. We want to get the best possible deal for all of the UK. When he appeared before the House of Lords committee the other day, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union said that he would look at some joint working. Each Government need a safe space in which to work out their position. That may provide some constraints to the degree of joint working, but there certainly needs to be full engagement.

Lord McAvoy (Lab): My Lords, it is of course right and proper and correct that the UK Government should consult all the devolved Governments within the United Kingdom on developments after Brexit. Does the Minister agree with the Labour Party and

with me, as a Labour Party spokesperson in this Chamber, that no matter what the ramifications of Brexit are—and there will be complicated discussions—there is absolutely no justification for a divisive “indyref 2”, as it is called in Scotland?

Lord Dunlop: In a couple of days’ time we will be celebrating the second anniversary of a clear and decisive referendum in Scotland. I do not believe that the EU referendum provided a mandate for a second independence referendum. This is not about whether there could be an independence referendum but whether there should be one. The UK Government are very clear that there should not be another independence referendum—and I think that an increasing number of voices in the SNP are coming to that conclusion.

Lord Lexden (Con): Does not this issue underline the importance of improved arrangements for inter-governmental co-operation within the United Kingdom, which was the subject of a report by the Constitution Committee published in March last year?

Lord Dunlop: As my noble friend will know, there are a number of bits of intergovernmental working architecture, including the Joint Ministerial Committee and the British-Irish Council. In addition to the bilateral discussions that need to take place between the UK Government and the devolved Administrations, we need to use those multilateral forums to discuss the implications of exiting the EU and how we go forward.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, the Government have pledged to consult the devolved Administrations and London about the implications of Brexit. However, there are some very distinctive interests in the disadvantaged regions of England. The population of Yorkshire is slightly larger than the population of Scotland. Do the Government have any intention of finding a way to consult the north and the west of England about their very real interests, which are distinct from those of London and which the Government need to take into account?

Lord Dunlop: I am sure that my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union wants to consult and engage widely. I note what the noble Lord said and I will certainly pass it on to my right honourable friend.

Syria: Aleppo Ceasefire *Question*

11.33 am

Asked by *Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead*

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what efforts have been made in the UN Security Council to secure a ceasefire by all forces in and around Aleppo in Syria in order to facilitate urgent humanitarian aid, particularly to injured children.

Baroness Goldie (Con): My Lords, the United Nations Security Council has consistently called for the end of violence across the whole of Syria, including Aleppo. We welcome the agreement reached by the United States and Russia on 9 September to restore the cessation of hostilities across Syria and to provide unhindered humanitarian access. All parties must now do what is needed to end violence. In particular, that includes the regime. We urge Russia to use its influence to ensure that that happens.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead (Lab): I thank the Minister for that comprehensive and helpful reply. Does she recall the picture of little Omran Daqneesh covered in blood and dirt when he was pulled out of the rubble after the bombing? Only yesterday on the BBC we saw a terrified 8 year-old who had had his arm amputated. When so many children have known nothing but brutal war, is it not vital that the guns stay silent so that the desperate needs of the people of Aleppo can be met? Will the Minister tell the House what representations have been made to the United States and Russia to extend the current ceasefire in order to maximise the supply of the vital aid that those people so desperately need?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Baroness eloquently and poignantly raises a very important issue, one that I think has touched the hearts of all of us looking at the ghastly footage on our television screens. We are committed to doing everything we can to support humanitarian aid to Aleppo, which is why we fully support pauses in fighting to get that aid into Aleppo and to ensure that those in dire need of medical evacuation can access treatment. The recent deal has a very important role to play in that. I reassure the noble Baroness that the United Kingdom Government are working in conjunction with global partners, not least the International Syria Support Group. Very recently, the Foreign Secretary hosted a meeting of the Syrian High Negotiations Committee, so we are doing our very best at every level to facilitate attainment of the objectives which the noble Baroness desires.

Lord Hylton (CB): My Lords, on 3 and 4 September, I was in Aleppo with parliamentary and other colleagues. It was obvious that normal life continued there, at least in the government-controlled areas. Will our Government press hard for effective monitoring of the present ceasefire and for severe penalties for ceasefire breaking?

Baroness Goldie: The short answer is yes: we shall do everything we can to monitor progress. Although we are at an early stage in the cessation, the indications are perhaps encouraging, and we very much hope that it will be sustained and that therefore the concerns which the noble Lord expressed will be assuaged.

Lord Oates (LD): My Lords, the brutality inflicted on the people of Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria by the Syrian regime is appalling, but do the Government not recognise that insisting as a precondition that Assad cannot play any future role in Syria simply means that the war will continue, Assad will remain and millions of people in Aleppo and elsewhere will continue to suffer?

Baroness Goldie: The United Kingdom Government have made clear that the stable and peaceful future of Syria depends on fundamental changes taking place in that country. Our position is that we consider the presence of President Assad to be unhelpful in that process. We think there has to be a transition to another regime and that, ultimately, he cannot be a part of that new regime. As I have said previously in the House, his presence is divisive and distracting.

Lord Selkirk of Douglas (Con): Can my noble friend say to what extent the Government of Turkey are facilitating urgent humanitarian aid?

Baroness Goldie: Turkey is an important ally in these matters, and that is an important relationship. All the parties to the International Syria Support Group, of which Turkey is one, are doing their best to make a contribution.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, my noble friend Lady Kinnock drew attention to the dire situation in and around Aleppo, but of course there are other areas in need of urgent humanitarian help. Amnesty International has drawn attention to the 75,000 refugees trapped close to the border with Jordan after the Jordanian border was closed because of an attack. Could the Minister tell the House what steps we are taking to work with the Jordanian Government to ensure that some humanitarian aid gets through to those 75,000 people, who have had no help since August?

Baroness Goldie: I thank the noble Lord opposite for raising that point. I cannot give him a specific answer other than to confirm that Jordan is also a member of the International Syria Support Group, but I undertake to make an inquiry, and if I can elicit more information I shall write to the noble Lord.

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, the last Government were doing a great deal to assist women and girls who have been subject to sexual violence in this conflict. Can the noble Baroness say whether this programme is set to continue on the same scale as under the last Government?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Baroness raises an important point. Again, there are a range of initiatives and endeavours that the UK Government want to pursue, but the prerequisite for that is that we enter a more stable situation in Syria. That is why the deal between the United States, Russia and the regime is so important. We hope that will facilitate a greater opportunity for engagement and the provision of help.

Lord Marlesford (Con): My Lords, while it is now clear that Bashar Assad cannot have a long-term future as President of Syria, will the Government do everything they can to ensure that when there is a change of regime the new Government is also secular, and that the one thing that is guarded against is the encouragement of Islamists, resulting in another theocratic Government in the Middle East, which would be the ultimate victory for IS?

Baroness Goldie: I say to my noble friend that this anticipates a point further down the line. Any attempt to broker peace will be facilitated by the United Nations with all the members of the global coalition. We very much hope that the UN special envoy, Staffan de Mistura, whose endeavours were interrupted by the breach of the earlier cessation of hostilities, will feel that the time is approaching when he might resume his role. I am sure there will be diplomatic discussions about trying to ensure that that happens.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane (Lab): I apologise for reverting to the point made earlier by the noble Lord, Lord Oates, but, whatever we think about President Assad, surely it is only proper that it is the Syrian people who decide who is going to run their country, not Saudi Arabia, America, Iran or Russia.

Baroness Goldie: The ultimate objective for Syria is, we hope, that there will be a restoration of stability and peace and there will be respect for freedoms and democracy, and that anticipates that the Syrian people will have a significant say in what kind of regime they seek. The United Kingdom Government have made clear that, in these difficult, sensitive and fractious times, the presence of Assad is not conducive to those objectives.

Grammar Schools

Question

11.42 am

Asked by **Lord Scriven**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evidence they have that grammar schools improve the educational attainment of areas where they are established.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Lord Nash) (Con): My Lords, exam data show that grammar schools achieve good results for pupils attending them. As set out in our consultation document, *Schools that Work for Everyone*, some studies suggest that there may be an association with poorer educational consequences for pupils not attending selective schools in areas where selection is allowed. In contrast, research from the Sutton Trust found no adverse effects of existing grammar schools on GCSE results for pupils in other schools.

Baroness Whitaker (Lab): My Lords, in what way—

Lord Scriven (LD): I thank the Minister for that very well-crafted Answer. The vast majority of studies, apart from three, show that there is no overall attainment and actually all that happens is a distributive effect, where those who go to grammar schools improve and those who do not—the majority—have slightly worse educational attainment. Given that three or four times more people who sit the 11-plus fail it than succeed at it, that grammar schools tend to attract the highest-graded teachers and that this distributive effect takes place, what evidence is there that the consultation paper ideas that the Government have put forward will deal

with these systematic failures that fail so many young people in the grammar school system based on selective education?

Lord Nash: The existing evidence is based on the system as it currently works, which is old technology and has undoubtedly resulted in binary choices in cases. We want to develop some new technology that embraces the selective system to result in a benefit to the whole education system.

Lord Framlingham (Con): My Lords, does the Minister agree with me that there is a grave danger of this House being as out of step with the country on grammar schools as it was on Brexit? The majority of people in the country understand the huge value of grammar schools—

Noble Lords: No!

Lord Framlingham: Noble Lords are making my point. The majority of people in the country are happy to see grammar schools reintroduced.

Lord Nash: We want to widen the choice for parents and there may well be areas where they would like to see more grammar schools.

Baroness Whitaker: My apologies for inadvertently attempting to pre-empt the noble Lord's interesting and relevant question, but can the Minister tell us in what way a system set up to reject a majority of children will serve the interest of a modern labour market and the needs and potential of individual students?

Lord Nash: Again, the noble Baroness is referring to an old system, where indeed parents and pupils may have had a binary choice between a highly performing grammar school and a very poor secondary modern. Now they may have a choice between a highly performing grammar school and a highly performing academy, which may well suit that pupil better. We believe that if we have a system where all selective schools, including existing selective schools, are required to engage in a wider system of support, we may well be able in certain circumstances to develop technology which works for the benefit of all pupils.

Lord Jopling (Con): My Lords, the Minister has said that he would like a wide choice of educational opportunity. Is it not astonishing that the recent White Paper makes no reference whatever to the remarkable work which my noble friend Lord Baker has been pursuing in establishing schools which concentrate on high technology?

Lord Nash: I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Baker for the UTC programme. It was not mentioned in the paper because that is not what it is about, but there is no intention to do anything other than support that programme.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): Yesterday, in answer to yet another Question about grammar schools, the Minister stated that early years is so important. So why is it that a highly contentious and hugely socially divisive new policy on grammar schools can appear as if from nowhere in the form of a consultation document within two months of the Prime Minister taking office, yet a consultation document promised on children's Sure Start centres last year still has no publication date, a fact confirmed by the Minister to my noble friend Lord Beecham in a Written Answer this week? The consultation document refers to £50 million being given over for grammar schools. Given the breadth of his remit, will the Minister commit now to fight within his department for a similar amount of funding for Sure Start centres, because they make such a difference to the lives of so many children born into disadvantaged families?

Lord Nash: As I said yesterday, I entirely agree with the noble Lord about the importance of early years—I think we all recognise that. That is why it is so pleasing to see so many academy groups opening nurseries. There have been a number of mergers and some closures of Sure Start centres, but the number of pupils attending them has remained fairly constant and the evidence is that they are doing well. Of course, this Government have invested heavily in early years childcare.

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, will the Minister bear in mind that the 11-plus was based on what is now regarded as faked information about 11 being the correct age at which to assess? It is regarded as particularly unfortunate for most boys. If we are going down the selection route, could we not follow the example of public schools in pushing the age back by a couple of years?

Lord Nash: As I said, we are working to develop systems which are much fairer and less easy to prepare for, and we believe that under the new system pupils may well be able to move streams or even schools at a later age. I entirely agree that the common entrance exam is a first-class exam taken at 13.

BBC Statement

11.50 am

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House I would like to repeat a Statement made by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Statement is as follows:

“Today I am laying before Parliament a draft of the royal charter for the continuance of the BBC, together with the accompanying draft framework agreement between the Government and the BBC. The latter sets out the detail behind the charter, including how the BBC will operate in the new charter period.

These drafts set out the policies contained in the White Paper, *A BBC for the future: a broadcaster of distinction*, which was published in May. This White Paper was the culmination of one of the largest public consultations ever. More than 190,000 members of the public, as well as industry stakeholders and experts,

gave their views on how the Government could enable the BBC to continue to deliver world-class content and services over the next 11 years. The consultation served as a reminder that the BBC matters deeply to this country—as it does to people right across the world. Far from diminishing the BBC, our changes strengthen it.

I am very grateful to my predecessor, the right honourable Member for Maldon, for all his brilliant work on the BBC. My department has worked very closely with both the BBC and Ofcom, which has taken on the job of being the BBC's first independent regulator, to develop and agree these draft documents. I am a huge fan of the BBC. At its best it is peerless. Our aim is to ensure that a strong, distinctive, independent BBC will continue to thrive for years to come, and also to improve the BBC where we can.

The new charter and agreement will enable a number of improvements. They enhance the distinctiveness of BBC content, and the BBC's mission and public purposes have been reformed to reflect this requirement. The governance and regulation of the BBC will be also be reformed. The new BBC board will be responsible for governing the BBC, and Ofcom will take on the regulation of the BBC. The charter and agreement set out functions and obligations that the BBC and Ofcom must follow in order to deliver this.

The charter explicitly recognises the need for the BBC to be independent, particularly in editorial matters, and the BBC will appoint a majority of the members of the new board, with strict rules to ensure all appointments are made fairly and openly. The charter also provides financial stability for the BBC by making it clear that the licence fee will remain the key source of funding for the BBC for the next charter period.

Obligations for the BBC to consider both the negative and the positive market impacts of its activities are set out in the charter. Ofcom must always keep these in mind when reviewing new and changed services. The BBC is obliged to work closely with others and share its knowledge, research and expertise for the wider public benefit. The Government want a BBC that is as open and transparent as possible. The charter sets out new obligations in this regard, including publishing the salaries of those employees and talent who earn more than £150,000.

The BBC serves all nations and regions. It needs to be more reflective of the whole of the United Kingdom, and the new charter requires this through the mission and public purposes. This will be supported by specific board representation, including the appointment of nations' members which, for the first time, will be agreed with the Administrations of Northern Ireland and Wales—as well as for Scotland, as is currently the case. Provision for the nations will be regulated by Ofcom through a new operating licence regime, which will include continuing the approach of production targets for making programmes outside London.

One of the BBC's many responsibilities is to bring people together, supporting and encouraging greater cohesion, not least among the nations of the United Kingdom. We have made considerable progress since the publication of the White Paper and resolved a number

of important areas with the BBC. This is allowing us to go further in the key areas of transparency, fairness and securing independence for the BBC.

In addition to the principle of a mix of public and BBC-made appointments—all made in line with best practice—I can confirm that the charter sets out that the BBC will appoint nine board members, including five non-executive directors, and that an additional five will be public appointments. This means that the BBC will appoint the majority of members to its new board. This ensures the independence of the BBC board and that each nation of the UK will have a voice. This will strengthen the BBC's independence, from the position where all the BBC trustees were appointed by the Government.

The National Audit Office will become the BBC's financial auditor. In addition, the charter will enhance the NAO's role and access and allow it to conduct value-for-money studies on the BBC's commercial subsidiaries. This money subsidises the licence fee, so the public has every right to expect value for money. And there will be greater transparency, with a full, fair and open competition for the post of chairman of the new BBC board. This is in line with the recommendation of the Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport. It is a significant new post, and transparency and fairness in making the appointment are vital, not least so that industry and the public have confidence. I am grateful to Rona Fairhead—who has decided not to be a candidate for this new post—for the work she has done as chair of the BBC Trust and in particular for her help in reforming the governance of the BBC.

The fundamental reforms set out in the draft charter will take time to implement, given the complexity of the changes, the need for a smooth transition and the importance of consulting on some elements of the new regulatory structures. There will be a short period of transition before the BBC board and Ofcom take on their new governance and regulatory roles on 3 April next year. The BBC will continue to operate under current arrangements during this transitional period. Further details about the transition will be confirmed in the coming months as we work closely with the BBC and Ofcom to ensure all elements of transition are managed as smoothly as possible, including the process by which the new BBC board will be established.

Members of both Houses will now have a chance to consider the proposals in detail. To aid them in that endeavour, I have today deposited a series of information sheets in the Libraries of both Houses. I have also sent the draft documents to the devolved Administrations in order that the devolved legislatures can debate them over the coming weeks. My DCMS ministerial colleagues and I look forward to parliamentary debates on the draft charter and agreement in due course. Following these debates, the Government will present the charter to the Privy Council, in order that the new charter is in place by the end of the year.

The BBC is one of this country's greatest achievements and greatest treasures. These reforms ensure that it will continue to be cherished at home and abroad for many years to come. I commend this statement to the House".

My Lords, that concludes the statement.

11.57 am

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement on the BBC royal charter and framework agreement. This House has a distinguished record of debates, Oral Questions and excellent committee reports in holding the Government to account over their stewardship of the BBC and broadcasting more generally.

The proposed royal charter and agreement—which, unfortunately, I have not had time to read, though I have read the advance notice of the Minister's statement, for which I thank him—reflect a lot of what we have been saying in this House over the past year. But in truth, as the Statement concedes, the turning point was the enormous and passionate response to the public consultation carried out by the Government, which forced them to withdraw the worst of their original plans to,

“cut the BBC down to size”,

as the former Prime Minister put it. In the Statement, we hear the claim from the Government that:

“Far from diminishing the BBC, our changes strengthen it”.

The statement goes on to say:

“Our aim is to ... improve the BBC where we can”.

How does that sit with the wish for a strong, independent BBC? I am sure I am not alone in feeling that there is a rather chilling assertion behind that statement.

The truth is that the BBC belongs to the people of this country, not the Government: the BBC is the linchpin of the UK's public service broadcasting ethos and it is the envy of the world. The overwhelming majority of the public clearly want the BBC to continue to inform, educate and entertain and to survive and thrive in the long term. So the key question is: do these proposals strengthen or weaken the BBC?

We set Ministers five major tests for the new charter and agreement. First, we believe that the “Reithian principles”—to inform, educate and entertain—are widely understood and recognised as forming the BBC's mission. They have stood the test of time, and we do not think that the additional wording to be inserted into the royal charter strengthens the BBC. Indeed, it seems set to weaken it.

We are not entirely clear what this wording is intended to do. The former Secretary of State—praised in the Statement—on several occasions suggested that the BBC should be restricted to “distinctive” programmes, although he never spelled out what that meant other than to hint that the BBC should not produce programmes offered by the other broadcasters and should cease to compete. The “Great British Bake Off” saga may have answered that point. In the time since then, it has become clear that the word is, to all practical purposes, otiose. Therefore, it is not clear what benefits the Government will gain from including the additional wording in the charter. Can the noble Earl give us the rationale for including those changes to the Reithian principles?

Secondly, we agree with the Government that it is right to sort out the regulatory and accountability problems which have hampered, rather than helped, the BBC since 2007. The structures put in place at that time were considered appropriate, but we are content

[LORD STEVENSON OF BALMACARA]

with the leaner and more effective structure that is being proposed and should be introduced under the next royal charter. Also, we agree that Ofcom should become the independent regulator of the BBC. I notice in the Statement that there is to be a short period of transition before the BBC board and Ofcom take on their new governance and regulatory roles. Can the noble Earl confirm that Ofcom will be able to take on this crucial new role, and that it will not be constrained by lack of resources?

Thirdly, the new unitary board must not only be fully independent of government, but must be seen to be so. The agreement makes it clear that all appointments are to be made in line with best practice. Can the noble Earl say concisely what that actually means? The reports that have reached the press about the decision of the current chair of the BBC to fall on her sword, after the Government withdrew what seemed a sensible proposal for her to continue into the new structure, suggest that the Government are paying no more than lip service to the board's independence. Can the noble Earl confirm that there will be an appointment of a new chair under best practice by the time the new charter comes into effect?

Fourthly, it will be for the new unitary board, independent from government, to set the objectives for the BBC, and there is surely no role for government to specify which channels, particular genres or indeed individual programmes should be included in or excluded from the BBC's output. In that context, it does not seem appropriate for the Government to require the BBC to publish salary details of its "talent", particularly when the Government make no similar requirement for other public bodies, or indeed for business or commerce. This smacks of meddling and micro-management; it should be left to the judgment of the new unitary board.

Finally, we called for the charter review process to be decoupled from the general election cycle resulting from the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011. I understand from what the noble Earl said that that has been accepted—and we are glad that that is so. I look forward to reading the fine print on this and the arrangements that have been made for the interim review and the licence fee settlement. It is important that they should not be confused.

We welcome the debates that have been promised in October and look forward to them. We also welcome the fact that the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies will contribute to the debate; that will lead to a much more rounded consideration of the issues before us. When we have these debates in October, I hope there will be an opportunity to look again at the process we have been through in the past two years and whether, for instance, the BBC should, like Channel 4, be given statutory protection rather than a royal charter.

Lord Foster of Bath (LD): My Lords, I, too, thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. I certainly believe that the BBC is the best broadcaster in the world and one of the greatest gifts that we have given to the world, and on these Benches we will base our judgment of the draft charter and agreement on whether they protect the independence, impartiality and popularity of the BBC.

The Government did not get off to a very good start by requiring the BBC to fund free licences for the over-75s. That move has meant a huge cut to the BBC's income but is also wrong in principle. Government policy should be paid for by the Government through general taxation, not by top-slicing the licence fee.

However, there is much to be welcomed in the draft charter, from the increased emphasis on diversity—which I hope we will see as much behind the camera as in front of the camera—to the scrapping of the BBC Trust, which had the incompatible tasks of being both a flag-waver for the BBC and a regulator of it. Like the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, I believe that the proposed new unitary board, with Ofcom as regulator, is a far better approach. But while acknowledging that improvements have been made since the White Paper, we believe that all non-executives on this board should be independently appointed, as is the case, for example, with judicial appointments.

The current trust is far less powerful than the proposed unitary board, which will set the BBC's editorial direction, make key decisions on programmes and even have a say on how the BBC manages news. What defence can the Minister offer to the argument that giving these important powers to, among others, government appointees will understandably lead to the accusation that we are creating a state broadcaster and not a public service broadcaster?

We welcome the 11-year charter period, giving time for the BBC to plan and make investment decisions, but this confidence is potentially eroded by the proposal—not mentioned in today's Statement—for a mid-term review. Immediately after the next election, this review will take place and the licence fee will be renegotiated. Uncertainty about the outcome of this review and the new licence fee settlement will undermine the benefits of an 11-year charter period. Notwithstanding the assurance that we have had in recent days that the mid-term review will be light touch, what assurances can the Minister give that it will not be used to unpick parts of the charter itself? The mid-term review will also coincide with the end of the three-year trial period for the contestable fund. If the trial is successful and the contestable fund is extended, can the Minister give an absolute assurance that the licence fee will not be top-sliced to pay for it?

However, I believe that the biggest threat to the independence of the BBC comes from uncertainty surrounding government plans to require the BBC to be distinctive. The White Paper said that,

"the BBC should be substantially different to other providers across each and every service, both in prime time and overall, and on television, radio and online".

While Ofcom is to judge this, the White Paper said that:

"The government will provide guidance to the regulator on content requirements and performance metrics".

This looks like very direct government interference into the editorial decisions of the BBC—interference that could curtail the BBC's creative freedom to be popular. Surely that is in conflict with the Government's stated aim to ensure an independent BBC.

The issue of competition is also a real concern, with the BBC believing that the requirement to name all those earning more than £150,000 will undermine its ability to attract and keep the best talent. Why does the Minister believe that the BBC is wrong?

Finally, I hope that we will have the opportunity not only to consider, as was said in the Statement, the details of the White Paper but to vote on its contents.

The Earl of Courtown: My Lords, I thank both noble Lords for their comments on the draft BBC charter and I will deal with the points as they were made.

The noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, started with a question on distinctiveness. As the noble Lord is aware, this has been a key focus of the charter review process, and the noble Lord, Lord Foster, mentioned this as well. It is something that the BBC has fully recognised and embraced during this process. The BBC's director-general has been a particular driving force on this issue, and he has highlighted that he wants to see a system that,

"firmly holds our feet to the fire on distinctiveness".

That is exactly what the White Paper proposals seek to deliver. The noble Lord, Lord Hall, has issued a statement this morning saying that the draft charter, "will deliver the strong and creative BBC the public believes in". He went on to say:

"Overall, we have the right outcome for the BBC".

The noble Lord, Lord Foster, mentioned the licence fee—as did the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, I think—and much of this was aligned towards the over-75s. The issue with the over-75s is a deal that was done with the BBC. It gives the BBC a flat cash settlement until 2021 and gives the BBC certainty on this issue.

Both noble Lords mentioned the BBC's mission and purposes and the Reithian principles, all of which have been debated at great length in this House. The noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, also mentioned Parliamentary Questions, debates and committee reports, all of which the Government have taken note of. The BBC is clear that the core of its mission to inform, educate and entertain should endure. This has been repeated by my noble friends Lady Neville-Rolfe and Lord Ashton of Hyde. However, the next charter provides the opportunity to explain more fully what we expect from the BBC. This is why its new mission is to act in the public interest, serving all audiences with impartial, high-quality and distinctive media content and services that inform, educate and entertain. The new public purposes emphasise the key factors that are central to the mission of the BBC. The importance of the BBC's international role is strengthened through the introduction of a stand-alone purpose about reflecting the UK, its culture and values to the world.

Both noble Lords asked questions about independence. Again, I think the Government have gone many miles on this journey from the White Paper to where we are today. I reiterate where we are. The board will have 14 members. The Government will appoint five non-executive members—the chair and four members for each of the nations. There will be no deputy chair; instead, a senior independent director will be appointed from the non-executive members. All government appointments will follow a robust and transparent public appointments process. The BBC will appoint

five non-executive members and four executive members. The BBC has the majority on the board. This is all to do with transparency and independence.

I think that covers the questions asked by the two noble Lords, but I will have a look at them and, if there is anything more I can add, I will do so in writing.

12.12 pm

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury (Con): My Lords, there will be a very broad welcome for the Government's decision to have a majority of the new BBC board as independent, not government-appointed, members. However, I urge my noble friend to take note of two points. First, in addition to them being independent, I hope that the criteria for deciding who might be appropriate will take into account an understanding of the very rapidly changing world of television in the future, which will be the world in which the BBC has to operate. Secondly, I again urge that there would be real advantage in terms of enhancing the independence of board members if they were appointed for one term only, so they would not feel the need to curry favour to ensure a renewal of their appointment.

The Earl of Courtown: My Lords, the draft charter allows the independent non-executive directors to have two terms of four years each. No doubt the department will listen carefully to what my noble friend has said.

Baroness Deech (CB): Does the Minister appreciate the anxiety of some Members that we are dependent on the Government to find a few minutes or an hour or two to allow this House to discuss the royal charter, given that it is no longer an appropriate method of governing something as important as the BBC? It is patently not a guarantee of the independence of the BBC. On the contrary, it is simply a deal between the Culture Secretary and the director-general. It is high time for a statute. There is no need to fear that this House or the other House would interfere more in the BBC or be more oppressive in terms of its independence than is the case under the royal charter. Further, does the Minister agree that Ofcom is not the right body to deal with important political and impartiality complaints as it is full of former BBC employees and is very heavily dependent on government appointments? Will he assure the House that there will be a new method for appointing Ofcom members that will assure their independence and expertise? At the moment, Ofcom is not the right body; my own preference would be for an ombudsman.

The Earl of Courtown: The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, will know that I responded to a Question on this exact subject some time ago. The noble Baroness also mentioned the charter and obviously feels that we should change our position on using it. But the Government feel that the charter is the right way forward. It has served us well. The charter review has heard from this House and, as I said earlier, the Government have listened to many Questions, debates and Select Committee reports on this. As I said earlier, there will be opportunities for further scrutiny of the charter and the framework agreement, and there will

[THE EARL OF COURTOWN]

be a debate in this House in October. The noble Lord, Lord Foster, asked whether there would be an opportunity for a vote; that is up to the usual channels. The BBC is under royal charter for a reason: its independence. This is fundamental to the BBC's work and it has consistently argued that it wants a robust charter review on a predictable timetable. It would not be in the best interests of the BBC if carefully negotiated positions could be undone. On Ofcom, this was advised both by committees and by the Clementi review, and we feel that Ofcom is the best regulator to use.

Lord Lea of Crondall (Lab): My Lords, I am sure that, in general, this side of the House will always be in favour of transparency on salaries in every sector of the economy; we have advocated that. But can the Minister advise further about the rationale of demanding salary publicity for people in one sector of the broadcasting industry? I call it publicity because is not the idea to somehow spotlight the BBC salaries in some way for some purpose or another? Is it to whip up some sort of resentment about these salaries? Is it not true that, on the level playing field of the private sector, it is a total illusion that the public, who may pay the salaries of the BBC, do not pay the salaries of people who work in advertising agencies. Is this not an illusion about how our economy works and will it not prove untenable in the medium term to have this requirement without a similar requirement for the rest of the broadcasting industry?

The Earl of Courtown: My Lords, I was glad to hear that the noble Lord, Lord Lea of Crondall, welcomes transparency. But the fact is that we are talking about the licence fee holders' money. They demand transparency, and one of the great points about the charter review is to have more transparency. It is quite fair that the threshold, which was set at £150,000, is in line with that for BBC executives and the Civil Service, and is just above the PM's salary. I am not sure whether the noble Lord is aware, but this will be done in bands, and initially the band for salaries will be £50,000 before it goes to the actual salary. I cannot agree with the noble Lord; transparency demands that we are open for everybody to see.

Lord Berkeley of Knighton (CB): My Lords, I declare an interest as a contributor to the BBC; however, the happy news is that I can assure your Lordships that I will not be entering the ranks of the plus-£150,000, and nor will anybody I know on Radio 3. On a serious point, and addressing the noble Lord who spoke last, I have no objection to people knowing what I am paid by the BBC. We can read about the Minister's salary and those of other Members of Parliament, so it is not unreasonable.

The Minister mentioned the excellence of the BBC and I will take this moment to invite him to congratulate Radio 3 as it celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Third Programme. No other institution does more for serious music in this country than Radio 3. It commissions new work and takes music out among young composers and the young generation of artists. I am sorry if for a moment I blow this trumpet—but, after all, a birthday is a good moment to do it. It does a quite extraordinary job and we should all realise that it is the envy of the

world. In other countries people in the musical world will say, "Do you realise how lucky you are to have this extraordinary institution?". So I would like to take this opportunity to say happy birthday and I invite the Minister to do the same.

The Earl of Courtown: The noble Lord will be very glad to know that I will not sing it. However, he is quite right in what he said, and I do wish Radio 3 a happy birthday. It is such an important station and I have listened to it for many years. It has turned me towards listening to a little more classical music than I did in the past. I was also glad to hear what the noble Lord had to say about matters relating to the transparency of salaries paid at the BBC.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, I hesitate to disagree with the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, or indeed with the Minister. But, as far as I am aware, there is not a competitive market for the services of Members of your Lordships' House. Nor is there a competitive market in a number of other areas where this kind of transparency is commonplace. The fact is that the BBC is part of one market for the services of the talent that is being sought. The Minister referred in his opening remarks to the widespread consultation that had gone on with the public about the BBC. As far as I am aware, there was no great call in that consultation for this particular kind of transparency and there was a very high degree of support for the value for money that the BBC represents. In those circumstances, frankly, the only beneficiaries of this particular kind of transparency will be the BBC's competitive rivals, who will not have to provide the same kind of information themselves. Will the Minister tell the House what the thinking behind this is, if it is not just to clip the BBC's wings?

The Earl of Courtown: The noble Baroness makes an interesting point, but the fact is that to follow through on the transparency that runs all the way through the charter review, it was important that we arrive at this point and have transparency around individuals earning more than this amount. I disagree with her slightly about public bodies being competitive. I know that in a former life as a contractor, we had to compete on price for jobs against people in the public sector. We knew their costs but it was not a very easy game, I must admit. I understand the noble Baroness's view, but our view is different.

Lord Tugendhat (Con): My Lords, I will first revert to the question raised by my noble friend Lord Sherbourne. The question of renewal is a very important one because everybody has seen in the public sector that when appointments are coming up for renewal, the appointees sometimes become a little more flexible and a little more willing to listen to those who will be doing the appointing. I think that two terms of four years is excessive. It would be much better to consider one term of five years. That would help to ensure a greater degree of independence. Does the Minister agree that transparency is a very important principle where public money is concerned? When we talk about the licence holder, that is public money. If the BBC goes down this route, there will be pressures on others to follow—and that is very important. The question of

transparency is spreading across British life; we see it more and more in business, as well as in the public service. I commend the Government for this action.

The Earl of Courtown: I thank my noble friend Lord Tugendhat for his question. As he said, life is changing. Twenty years ago there was no transparency in all sorts of areas—there was no transparency on matters relating to your Lordships' House. But the world is now becoming more open and we have to accept that. I also have no doubt that the department will listen carefully to my noble friend's comments about the term for non-executive directors.

Lord Elystan-Morgan (CB): My Lords, the Minister will no doubt recollect that many noble Lords with a Wales connection have over the years raised the position of the Welsh language channel, S4C. On almost each occasion, encouraging words have been spoken from the Dispatch Box with regard to that particular matter. Has such a provision been included in the draft charter? If that is not the case, will the matter be swiftly remitted?

The Earl of Courtown: My Lords, the noble Lord refers to S4C and, in essence, minority languages as well. The Government are committed to maintaining minority language broadcasting. S4C's independence is highlighted in the framework agreement. The BBC has also confirmed that S4C will receive £74.5 million of licence fee funding per year between 2017-18 and 2021-22. The Government have also committed to a review of S4C in 2017 covering its remit, funding and governance. Further details, including the review process, will be announced in due course.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane (Lab): My Lords, I am comparatively relaxed about the publication of salaries, unlike quite a lot of my colleagues. However, one thing could turn out to be counterproductive. There is at least anecdotal evidence that what has driven up executive pay in the private sector has been the publication of what competitors are paying. After all, because of the consultants who advise people—and indeed are encouraged by the Government to advise people on salaries—nobody wants to be in the bottom quartile. Mathematically, if nobody opts to be in the bottom quartile, salaries will go up—and historically they have gone up.

It is also fair to say that, a public company such as ITV, for example, has to publish its salaries. They are in the shareholders' report. I am in favour of extending transparency and making publication compulsory.

Lord Berkeley of Knighton: Those of us—

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: I gather that I was being unduly courteous in giving way. The time for a proper debate on this will be in October, and I welcome the offer of such a date.

I have a final point on Radio 3. I share the general congratulations to Radio 3, but it is worth while remembering that Lord Reith disapproved of Radio 3 because he wanted classical music to permeate all programming, not be isolated on a single channel.

The Earl of Courtown: Well, my Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Gordon, has educated me about Radio 3. The point he made about transparency and competitiveness

is noted. There is not a great deal more on the subject that I can add at the moment, but the importance of these matters about radio and such like are noted.

Lord Lexden (Con): Will my noble friend explain how the new arrangements will strengthen and enhance the World Service at the BBC, to which many of us attach great importance, particularly at a time of acute international instability? Will he also comment on the proposal for a mid-term review of the new charter, which was a point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Foster?

The Earl of Courtown: As I think I said to the noble Lord, Lord Foster, perhaps not very clearly, the mid-term review will be a health check. The whole point of this health check is to make sure that everything put into it is working correctly.

On the World Service, as my noble friend will know, it is one of the BBC's most distinctive services, which is hugely valued by audiences. Its reach and reputation help to project the United Kingdom's cultural and democratic values to more than 246 million people worldwide. It is a vital part of the UK's soft power influence. We are protecting the funding for the World Service at £254 million a year for the next five years and providing additional funding at £34 million in 2016-17 and £85 million a year for the following three years. We are continuing the approach of the current charter in ensuring the independence of the World Service.

Lord Maxton (Lab): I am delighted that in October we will have a debate on the review and the royal charter, but will we be able to amend it? Will we be able to vote on it? In particular, will those people along the Corridor, who after all are the only people elected to represent the licence payers of this country, be able to vote and amend the charter as it is at present proposed? I will give the noble Earl the answer before he does: it is no, we will not be able to amend it because it is a royal charter rather than a statute, but it ought to be a royal statute or nothing. On the point about salaries, why does the Freedom of Information Act, which has been one of the biggest drivers behind making this whole area more open, not cover the publicly-funded BBC as well?

The Earl of Courtown: I cannot answer the last question put by the noble Lord, Lord Maxton, concerning FOI requests for other bodies, but the point is interesting and has been well made. I would not say that the noble Lord has seen my brief as far as the charter review is concerned. For a start, what happens down at the other end of the Corridor is very much a matter for another place, but as I have said, we in this House will have a debate in October and it will be up to the usual channels to decide how the Motion is put.

Drug-Resistant Infections

Motion to Take Note

12.31 pm

Moved by Lord Lansley

That this House takes note of the report *Tackling Drug-Resistant Infections Globally: Final Report and Recommendations*, published on 16 May.

Lord Lansley (Con): My Lords, it is my privilege to be able to introduce a debate on the subject of tackling drug-resistant infections and in particular to take note of, and certainly to welcome and take forward in our debate, the review on antimicrobial resistance led by my noble friend Lord O'Neill. It is a great pleasure to see him in his place for the debate.

In his 1945 Nobel Prize lecture Alexander Fleming said, some 17 years after his discovery of the antibiotic properties of penicillin:

“Then there is the danger that the ignorant man may easily underdose himself ... He buys some penicillin and gives himself, not enough to kill the streptococci but enough to educate them to resist penicillin”.

Those words were prophetic in terms of the emergence of antibiotic resistance, which did indeed occur shortly thereafter. But for the subsequent 40 years or thereabouts, although such resistance did regularly emerge, the discovery and development of new antibiotics gave us all an increasing reassurance that no longer would we fall victim to infections either as readily or as rapidly as did our forebears. The burden of mortality, particularly in developed countries, has shifted from infectious diseases to non-communicable disease. Over time, however, the development of increasing antibiotic resistance across a range of bacterial infections has outstripped the limited further development of novel antibiotics, and the extent of the use of the drugs which are currently available has increasingly prompted the development of organisms capable of near universal resistance.

In this decade, and especially over the past three to four years, we have seen a most welcome high-level political and scientific awareness and response to the risks we face from antimicrobial resistance. In this country, not least following the urgings of the Chief Medical Officer, to whom I pay tribute in this regard, the coalition Government adopted in 2013 a five-year strategy. In 2014 the Prime Minister asked my noble friend Lord O'Neill and his team to look at the global response. Working with the Wellcome Trust, the review has produced a series of reports over time describing the extent of the risks we face, how to seek to contain those risks by extending the life of our existing antibiotics through reducing unnecessary use not only in humans but also in animals and the environment, how to speed up diagnosis so as to deliver the right treatment by limiting the use of antibiotics to what is necessary, and to promote the development of new drugs, vaccines and other approaches to combating infections.

Those several papers were brought together in May this year in the review's final report. I am most grateful to your Lordships' House for the opportunity to debate that report soon after its publication, and in particular to do so in the wake of the discussions at the G7 and the G20, and in anticipation of the UN high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance next Wednesday, to take place in the General Assembly. I see our short debate as needing to enable this House to talk about how we move forward from the analysis, work and achievements thus far to try to generate more action and measurable progress. If we do not, my noble friend Lord O'Neill's report quantifies the risk we face: in the next 35 years the mortality attributable to AMR could rise from 700,000 across the world to

some 10 million. Our children and grandchildren could be vulnerable to infections we thought we had conquered.

We need to avoid seeing this as simply a future threat. It is a clear and present danger. If I may, I will delve into the review's report for one example, which I thought conveyed that very persuasively. It is about dealing with drug-resistant *E. coli*. Its prediction of what it might look like in 35 years' time was that some 40% of the economic impact of drug-resistant infections would be attributable to drug-resistant *E. coli*. But that drug-resistant *E. coli* is already with us. Incidence of carbapenem-resistant *E. coli* has doubled between 2008 and 2013 in the United Kingdom alone. There are countries in Europe where it is endemic. The last-line antibiotic to combat it is not always now effective. There are isolated incidents of it failing.

In its methodology, the review conducted research to look at what would happen if, over the next decade, there was an increase in drug resistant *E. coli* similar to the increase in the last decade of a parallel pneumococcal bacterium. Using that assumption, it would mean that in Europe by 2026, which is only 10 years from now, 40,000 more people would die from *E. coli* infections as a result, but if we were to develop the additional new and rapid diagnostic systems we need, that in itself could save 6,000 of those lives. If a new antibiotic to combat it were available, a further 7,300 lives could be saved. That is a measureable, specific example of the threat we face and combat, not at some distant time, but now.

We should thoroughly welcome the report and focus on how we now turn this into action. If the House will forgive me, I will not dwell on the importance of the reduction of infection itself through the adoption of the most rigorous means of dealing with hygiene and clinical practice. We have done that a lot over the years. We can demonstrate in this country that after 2006 and all the way through to now, and, I am happy to say, under the coalition Government in the last Parliament, we continued to see a dramatic reduction in the incidence of MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* in our hospitals. We can take some pride in what we have achieved, but it needs to be true for combating all bacterial infections.

In addition, we need now to have measurable progress. Key to that is surveillance. This is a global threat and we need surveillance globally to be at a high level. I am sure my noble friend the Minister will refer to the Government's Fleming fund, which gives us a place and resources that can make a dramatic impact on that surveillance. However, my first of a number of suggestions is that through the Department for International Development and the deployment of our international aid budget we can say to the people of this country that that budget can be of direct, significant benefit to them, not only if we deploy it in reinforcing basic health systems in many of the most vulnerable countries—the importance of developing that basic health infrastructure was demonstrated during the Ebola outbreak—but also if we go on to make sure we have lab capacity and surveillance systems, diagnostics and treatment protocols enabling us to combat the rise of drug-resistant infections.

We need quantification of this here and in developed countries. As with everywhere in my experience of healthcare systems, understanding variation and the reasons for it, and combating the worst to bring everybody to the level of the best, are critical. The quantification in this respect shows at least a threefold variation in the use of antibiotics in developed countries. Some use far more antibiotics than other countries. We are not the least: countries such as the Netherlands have extremely good records on antibiotic use. We need to bring everybody not through their national action plans but in the global system to the best possible level of activity.

I focus for a moment on animal health. The One Health model, in working together with the veterinary world, characterises the approach of the World Health Organization to this. It is really important that we reduce the unnecessary use of antibiotics in animal health. Of course, we cannot say that there should not be proper use of antibiotics for animal health but we must reduce the level of prophylactic use in animals. We should look—as I know the Americans are, and we are in Europe—for the elimination of antibiotic use simply for the promotion of growth in animals rather than for treatment. We should make sure that the use of antibiotics in animals is properly subject to veterinary supervision. We should also consider reserving the necessary but small number of last-line antibiotics for human health purposes rather than have them deployed in animal health, with the finite risk of infections forming drug resistance in animal populations and spreading to humans.

The improvement of rapid diagnostics is terrifically important. The Longitude Prize demonstrated public awareness and support for developing cheap, accurate and rapid point-of-care test kits for bacterial infection. That is vital and I hope we will hear more about it. The technology platforms and many of the assays are there. In the NHS, often there is a tendency for innovation, for promoting innovation and seeking to bring it forward, but then it all stops at the moment it should be rolled out through a procurement process within the NHS. In this context, now is the moment to think about putting into the NHS mandate, to be published later this year, specific proposals relating to the NHS England approach to the rollout of rapid diagnostics and the resistance of antibiotic use in the NHS. For example, in America, two-thirds of antibiotics are frankly not needed by those to whom they are prescribed.

I will not dwell on regulated co-operation but frankly we must do a lot of that in clinical trials. Some 80% of the cost of developing a new drug is in clinical trials. If we can make clinical trial practice across the world more consistent and easier to achieve, we will do an enormous amount to bring through new medicines. We must do that; we must bring through new antibiotics. Vaccines have a lot to offer in this respect. Perhaps at the moment we underestimate what we can do. It would make an enormous difference in reducing the overall use of antibiotics if some common infections, such as *Clostridium difficile*, were capable of being immunised against. We would see the prospective benefit of that. We should use vaccines as a cost-effective approach wherever we can.

On generating new treatments, the US has gone down the road of generating antibiotic incentives through the GAIN system, which gives priority review and market exclusivity. Frankly, if we want a global response we should look at how successful that system is. The US has approved five new antibiotics so far under that proposal. It could be allied to market entry reward, as the review recommends, and that reward could be made much more affordable across the world if market exclusivity—even a transferable market exclusivity—could be allied to it.

Let me conclude. Those are some of the key areas; I have not attempted to talk about all 10 key recommendations. Getting that One Health approach by working on animal as well as human health, as I have described, and really focusing on rapid diagnostics, where we could make an enormous impact quickly with technology that is already available, can take us a long way. However, we need the global system to respond. The G7 recommendations that I read seemed compelling and supportive but did not actually involve much pledging—for example, to support the global innovation fund which Her Majesty's Government have put in place. That fund needs to be matched and added to by other countries around the world to bring forward new treatments. In the G20 conclusions, I saw that one paragraph at the end—almost an afterthought—simply called for a report back over the course of the coming year to the Berlin meeting. That seemed disappointing.

I look very much for the UN high-level meeting to take measurable and decisive actions in this respect. It is always difficult. I was a chair of a High-Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases, back in 2011, where we thought that we might be able to generate a response similar to that of the high-level meeting on HIV many years before. I do not think that it happened. However, what we need for antimicrobial resistance is for the UN high-level meeting next Wednesday to generate the sort of global response in tackling this threat that we saw years back by the UN high-level meeting in relation to HIV. That is what I would like us to achieve. I hope that more of the contributions in today's debate will prompt that to happen. I am grateful to your Lordships.

12.47 pm

Lord Rees of Ludlow (CB): My Lords, this timely debate is a chance to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill, on the excellent series of reports that he has produced. We should surely also use this opportunity to acclaim Dame Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer, who espoused this cause early on and has probably done more than anyone else to raise ABR issues on the political agenda, not just in the UK but worldwide.

Antibiotic resistance is growing so fast that 700,000 people already die each year from untreatable infections. The pathogens such as typhoid which once succumbed swiftly to penicillin and other antibiotics now fight back; they are becoming killers again. Just this year, doctors have noted the emergence of resistance to colistin, which is the last line of defence against some very resistant bacteria. There is real worry that within a decade, transplants and even orthopaedic operations

[LORD REES OF LUDLOW]

will become hazardous because of the intractable risk of infection, so ABR is a global threat that hangs over us. The O'Neill report emphasised that by 2050, 10 million lives a year and a cumulative \$100 trillion of economic output might be at risk due to the rise of drug-resistant infections, unless we can develop new drugs and make more prudent use of what we have.

My comments will focus on avoiding the overuse of drugs. I have zero expertise in medicine—my scientific field is space research and astronomy—but I have become a small-time crusader for the AMR cause, for reasons that I will explain by offering a bit of history from 300 years ago.

In the 18th century, the most pressing scientific challenge was measuring time and determining longitude at sea. In 1714, the Government set up what was in a sense the first scientific quango: the Board of Longitude. The board established the first challenge prize: a reward of £20,000, a huge sum in those days, for the first person to devise a way to determine longitude, with specified precision. Famously, it was John Harrison, a working-class Yorkshireman and an outsider, who triumphed with his marine chronometer, an extraordinary high-tech artefact of its era.

In the 300 years since, this initiative has been emulated by many challenge prizes. One, for instance, was the stimulus for Lindbergh's transatlantic flight. More recently, the American government agency DARPA has sponsored competitions for driverless vehicles and for robots that can do complex tasks in hazardous environments. The California-based XPRIZE foundation promotes privately sponsored prizes. It aims to revitalise,

“markets that are currently stuck due to existing failures or a commonly held belief that a solution is not possible”.

As the current Astronomer Royal, I thought that the tercentenary of the Longitude Prize was worth celebrating with a national prize to address a contemporary challenge. Government support was forthcoming and allowed a reward of £10 million. Nesta, which has established expertise in this area, agreed to oversee the administration of the prize and has done a splendid job.

What should the challenge be? There is no manifest number one problem, as there was in the 18th century. A committee I chaired came up with a list of six possible challenges. All were presented on BBC TV and in the press, after which there was a public vote. The most popular choice was a project to tackle antimicrobial resistance.

A well-designed prize must meet several criteria. It should engage many contestants and, ideally, unleash investment amounting to far more than the prize itself. It must not require huge facilities accessible only to big battalions. Success must require genuine breakthroughs but be credibly achievable within five years. It should be configured, as was the original Longitude Prize, so that intermediate steps towards the target may get a reward. For an individual, a university group or a small company, the prize money is a significant incentive; if a big company wins, the publicity is more important. Either way, all have a motive to participate.

Of course, £10 million is a trivial sum compared to what is needed for developing new drugs, but there are bite-sized challenges relevant to AMR where it is an appropriate incentive. The target our expert advisers chose was to devise cheap, accurate, rapid and easy-to-use point-of-care kits to test for bacterial infections. These kits might be a strip of sensitised paper or a lab on a chip combined with a smartphone app, and they must be capable of being used anywhere in the world to identify the nature of someone's infection. This would reduce the overuse or misuse of antibiotics and thereby help ensure that the antibiotics we have now will be effective for longer. The O'Neill report argued that currently, more than half of prescriptions for antibiotics may be unnecessary or inappropriate and that developing a globally available test will be part of the solution to keeping these drugs viable for another generation.

The prize has attracted more than 150 registrations and remains open for more. Entries are whittled down by an expert panel. Many were clearly not credible, and some entrants are encouraged to team up with others. Entries have come from many countries, but to be eligible they must involve a UK company or institution and carry out manufacturing and/or design of the winning solution in the UK, or lab test or showcase the winning solution in the UK.

This year, incidentally, the Americans launched a challenge prize with similar goals and a similar scale of jackpot, although with a US focus. That prize will concentrate on the 18 identified bugs that pose special health threats in the US, but it is being co-ordinated with ours. The American prize has set a maximum time of 90 minutes for its test to be used and to give results, which is appropriate for use in out-patient and in-patient settings, including pharmacies. The Longitude Prize has set the time limit at only 30 minutes, as we are looking for a test that will work in the field, in all health settings, including where antibiotics can be bought over the counter.

Those of us involved in these prizes welcome the fact that the O'Neill report highlights the importance of rapid diagnostics. We hope the Longitude Prize will help to speed up existing work in this area and generate some novel ideas. Moreover, a feature of prizes is that they can attract public interest. Nesta has been working hard on this in the UK, even developing a computer game based on the principles of antibiotic resistance to illustrate the science.

If overprescription of antibiotics were the only problem, it would be challenge enough. But of course, it is already much worse than that, because in the US, China and many other countries, as the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, indicated, antibiotics are being used for animals in a prophylactic context. I gather that the EU is banning this, and we hope that that will be followed.

Finally, it is worth noting that this challenge is clearly one that must be tackled globally. It therefore tends, rather like climate change in a way, to slip down the agenda compared to more parochial issues. It is also rather like climate change in that, although it is important now, it is going to be even worse in the future, so the benefits of action will accrue even more to the next generation than to us. For that reason, in order to ensure it does not slip down the agenda,

the public need to keep up the pressure. The O'Neill report included a global awareness campaign as one of its priorities, and I echo the view expressed already by the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, that the forthcoming UN meetings will offer a boost to this cause.

12.58 pm

The Earl of Selborne (Con): My Lords, the House will be most grateful to my noble friend Lord Lansley for giving us the opportunity to debate the report and recommendations of the review on antimicrobial resistance, chaired by my noble friend Lord O'Neill, to whom we are all greatly indebted.

In the short time that antibiotics have been available to clinicians, the United Kingdom has played a leading role in their development, and indeed in the development of diagnostics, vaccines and other products vital for the prevention and treatment of infection. I say "short time", because the first clinician to witness the miraculous potential of penicillin was Charles Fletcher, in February 1941, when he was working as a research student for Professor Howard Florey—later of course Lord Florey, and a Nobel Prize winner along with Sir Alexander Fleming. Professor Florey gave him the task of testing whether it was safe to give penicillin to patients. Told to find the worst case of bacterial infection in the Radcliffe Infirmary, he chose an Oxford policeman who had been infected after a scratch on this face due to contact with a rosebush. After four days of treatment, he was on the way to making a full recovery—it was totally remarkable. But then of course the penicillin supplies ran out, as there was no industrial process for producing this material, and the patient relapsed and never recovered.

As my noble friend reminded us, Sir Alexander Fleming and others warned us of the danger of resistance, which he was aware of soon after his epic discovery of the antibiotic properties of the mould *Penicillium notatum* way back in the 1920s. It remains a total mystery to me, incidentally, how apparently rational people around the world can witness the remorseless advance of resistance within microbes and yet reject the concept of Darwinian evolution; there it is, in all its clarity.

Now, thanks to this highly influential review, commissioned by our Government, the United Kingdom is continuing its leading role in developing strategies on a global scale to meet the challenges of rising drug resistance. Like the noble Lord, Lord Rees, I pay tribute to the role of Dame Sally Davies in keeping this on the agenda both nationally and internationally.

At the World Economic Forum at Davos in January, the global pharmaceutical industry signed up to what was described as the declaration on combating antimicrobial resistance, which called on Governments around the world to do more than just issue statements of intent and to take concrete action, in collaboration with the companies that had signed up, to support investment in the development of new products to meet the challenges of rising drug resistance. The review has suggested one-off payments to firms that develop drugs that meet predefined criteria of unmet needs, to be paid on top of sales revenue. Not surprisingly,

the 85 companies that signed up to the declaration at Davos supported that proposal, and said that if Governments offered them money they would do everything they could to earn it.

Clearly, the business model of expecting new antibiotics, or other products developed at great cost, to be funded by sales is doomed to fail—there is bound to be a market failure. These new products need to be kept as a last line of defence against so-called superbugs and held in reserve for the most difficult cases. Any incentive to maximise sales would be perverse in the extreme. We have heard already about the issues of the irresponsible use of antibiotics in agriculture. One such new treatment is colistin. Last year, genes resistant to this new treatment were discovered in hospital patients in China, and the agricultural use of colistin is thought to be responsible.

If, in the words of the Davos declaration, we are looking to Governments for concrete action, the first priority for our Government in the UK must be to run out a model for the UK that delinks payments for antibiotics from the volume of sales. If such a model could be piloted by, say, 2017, that would be concrete action indeed. It would also be a great stimulus to British innovation, which remains a world leader in the field. That does not apply just to large pharmaceutical companies; quite modest-sized companies are involved as well.

The review calls for the establishment of a global innovation fund for early-stage and non-commercial research, a highly important recommendation and potentially of great significance to all companies that are innovating in this area, particularly to small firms that struggle to comply with the funding arrangements of organisations such as Combating Bacterial Resistance in Europe, the Innovative Medicines Initiative and other funding sources.

The appalling story of colistin-resistant bacteria, attributed to agricultural use, emphasises the importance of the review's recommendations on antimicrobials in agriculture, on which it published a report in December 2015. The review says that,

"in some parts of the world antimicrobial use is far greater in animals than in humans; in the US, for instance, more than 70 percent of medically important antibiotics are used in animals ... Much of the use of antibiotics in animals is not therapeutic ... Instead, significant volumes are used either prophylactically amongst healthy animals, to stop the development of an infection within a flock ... or simply for growth promotion".

That is a scandalous state of affairs.

The review proposes three broad interventions to take bold global action to substantially reduce the use of antibiotics in agriculture. This is a global issue; to be fair to the EU, in some ways it has led the field from what was an appalling situation, not just in livestock production but in fish farming, which was absolutely scandalous. We need global action. The proposals in the review were, first, to set global targets to reduce antibiotic use in food products; secondly, the rapid development of minimum standards to reduce antimicrobial manufacturing waste released into the environment—that is a pause for thought; can you really imagine antimicrobial waste being released into the environment? It has happened—and, thirdly, improved surveillance and monitoring to check progress against global targets, which was referred to earlier.

[THE EARL OF SELBORNE]

The pharmaceutical companies that signed up to the Davos declaration accepted their responsibility in delivering at least some of these measures, alongside the Governments, who also have to deliver. However, I am not persuaded that the language of the declaration, prepared by the global pharmaceutical industry, is totally appropriate. It calls for,

“more judicious use of antibiotics in livestock”.

That does not sound very robust. The overuse of antibiotics in livestock husbandry is not just injudicious; it is scandalously irresponsible. Immediate action by the companies that sell such products is urgently required, as well as by those Governments who allow it.

The ball is now in the court of the G20 Finance Ministers. As my noble friend said, we have to move from statements of intent to concrete action. We look forward to the United Nations high-level meeting on 21 September. The members of the review team, led by my noble friend Lord O'Neill, have potentially done a wonderful service for patients around the world in setting out its list of 10 specific actions to be followed up by Governments. It is now time for their wise advice to be followed by concrete and timely actions.

1.07 pm

Lord Trees (CB): My Lords, I join others in congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, on securing this debate, which, I dare to suggest, in terms of the significance of the global problem that we are discussing, is one of the most important that we have had in this House for some time.

I begin with a quotation:

“This enquiry has been an alarming experience, which leaves us convinced that resistance to antibiotics and other anti-infective agents constitutes a major threat to public health, and ought to be recognised as such more widely than it is at present”.

That is not a quote from the O'Neill report; it is the opening statement of the summary of recommendations from the seventh report of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, published in 1998 and entitled *Resistance to Antibiotics and Other Antimicrobial Agents*. The inquiry was chaired by my friend, mentor and fellow vet Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior, who retired from the House at Christmas. The report went on to make a number of recommendations that have an uncanny similarity to the ones we are now considering in the O'Neill report. Such is the nature of human progress; it takes us a while to become convinced of emerging threats.

I wholeheartedly welcome the O'Neill report, and the political support that it received from the last Prime Minister deserves commendation. In common with other noble Lords, I also congratulate Dame Sally Davies on her championing of this important issue. If antimicrobial resistance was a serious problem in 1998, its significance has increased enormously since, especially as a result of globalisation and a dramatic increase in the large-scale movement of people.

I shall focus my remarks in this debate on the veterinary aspects of this issue and focus particularly on bacterial resistance to antibiotics—which I shall refer to as “antibiotic resistance”—which is a problem in human health, as we are hearing, that is relevant to antibiotic use in animals. In that context, I should

point out that the estimates of the costs that have been quoted already, provided by the consultants to the O'Neill commission, in terms of human life and in financial terms—10 million deaths per year by 2050 and a cost of US \$100 trillion, truly shocking figures—refer to antimicrobial resistance. That is to say, they include such problems as resistance to protozoa, malaria, viruses such as HIV, as well as bacteria such as the human tubercle bacillus, all of which are huge causes of human morbidity and mortality, but there is no connection with chemotherapy in animals.

None the less, there are undoubtedly substantial human health problems which relate to bacteria which also affect animals and where animal usage has been implicated as a source of resistant strains. These particularly involve bacteria associated with gastro-enteric infections and the environment, such as *E. coli*, campylobacter and MRSA.

As the O'Neill commission laid out, the solutions to this problem involve reductions in drug usage, the development of new therapeutic and diagnostic agents and vaccines and the application of a global approach. I shall deal with those issues in that order and, as I said, mainly from a veterinary aspect.

First, I assure the House that, with respect to the UK and the EU, the veterinary bodies take the issue of antibiotic resistance very seriously. There are numerous high-level initiatives to reduce antibiotic usage in animals and to ensure their responsible use when necessary for animal health and welfare. In the UK and the EU, antibiotics are available only on prescription, and I assure the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, that the use of any antibiotics for growth promotion has been banned in Europe and the UK since 2006. Certain antibiotics critical for human use are still in veterinary use, such as fluoroquinolones and third and fourth-generation cephalosporins, and they are receiving particular attention from the veterinary community.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate of Defra, the British Veterinary Association and its subdivisions, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association and the British Equine Veterinary Association, the National Office of Animal Health and an organisation called RUMA—the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance—as well as industry organisations, have all been active in recent years in promoting the responsible use of antibiotics and in promoting and introducing measures accurately to record and reduce their usage. Indeed, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has incorporated in its guide to professional conduct a professional obligation on vets to use responsibly all antimicrobials, so it could be a matter which triggers a professional disciplinary offence.

The British Poultry Council, which represents 90% of the poultry meat industry, established an antibiotics stewardship programme in 2011, which introduced a voluntary ban on cephalosporins in 2012, and is committed to reduce fluoroquinolone use and cease all use of colistin in British poultry, which two noble Lords have mentioned. It reported a 44% drop in total antimicrobial usage between 2012 and 2015, despite a 5% increase in poultry meat production.

All those measures are to be commended, and the total usage of antibiotics in the UK in animals is substantially less than that in humans. Progress shows

what can be done, but we cannot be complacent, and more needs to be done, as I shall discuss. Suffice it to say that total antibiotic usage in animals in the UK is now close to the 50 milligram per kilogram target suggested in the O'Neill report. The veterinary profession is committed to continue these trends in the interests of public health while at the same time balancing the legitimate need to protect animal health, welfare and food production.

There is an urgent need in veterinary as well as human medicine to develop better diagnostics and better vaccines for infectious diseases, as the O'Neill commission urged and several noble Lords have said. These have the potential substantially to reduce the use of antibiotics. For example, the burgeoning aquaculture industry, particularly salmon farming, has made a remarkable reduction in antibacterial usage in the UK. Despite a huge increase in productivity from about 60 million tonnes in 1993 to 180 million tonnes in 2014, antibiotic usage in the sector is now very low. It is about one to two tonnes per year, which may sound quite a lot, but I assure your Lordships that it is small compared to the 419 tonnes total in all animals in the UK and 531 tonnes in humans—those are the 2013 figures. That progress in aquaculture has been achieved mainly by the development of vaccines and other management processes.

That is what is happening in the UK and Europe, but to reduce antibiotic resistance by reducing and controlling usage it is essential that action takes place on a global scale. There are no restrictions on antibiotic usage in animals or humans in many parts of the world, including in areas where there may be particularly high densities of human and animal populations and very high levels of contact between the two. Resistant strains which arise by natural selection in animals or humans due to uncontrolled use of antibiotics anywhere in the world can arrive in the UK within hours. About 60 million people per year travel through Heathrow airport alone, each carrying millions of microbes on two legs, many of which may have been acquired only hours previously. The O'Neill commission rightly emphasised this fact, even in the title of its report, *Tackling Drug-Resistant Infections Globally*. Whatever we do here in the UK—already a lot is being done in both the medical and veterinary worlds, but we need to do more—will be rendered ineffectual because of global human traffic, and we will not eliminate health risks anywhere unless we can secure concerted global action to address that.

At the same time as encouraging responsible use of antibiotics, there is an urgent need to discover and develop new antibiotics and new ways to combat bacterial infections. These may be by innovative therapeutic techniques, and the UK's vibrant and creative scientific and commercial sector is at the cutting edge of these developments. A number of exciting developments are badly in need of support. That may initially come from traditional research grant sources—I commend the initiatives that have recently been announced. Other developments may require creating appropriate financial incentives for investment. A major problem with antibiotics, as with many other therapeutics, is that relatively small amounts of drugs are used only occasionally on only a small proportion of the population.

The market sizes are not such as to provide the incentives for industry to respond. Industry is very successful in responding when there are market rewards consistent with the high cost of developing and registering therapeutic drugs. The O'Neill report rightly comments on that and makes a number of exciting and creative suggestions on how to mobilise the creativity of industry by creating artificial marketing opportunities.

In addition to therapeutic agents, we must do more to stimulate research on vaccine development. Earlier, I illustrated how important that can be in terms of aquaculture. There are challenges there with respect to some of the bacteria involved, but in general we have been extremely successful in science in developing vaccines to bacteria, and I am optimistic that solutions will be found and that vaccination will substantially reduce the need to use therapeutic interactions.

Lastly, management systems are hugely important; I do not have time to discuss them in any detail, but we need more research into improved management, particularly in animal husbandry systems.

In conclusion, I welcome the debate and the attention that the subject is receiving. Although only a proportion of the problems of antimicrobial resistance in humans is related to animal usage, there is a very high level of awareness in the veterinary community about this problem and a commitment to the responsible use of antibiotics and a reduction in the usage. The magnitude of this problem globally merits much more investment in research and development of vaccines, antibiotics, innovative therapies and new diagnostics, as well as improved management systems. Above all, the uncontrolled use of antibiotics, like climate change, is an issue that must be tackled globally.

1.20 pm

Lord Colwyn (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Lansley on securing this debate on what is one of the greatest health and economic challenges of our age. Antimicrobial resistance—AMR—which is causing the rise in drug-resistant infections, is killing around 700,000 people worldwide. In the UK alone, it is resulting in 3,000 deaths a year, with an estimated cost to the NHS in excess of £180 million per annum. Without global action, AMR will kill another 10 million people annually by 2050, according to recent models referenced by my noble friend Lord O'Neill in his recent report on this issue. According to my noble friend's findings, the increase in death and illness is set to wipe approximately \$8 trillion off the world's annual output by 2050. Previous speakers have referred to Dame Sally Davies, who frightened me when she described the threat of antibiotic resistance as being as great as the threat of terrorism.

The problem has been well documented and assessed; we now need to move on from discussing the problem to supporting the development and rollout of solutions. Policy discussion must go beyond just antimicrobial stewardship and the restriction of the use of existing antibiotics.

I note that at the May 2016 G7 summit, the then Prime Minister stressed the scale of the global problem of AMR and committed the UK to supporting British pharmaceutical companies to be at the forefront of

[LORD COLWYN]

bringing new products to market. Indeed, the report of the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill, called on the Government to provide:

“Better incentives to promote investment for new drugs and improving existing ones”.

I hope that the Minister will be able to reiterate this commitment on behalf of the new Prime Minister. Supporting the development of new antibiotics must be a key policy pillar in the Government's antimicrobial strategy both at home and abroad.

This afternoon I would like briefly to touch on an example of the types of solutions that exist beyond better antimicrobial stewardship, which is combating AMR at home and abroad. In my career as a dentist, I was aware of some of the important work being done using oxygen in oral health care. I am excited that oxygen is now at the forefront of work to address AMR with the development of reactive oxygen technology.

Reactive oxygen is a British-led innovation which represents a new generation in antibiotics. It works by generating highly reactive, free-radical oxygen species, mainly hydrogen peroxide—one of nature's fundamental defences against infection. It has been advanced by a small UK company, Matoke Holdings. Its chief executive, Ian Staples, is working with eminent clinicians, researchers and academics across Manchester, Southampton and Birmingham universities, including Dr Matthew Dryden of the University of Southampton School of Medicine and Professor Jonathan Cooke of Manchester University Pharmacy School and Imperial College London. These British scientists have developed a unique technology to precisely control levels and the rate of release of reactive oxygen, harnessing its ability to fight infection. No Gram-negative, Gram-positive or multiresistant bacteria tested to date have survived contact with reactive oxygen in either laboratory or clinic, including MRSA and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

However, direct use of the gas is prohibited because ozone should not be inhaled. Professor Eddie Lynch, a colleague of mine, has shown that primary root carious lesions can successfully be treated with a novel ozone delivery system able to avoid any toxic risk. The system includes a source of ozone and a dental hand-piece with a removable silicon cup for exposing the tooth's lesion to the gas. Although it is many years since I observed this treatment, it was very effective, with no side-effects. It could be considered a valid alternative to conventional drilling and filling for the management of primary root carious lesions.

I was delighted to hear from Matoke Holdings earlier this year. Reactive oxygen is one alternative that can play a vital role in tackling drug-resistant infection. The first product from this innovation, Surgihoney RO, is already approved by the EU regulatory body as a topical antimicrobial gel with antibiofilm action for wounds, burns and ulcers, including diabetic, and it has already been prescribed through the NHS. It has also been used by volunteers in Uganda and Ethiopia to prevent and treat infections, taking this British innovation to parts of the world where it is desperately needed. This is made possible given it is a low-cost, effective antimicrobial that is easy to use and does not require refrigeration. But, such innovative

products need to be made available more widely to support some of the most vulnerable international communities.

The technology is now rapidly being developed to tackle other complex clinical infections for which conventional antibiotics are failing, including cystic fibrosis, chronic rhinosinusitis and recurrent urinary tract infections. Such technology has huge potential to deliver significant savings to the NHS and international health economies by providing a new effective treatment for chronic wounds, reducing amputations and days spent in hospital and nursing care. Such British innovative technology, which represents a new generation in antibiotics, needs to be brought to the forefront of the policy discussion about how we tackle AMR, both within the UK and globally.

While reactive oxygen technology is being pioneered by one British SME, this needs to be supplemented by strong government support for innovation to address this global challenge at scale and at pace. Investing in British research and development and supporting British enterprise will support our economy and allow us to export solutions to the threat of AMR across the globe. British innovation can still be a leader in the post-Brexit world. I ask the Government to do all they can to put British enterprise and R&D at the forefront of their strategy to combat AMR and to ensure that they look at the innovative new solutions that are already out there.

1.28 pm

Baroness Hayman (CB): My Lords, like others, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, both on securing this debate and on his very cogent introduction today.

My contribution will concentrate on the global health aspects of the report, particularly in relation to malaria and artemisinin resistance. I draw attention to my interests in this area, as set out in the register. Much of what I will say draws on the recent report of the All-Party Group on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases, and the Malaria Consortium, entitled, *Racing Against Time: Protecting the Gains Achieved in Malaria Control Against Drug Resistance*. It was dedicated to the memory of Dr Sylvia Meek of the Malaria Consortium—its co-author—who died tragically young very soon after completing the report. Sylvia dedicated her life to the fight against malaria with both passion and intellectual rigour. I pay tribute today to the enormous contribution she made, and the example of service she gave in international health.

Malaria control is one of the great global health success stories of this century. Deaths have declined by 60% across the world since 2000, which equates to 6.2 million fewer deaths than would have occurred. The incidence of new cases is down by 37%. The UK has played a major part in this achievement: at government level, through NGOs like Malaria Consortium, and through the enormous scientific contribution of our centres of excellence, particularly the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Progress has been achieved through collaborative action and the development of new tools—treatments, diagnostics, vector control, prevention strategies—and their effective deployment

in endemic countries. The research continues, not least on the development of an effective vaccine against malaria.

But all this progress and all the investments we have made are threatened—and the history of malaria teaches us that progress has been threatened and lost in decades past—by the declining effectiveness of vector control because of the growth in resistance to insecticides and, in particular, to artemisinin combination therapies, which are the most effective treatment we now have for malaria. Resistance to ACTs is already a significant threat to health in south-east Asia and it will be a global threat if it spreads. Drug resistance has been detected in five countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. If it spreads to other parts of south Asia, and worst of all to Africa, a global public health crisis will occur.

Drug-resistant malaria parasites have not yet been detected in Africa, but, following the pattern of the spread of previous resistant strains—as I said, we have been here before—drug-resistant malaria is a distinct and worrying possibility. At the moment, despite ongoing work to develop replacement drugs and a vaccine, no new treatment for malaria is in the pipeline if ACTs were to become ineffective. If resistance were to reach Africa, where the malaria burden is greatest, the impact could be devastating, leading not only to a massive increase in deaths but to massive costs—both medical costs and productivity losses.

I welcome the publication of this report and the opportunities it gives us to tackle the threat and existence of antimicrobial resistance. There are certain areas to which I wish to draw attention. One is recommendation 4, on improving global surveillance of drug resistance. The noble Lord, Lord Lansley, rightly drew attention to this, and I would like to endorse what he said. Strong disease surveillance systems are critical to monitoring and responding to the spread of disease resistance, as well as to the management and elimination of diseases such as pneumonia and malaria. Effective surveillance systems allow resources to be directed to the most affected populations, enabling us to identify gaps in programme coverage, detect outbreaks and assess the impact of interventions. The Ebola crisis provided a stark warning of the need to strengthen surveillance, particularly at community level, as I saw for myself when I visited Sierra Leone 18 months ago at the height of the epidemic. However, countries like Sierra Leone need support to substantially strengthen disease surveillance so that it becomes a core intervention and part of their public health systems. I encourage the Government to prioritise surveillance and would be grateful if the Minister, either in summing up today or separately in writing, told me what plans there are to help countries strengthen their surveillance.

The other recommendation to which I would like to draw attention is promoting new, rapid diagnostics as one of the ways of cutting the unnecessary use of antibiotics. Universal access to accurate diagnosis prior to treatment is a critical element of decreasing the irrational use of drugs, which is one of the causes of their reducing efficacy. The increase in availability of malaria rapid diagnostic tests over recent years has

improved the rational use of artemisinin combination therapies. In 2014, for the first time, more RDTs were distributed through the public sector globally than ACT treatments. The availability of RDTs was also crucial in extending the accurate diagnosis and treatment of malaria at community level through trained volunteer community health workers, allowing for the differential diagnosis and treatment of febrile illness and reducing the common blanket prescribing of antibiotics for almost every sick child.

In Uganda, I had the privilege of seeing community health workers, some of whom were barely literate, doing an amazing job of differential diagnosis and effective treatment in the middle of the night with a two year-old with a high temperature. It is extraordinary what can be achieved. Developing new, accurate and easy-to-use diagnostic tools for other diseases, such as neglected tropical diseases like dengue and Zika, would support efforts to eliminate them and deserves priority.

Finally, the announcement of the Ross Fund is much to be welcomed, particularly the £350 million that has been committed to fight antimicrobial resistance. We hope that surveillance will be at the centre of the Ross Fund's strategy. I would be grateful if the Minister provided an update, either today or in a letter, on the progress of the fund, along with details of how and when funding is likely to be allocated.

The UK Government, through DfID programmes and support for the Global Fund—HIV and TB being other areas, like malaria, threatened by antimicrobial resistance—have made a huge contribution to the fight against those three diseases, particularly in leadership on malaria. I hope the Minister will commit not only to the robust and speedy implementation of the recommendations in this report, but also to continuing the British Government's commitment to their leadership role in the fight against malaria.

1.38 pm

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, I too congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, on initiating this debate. Antimicrobial resistance is a global health disaster waiting to happen, so it could not be more important and it cannot be understated. The report we are debating today is extremely comprehensive and makes a large number of very important recommendations, most of which are practicable and very cost effective. I was glad to see that they focus mainly on reduction and prevention.

Developing new antimicrobial products is important, but it is a bit like closing the door after the horse has bolted. We must shut the stable door and stop the horse bolting in the first place. Global co-operation and a massive awareness campaign about the problem of drug-resistant infections will be essential to tackling it. I have my doubts about whether this could ever really work, but it must if we are to defeat this terrible threat. Given the difficulties and cash shortages of some of the countries that would need to be involved, we would do well concentrate on two things: what we can control within our own shores, and co-operating where we can with international initiatives and funding projects in poorer countries, perhaps with the DfID funding for the Department of Health referred to in yesterday's debate on smoking.

[BARONESS WALMSLEY]

If we are to be able to reduce the prescribing of antimicrobials to humans, we need to reduce the pressure on doctors from patients who do not really need them. That will take public education and a culture change—and of course we know that a lot of them do not work anyway, so it will save money as well. But we also need to improve rapid diagnosis, as has been said, and develop the use of vaccines and other alternatives to the use of antibiotics.

Vaccine programmes have been very cost effective over the decades, often saving society more than 10 times the cost of their development. But, as the report points out, new vaccines relevant to AMR are more complex and therefore more costly to develop. The report's authors therefore recommend a greater level of investment in this area with funding from government, charities and international organisations. I do not go back in your Lordships' House as far as 1998, but this recommendation cast my mind back to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology report in 2002-3, entitled *Fighting Infection*. I was a member of that committee. In our report we said:

"We were particularly impressed, when we visited the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Disease in the US, to hear about their Small Business Initiatives. Small companies willing to take financial risks inherent in developing a vaccine could apply for up to \$100,000 to cover initial development costs. If the company then patented the vaccine they were obliged to make every effort to bring it to market ... Pharmaceutical companies invest ten or twenty times less money in vaccine R&D than in therapeutics. They regard the public expectation that vaccines should not have any side-effects as a particular burden. Such public anxiety requires vaccines to be more thoroughly tested than other pharmaceutical products in order to reveal any potential side-effect. This informs companies' risk-analysis of products to decide whether or not to further develop or to market ... Pharmaceutical companies desire clearer guidance from Government about levels of demand".

We recommended that,

"vaccine development should be facilitated and ... that the Government should develop and maintain clear evidence-based guidelines about vaccine requirements and should create financial incentives to enable early research, development and commercialisation of vaccines".

That was in 2003, and I fear that the same needs still exist today. What are the Government doing to encourage and enable the development of new vaccines? Do they have a similar scheme to assist smaller research companies to mitigate the risks associated with the development of vaccines and other treatments, such as the company producing reactive oxygen, mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Colwyn? We have to accept that development will have to be done in the richer countries, of which we are one—and, of course, happily we also have the skills here.

I was glad to see the warnings about the prophylactic use of antibiotics in agriculture because excrement from livestock is subject to even looser waste management practices than human waste. So not only are we taking in those chemicals in the meat that we eat but they are also being flushed away into our rivers, streams, soils and also the sea, where they are picked up by fish. So even careful usage and hygiene on one continent can be neutralised by poor practice on another—hence the need for global action. Of course, this is in addition to the effect of the mass movement of people, referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Trees.

Clearly, the consumer needs more information about the antibiotics used in meat production. If we had that, I am convinced public pressure would reduce their use in food production. I absolutely agree with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, and the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, about this. I hope that our departure from the EU will not stop us from banning more categories of use than we have already. But hygiene measures to prevent these products getting into the water we drink and the fish that we eat are also essential. That should include antimicrobials in development, which should be disposed of by pharmaceutical researchers in a way that does not pollute our water. I use the word "pollute" deliberately, because these products can be just as dangerous as the microbeads which have recently been brought to our attention as a great danger to marine life.

There is another danger which I did not notice mentioned in the report. That is the fact that bacteria can swap bits of their DNA with other bacteria—and this is very significant. A drug-resistant bacterium that passes through the intestines of any animal into the local waterway may not in itself be a pathogen that normally threatens human health, but that benign bug can share its drug-tolerating secrets with others. David Cummings, a biologist at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego explains in his paper on the subject:

"It's not necessarily important what species is holding on to the DNA as long as the DNA is held on to and propagated. Then it can later be released to cause disease in an animal, plant or human".

Of course, course, drug-resistant strains of bacteria—to go back to what the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, said about Darwinism—tend to be the fittest, and therefore survive. Cummings's research has identified dangerous DNA in the river sediments around San Diego and across the Mexican border. He says:

"These coastal wetland habitats are becoming sinks and ultimately sources for drug-resistant bacteria—more importantly, sinks for the DNA that provide resistance",

and he points his finger at very common things, such as pet waste, bird faeces, leaky sewer pipes and hospital waste effluent as the likely culprits.

Bacteria are very biologically clever and flexible. Not only are they able to develop resistance to our antibiotics and thrive but they can then pass that resistance on to other bacteria that can harm us. So our focus needs to be not only on pathogens and developing ways of killing them but on reducing the use of antimicrobials as a whole. In relation to that, I was very interested in the section of the report covering the provision of clean water and proper sanitation in four middle-income countries. These simple, fundamental basics of public health, which we take for granted here, can break the chain of infection and reduce the need for antibiotics by up to 60%. This in turn reduces the development of drug-resistant strains.

I saw for myself the practical benefits of improvements in these areas when I visited an area near Calcutta with UNICEF a few years ago. I have never seen more brand new toilets in a few short days in my whole life—and, of course, people were very proud of them, as well they might be. The benefits of clean water to the schoolchildren, with whom I washed my hands with soap before a meal, showed in their smiling

healthy faces and their growth charts on the wall of the school. The benefits of proper toilets to the mothers, who earned money by manufacturing them, and then of having them available in their homes, were enormous and obvious. I have mentioned before the UNICEF project in a village where clean water was being pumped up from a well by a pump which was serviced regularly by the women. They may not have realised it, but they were not only saving their children from diarrhoea but were contributing to limiting the global development of antibiotic resistance.

The report also recommends the development of more rapid diagnostics and early recognition of human disease. Obviously, early treatment will require smaller quantities of antimicrobials. The Royal College of Nursing agrees. One key recommendation in its briefing was implementation of rapid diagnostic testing for suspected cases of pneumonia and investment in systems that capture the rationale for prescribing antibiotics to improve practice, reduce unnecessary prescribing and cut the cost to the NHS. The RCN also calls for a national strategy for infection prevention and control, but rightly points out that AMR is not exclusively a hospital or even a healthcare-related issue, and multisector engagement is necessary.

For so long, we have had so many very effective treatments for infectious diseases that we are in danger of being casual about infection control. After all, if we get an infection, the antimicrobials will deal with it, will they not? Well, perhaps not any more. The many factors that we have heard about in this debate that make it easy for micro-organisms to develop drug resistance, all put together, make me feel that the human race has become very cavalier about infection—we have in the West at least. For example, all hospital wards and departments that I have been in now have little machines at the entrance with antimicrobial stuff that you can rub on your hands. But do we always use them? I must admit that I do not always. When hospitals look superficially very clean, as most do, it is tempting to forget the millions of invisible but potentially dangerous microbes lurking in every corner. Of course we do not want to live in a completely sterile environment, because that would not allow our immune systems to develop strongly, and we need that. The human immune system is a wonderful thing but it cannot cope with overwhelming odds. We need to take all the recommendations of this excellent report to heart. As the report says, it will save money as well as lives. Can the Minister tell us how the Government plan to respond?

1.50 pm

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, on raising such an important and interesting Question for our debate today on the risks that we face, now and in the future, in relation to AMR. It is of course very timely, because of the imminence of the UN high-level meeting and also because of the work of the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill of Gatley, to whom I pay tribute—indeed, I am grateful to him for his summary of his report, which we received yesterday.

We have had the interim response to that report, and I understand that a full response is due shortly. Can the noble Lord, Lord Prior, say a little more

about that full response and what he thinks might be in it? Can he also say a little more about the approach we are likely to take at the UN high-level meeting next week?

Noble Lords have referred to a lot of the recommendations of the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill; I will ask about two areas. The first relates to a global public awareness campaign. We know, as noble Lords have said this afternoon, that some have what can best be described as a cavalier approach to the use of antibiotics. I am interested to know what the UK's approach is to negotiations on an international response, particularly on the need for a global public awareness campaign. The noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, from her experience in Kolkata, intimated the kind of response that was possible, but we need a level of awareness for that to happen.

I also want to ask about work with the global finance and health community to develop a system that can reward pharmaceutical companies that develop new and successful antibiotics. I understand that the ABPI is working with the Minister's department to create a UK model that would delink payments for antibiotics from volumes of sales, which would guarantee companies a return on investment. The current financial model does not provide the incentives that the companies need. Can the Minister say a little more about the progress that is being made in those discussions?

Vaccines have been mentioned by a number of noble Lords. I have had a comment from one of the companies that have briefed me—it was from Pfizer, in fact—that while the UK is a world leader in national immunisation programmes, its sense is that immunisation is not regarded by the Government as an, "important component of its strategy to address AMR".

Can the Minister confirm whether that is true or not? As Pfizer points out,

"This is despite evidence that improvements in vaccination could help to contain the rise of four different types of drug-resistant infections".

The noble Lord, Lord Rees, very clearly set out the real risks faced, and he offered some interesting insights, I thought, into the use of prizes to stimulate solutions and to work up novel ideas. Does the Minister think that this might be something that is developed in the future?

We have heard a number of ideas. The noble Lord, Lord Colwyn, raised the issue of reactive oxygen. I am not sure that I entirely followed the technical details, but I got the point. He essentially said that there is a regulatory difficulty with its introduction. It would be interesting to know whether the Government are looking at this as a potential area for development.

I should also say that we have had an amazing amount of briefing for this debate. I was interested to hear from Brightwake the potential for using disinfectants as chemical agents, since they have excellent biocompatibility and can be used more on topical infections or wounds with a high risk of infection. Brightwake says that use in Germany has shown pre and post-surgical infections are the lowest recorded. My understanding is that there is a problem for manufacturers to get these agents through the regulatory process, because the cost of introducing a so-called "medical substance" into a medical device is very prohibitive.

[LORD HUNT OF KINGS HEATH]

None of us knows the impact of Brexit on the regulation of medicines and medical devices, but it might be worth looking at areas in which a speeded-up and rather more streamlined approach might be helpful in the future. Can the Minister's department have a look at that?

The noble Baroness, Lady Hayman, made some very telling points about malaria and the all-party report. I think that she and I are both interested to know whether the Government will take forward the recommendations and how they will do so.

We have talked about what is to be done globally, but there is much that can still be done in this country. GPs are clearly at the front line in terms of the prescribing that they undertake, and my impression is that many of them have responded to the challenge but there is a clear variation in performance. I was interested in the reference by the noble Lord, Lord Colwyn, to veterinary surgeons and the guidance—or what I think is rather more than guidance—issued by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons; it sounded much more like a requirement in relation to their clinical practice. I wonder whether there is something to be learned there in relation to the inappropriate use of antibiotics in human medicine. Can the Minister comment on where we are with GPs and whether there are things that we can do, none the less, to improve their overall performance?

I also refer the Minister to a comment that I have received from the BMA:

“In hospitals it is often unclear which staff have ‘ownership’ of antimicrobial prescribing and responsibility for minimising resistance”.

That is very interesting because—as the noble Lord, Lord Lansley, referred to—it has clearly been important that, at the end of the day, both the board of the organisation and individual senior officials have a clear responsibility for infection control. I wonder whether we need a similar approach when it comes to antimicrobial prescribing.

Three speakers—the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, and the noble Lords, Lord Lansley and Lord Trees—spoke about the issue of animals. They made some very telling comments. The noble Lord, Lord Lansley, asked about veterinary supervision of the use of antibiotics in animals; he also referred to the inappropriate use of what might be described as the antibiotics of last resort in animals, which should be reserved only for humans—I think that there is a great deal of sympathy for that.

The noble Lord, Lord Trees, spoke of the responsible attitude of veterinary bodies in the UK and EU and the considerable progress that has been made over the past few years. I think that it is right to acknowledge that progress and to acknowledge the farming community as a whole for its general co-operation on those measures.

But what about countries where there is absolutely no control of the use of antibiotics in animals? Is the Minister confident that this will be tackled in future global negotiations and discussions because this is clearly a very worrying situation? I am not an expert on the international food trade, but one of the major concerns of UK farmers is that very high standards are required of them, whether in relation to the inappropriate

use of antibiotics or on animal welfare, but they are forced to compete with countries which do not have these high standards. This is a very broad canvas, but clearly the issue of animals should be taken very seriously.

Overall, this has been an extremely constructive debate. I recognise that the Government, particularly under the previous Prime Minister, were taking a progressive approach in this area. I very much hope that this will continue under the current Prime Minister, and that we will see a wholehearted response to the report of the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill, very soon.

2.01 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Prior of Brampton) (Con): My Lords, this has been an excellent and informative debate. I join others in thanking my noble friend Lord Lansley for securing it, and for his very important contribution to it. However, it is slightly sobering to think that this issue was raised in the House of Lords as long ago as 1998, as the noble Lord, Lord Trees, said, and again in 2003, as the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, said. It is easy to write these reports but quite a different thing to act upon them.

I was struck by the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Rees of Ludlow, on longitude, and how that prize won in the 18th century by one of the great British entrepreneurs, John Harrison, transformed navigation. Prizes have a role to play, not just for the money but in raising the profile of issues and gaining public knowledge about what is going on. However, there is another issue here. We should not be afraid of money. If scientists working in British hospitals or universities are able to make money from winning a prize, or indeed from royalties or shared royalties for an invention, we should encourage that. I sometimes think that we are way off the pace compared with the culture in the US in that regard. My noble friend Lord Colwyn referred to reactive oxygen technology. That may well be one of the new technologies that could win a prize of this kind. Certainly, we should look at that technology very closely in our fight against infection.

I pause for a moment to try to imagine a world without antibiotics, before Alexander Fleming's great discovery of penicillin in 1928. It is worth noting that he discovered penicillin in 1928, but its use was not commercialised until the mid-1940s, so the take-up of new inventions and innovations was not as fast then as we would have liked. In those days, even a minor infection following a wound caused by a thorn in the garden or a shaving cut could result in disastrous consequences. In that pre-antibiotic age, 40% of deaths were due to infections. The emergence of antibiotics changed all that. Today, the equivalent figure has fallen from 40% to 7%. Much of modern medicine, such as cancer treatment, and much of modern surgery, is possible only because of antibiotics. However, we have been wasteful with this precious resource. As my noble friend Lord Lansley pointed out, when Alexander Fleming won the Nobel Prize in 1945, he said in his acceptance speech that,

“the thoughtless person playing with penicillin treatment is morally responsible for the death of the man who succumbs to infection with the penicillin-resistant organism”.

He was, indeed, prophetic. As my noble friend Lord Selborne almost said, in the evolutionary race, bacteria have a huge advantage over human beings. Populations of bacteria can reproduce and double within four to 20 minutes in the right circumstances. Our profligate use of antibiotics in humans and animals has accelerated that evolutionary process.

Fleming was, of course, right in voicing his fears, because that is precisely what has happened today. In a post-antibiotic era, routine operations such as removing an appendix, inserting a pacemaker or a standard hip replacement could again be very hazardous. Childbirth, too, may once again threaten a woman's life and child mortality could increase. As the noble Baroness, Lady Hayman, said, this problem could indeed set back all the successes that we have had in combating malaria.

The dilemma we face today is in two parts: a rise in antibiotic-resistant bacteria on the one hand; and the lack of new antibiotics coming on to the market on the other. In fact, we have not seen any truly new antibiotics for decades. This is in stark contrast to the rapid post-war development of new antibiotics. Already in the UK, we are seeing 5,000 deaths per year from sepsis, half of which are due to a resistant form of the bacteria. The numbers of infections complicated by AMR are expected to increase markedly over the next 20 years. If a widespread outbreak were to occur, we could expect around 200,000 people to be affected by a bacterial blood infection that could not be treated effectively with existing drugs. High numbers of deaths could also be expected from other forms of AMR. This is precisely why the Government asked my noble friend Lord O'Neill to conduct a review of the economic and social consequences of antimicrobial resistance. It is interesting to note that a senior, well-respected economist with particular expertise in emerging economies was chosen to conduct the review, as this issue goes beyond just a health problem. It is potentially a health, social and economic problem that threatens us on a global basis. In the Government's risk register, AMR is a tier 1 risk, along with terrorism and a flu pandemic.

As the review has pointed out, antimicrobial resistance is not just a human health problem; it is of huge significance in the animal health, environment and agriculture sectors. It is only by tackling the problem in the round—a One Health approach—that we will make a difference globally. It is worth quoting from the foreword to the report of my noble friend Lord O'Neill, which states that,

“without policies to stop the worrying spread of AMR, today's already large 700,000 deaths every year would become an extremely disturbing 10 million every year, more people than currently die from cancer. Indeed, even at the current rates, it is fair to assume that over one million people will have died from AMR since I started this Review in the summer of 2014 ... The cost in terms of lost global production between now and 2050 would be an enormous 100 trillion USD if we do not take action”.

The review's final report makes it clear that action is in part for nations to take in response to their particular circumstances, and that in other respects action will have to be taken globally. This mirrors the approach the UK has been taking towards AMR. As regards the Government's response on a domestic level, the UK's approach has been built around a five-year antimicrobial resistance strategy, first published

in 2013. The report from my noble friend's review has now given us the opportunity to reinvigorate and strengthen key elements of our existing strategy. New ambitions announced at the G7 leaders' summit in May this year, and by our new Prime Minister at the G20 last week, are an example of the immediate effect of the review. Our aim now is to halve by 2020 the number of inappropriate antibiotic prescriptions within the NHS. We are also taking steps to halve the number of the healthcare-associated Gram-negative bloodstream infections, like *E.coli*, which pose the biggest threat to human health. This is not to say that the NHS has not made progress already on antibiotic prescribing. In fact, between April and December 2015, 2 million fewer prescriptions were dispensed compared with the same period in 2014. That is a reduction of a little over 7%. However, we have a long way to go and we know how difficult it is to change behaviour. More accurate diagnostics will clearly be a key part of this programme. As my noble friends Lord Colwyn, Lord Lansley and Lord Selborne said, the take-up of innovation is hugely important.

In response to the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, about the regulatory regime in a post-Brexit world, I say that the Brexit situation enables us to look again at our regulatory and licensing regime to see whether we can streamline it to make it quicker and less expensive than any other regulatory system in the world. Maybe in another debate we should come back on that in the context of life sciences more generally in a post-Brexit era.

The Government will additionally set an overall target for antibiotic use in livestock and fish farmed for food. The use of antibiotics as an aid to growth or a prophylactic against infectious disease is clearly highly undesirable. As the noble Lord, Lord Trees, said, we have largely ruled it out within the UK and Europe but in many parts of the world it is still a major problem.

Other recommendations in my noble friend's review range from the issue of awareness-raising and behaviour change through to the question of how we might create the incentives to antimicrobial research and development that are so very much needed. Infectious disease has slipped down the priority list over the last 70 years and it is time that it came back to the top of the list. The Government will publish in the course of the next few days a full account of how they will address each of the recommendations in my noble friend's review.

On the international dimension of the Government's response to antimicrobial resistance, your Lordships will be well aware of the significant part that Dame Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer, has played—the noble Lord, Lord Rees, and other noble Lords drew attention to it—in raising the profile of AMR not only in this country but around the world. She has been and will continue to be a tireless champion, raising awareness of this huge threat to public health. The Government share her views fully. AMR has to be tackled on a global basis. In fact, in the last two years, the UK has played a central role in the WHO's global action plan, which is largely mirrored by the World Organisation for Animal Health and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Each of these is important and each creates clear aspirations.

[LORD PRIOR OF BRAMPTON]

Our current focus is on the UN General Assembly high-level meeting next week to drive further international commitment and action to tackle AMR on a global scale. This objective will not be achieved easily or without perseverance. There is, however, good reason to believe that the effort and investment will bring real results. Indeed, the leaders' communiqué from the G20 summit earlier this month acknowledged the threat that AMR poses to public health, growth and global economic stability, and committed to return to the subject next year. In the meantime, the leaders have asked international organisations with a particular interest, including the WHO and the OECD, to report back on options to address the serious shortfall in the number of new antibiotic and other drugs—a topic central to the analysis in my noble friend's report. We are confident that the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on 21 September will not only raise awareness but pave the way for a positive declaration that will include a strong UN follow-up mechanism to monitor progress, locking in global commitments.

Our commitment will continue to allow us to provide support to low and middle-income countries. For example, our £265 million Fleming fund will support these countries to improve laboratory capacity and surveillance to tackle infectious disease. We are also working hard to promote research and innovation in antimicrobial resistance; for example, in fields of new diagnostics and vaccines. We have also committed £50 million towards setting up a global AMR research innovation fund to help countries tackle the threat.

The noble Baroness, Lady Hayman, asked a question on the Ross fund. The fund will provide £1 billion to develop, test and deliver a range of new products for infectious disease, such as malaria, Ebola and other neglected tropical diseases. The UK has invested over £200 million in product development, which has contributed to the launch of over 13 new vaccines, diagnostics and drugs in the last five years. This is a fourfold increase compared to the total global product development for the world's most vulnerable between 1975 and 2000.

In conclusion, this is a hugely serious issue. AMR kills many people at the moment and could kill many millions more in the future. It also has huge economic consequences for the world. I will end by giving the last word to my noble friend Lord O'Neill, who has done so much to raise awareness of this great issue. I quote the last paragraph of his foreword to the latest report:

"Although AMR is a massive challenge, it is one that I believe is well within our ability to tackle effectively. The human and economic costs compel us to act: if we fail to do so, the brunt of these will be borne by our children and grandchildren, and felt most keenly in the poorest parts of the world".

2.16 pm

Lord Lansley: My Lords, I have been in your Lordships' House for less than a year and once again I am reminded of how much relevant expertise can be brought to an important subject—in this case an extremely important subject—even in the course of a short debate. I am most grateful to all noble Lords who contributed to the debate. It not only gave force to the report we

are taking note of and reinforced our thanks to my noble friend Lord O'Neill of Gatley and his colleagues for an excellent review that is a basis for taking action, but illustrated in a number of specifics how that action should be taken forward, highlighting some of the opportunities that lie ahead in tackling the extremely dangerous situation in which we might otherwise find ourselves.

I was grateful to my noble friend Lord Rees—if I may call him that on a Cambridge basis. The Longitude Prize and the work that went into it demonstrated magnificently that there is public recognition and awareness of the importance of tackling antibiotic resistance and doing so rapidly. I had not realised that there is a 30 minute/90 minute distinction between us and the United States, but I am with the Longitude Prize panel here in saying that we are looking for 30 minutes. These kinds of rapid, desktop, easy-to-use diagnostics can make a fabulous difference: first, in identifying viral rather than bacterial infections—innumerable prescriptions are issued for antibiotics for what turns out to be a viral infection—and in identifying what character of infection we are dealing with and to what antibiotics it may be susceptible. That will make a dramatic difference, and what the noble Lord said about that work was encouraging. That is of the moment; in the current few months that work is being reviewed and it will be reviewed regularly over the period ahead.

I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Selborne for sharing the expertise of the Science and Technology Committee. We were reminded of the previous work of the committee, to which he brought his expertise. He reminded us that the survival of the most adaptable organisms is a demonstration of the underlying biological power of bacterial infection which we have to deal with—we have to be eternally vigilant about that. I will pick out one other thing. He talked quite rightly about the Davos declaration and the relationship with the pharmaceutical industry. The declaration in January was important but we have to take this forward.

I am not sure that I have yet heard from my noble friend Lord Prior in his response to the debate how we can mobilise on a global basis a system of incentives for market entry that we know will be effective in mobilising the pharmaceutical industry's capacity—to the extent that it has such capacity—to find new treatments. Clearly there is a desire on the part of the industry for this to happen and a desire on the part of Governments to make it happen, but different and distinctive approaches are being taken, whether it is the American one, the market-entry process or the European support for innovation. We need to bring these together, and if we are to deal with this globally, we need to look for a global solution among some of the leading countries. My personal view is that a combination of extended market exclusivity plus a market-entry incentive could be affordable and achievable. I hope that that will be taken forward by some of the leading Governments working together.

The noble Lord, Lord Trees, reminded us compellingly of what has been done in this country and needs to be done elsewhere. That is the essence of it: it is about taking the example of this country and making it global

in tackling inappropriate and extensive antibiotic use in animal health, agriculture and the environment. That can be done, as we have demonstrated here.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, among others, said, there may be a role for us in trade control and in trying to make sure that it is not productive or profitable for people in other countries to produce food through the inappropriate use of antibiotics. We should certainly look at that.

I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Colwyn for talking about how we can find new treatments. I was always aware of the disinfectant properties of hydrogen peroxide but I was not aware that reactive oxygens specifically could achieve the control of infections in individuals.

The noble Baroness, Lady Hayman, rightly illustrated why vaccines could constitute the most cost-effective and important approach. The noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, also mentioned vaccine development, and these questions need to be taken up.

Finally, with the high-level meeting coming up, I will say this to my noble friend the Minister: I hope that the Government will take every opportunity next Wednesday to encourage those at the meeting to look for quantified progress in the way that our national action plan does and some other national action plans do. There is no reason now why we should not look for a global action plan that has quantifiable targets. Allied to that, we need more pledges to support the funding that the British Government are putting forward. I hope that, through the high-level meeting, there will be structural follow-up.

The Minister referred to the G20 and said that it was looking to return to this next year, but that is not sufficient. We want structural action to take place straight after that meeting. I am very grateful to your Lordships for their contributions.

Motion agreed.

Hinkley Point C

Statement

2.22 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat a Statement made in another place by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Statement is as follows:

“As the House knows, on 28 July, following a decision by the board of EDF to approve the final investment decision of the £18 billion project to build a new nuclear power plant in Somerset, I announced that the Government would carefully consider all elements of the project before announcing whether the Government would enter into a contract with EDF, and that we would make a decision by the early autumn. I can announce today that the Government have decided to proceed with the first new nuclear power station for a generation. However, this decision is made with two important changes.

On the Hinkley project itself, the Government will now be able to prevent the sale of EDF’s controlling stake prior to the completion of construction. This agreement will be confirmed in an exchange of letters between the Government and EDF. Existing legal powers, and the new legal framework, will mean that the Government are able to intervene in the sale of EDF’s stake once Hinkley is operational. Furthermore, and even more importantly, we will reform the wider legal framework for future foreign investment in British critical infrastructure.

These reforms will have three elements. First, after Hinkley, the British Government will take a special share in all future nuclear new-build projects. This will ensure that significant stakes cannot be sold without the Government’s knowledge or consent. Secondly, the Office for Nuclear Regulation will be directed to require notice from developers or operators of nuclear sites of any change of ownership or part-ownership. This will allow the Government to advise or direct the ONR to take action to protect national security as a result of a change in ownership. Thirdly, the Government will significantly reform their approach to the ownership and control of critical infrastructure to ensure that the full implications of foreign ownership are scrutinised for the purposes of national security. This will include a review of the public interest regime in the Enterprise Act 2002 and the introduction of a cross-cutting national security requirement for continuing government approval of the ownership and control of critical infrastructure.

These changes will bring Britain’s policy framework for the ownership and control of critical infrastructure into line with other major economies. This will allow the UK Government to take a fair and consistent approach to the national security implications of all significant investments in critical infrastructure, including nuclear energy, in the future. The changes mean that, while the UK will remain one of the most open economies in the world, the public can be confident that foreign direct investment works in the country’s best interests.

The £18 billion investment in Britain provides an upgrade in our supply of clean energy. When it begins producing electricity in the middle of the next decade, it will provide 7% of the UK’s electricity needs, giving secure energy to 6 million homes for 60 years. Furthermore, it must be stressed that the contract negotiated places all the construction risk on the investors alone. Consumers will not pay a penny unless and until the plant generates electricity.

The proposed strike price of £92.50, reducing to £89.50 if Sizewell C is built, contains important elements of insurance against any cost overrun in construction and future high gas prices, which have historically been volatile. It compares broadly with the costs of other clean energy, whether offshore wind with additional costs of intermittency, or gas with carbon capture and storage.

Hinkley unleashes a long-overdue new wave of investment in nuclear engineering in the UK, creating 26,000 jobs and apprenticeships and providing a huge boost to the economy, not only in the south-west but in every part of the country through the supply chain of firms, big and small, that will benefit from the

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investment. EDF has also confirmed that UK businesses are set to secure 64% of the value of the £18 billion investment being made—the biggest single capital project in the UK today. But as it is the first of a wave of new nuclear plants, we expect the experience of rebooting the nuclear industry to mean that the cost should reduce for future new nuclear power stations, of which another five are proposed.

In any consideration of nuclear power, safety will always be the number one consideration. The construction of Hinkley Point C will be under the close scrutiny of the Office for Nuclear Regulation, which is independent of the industry and of Ministers. The Office for Nuclear Regulation has the power necessary to halt construction or require amendments to any part of the plant if at any point it is not completely satisfied with the safety of any part of the reactor and its associated construction. Unlike in the past, the long-term decommissioning costs for the plant will be provided for explicitly as part of the funded decommissioning programme, at a level that has been assessed independently as prudent and conservative.

Any investment that provides significant electricity supplies for the next two generations of British people and businesses requires serious consideration. It was right that the new Government should have taken the time to consider all components of the project. Having reviewed the project, the Government are satisfied that the improved deal and the other changes announced today will, for the first time, remedy the weaknesses of the regime for foreign ownership of critical infrastructure.

It is important to get the right balance between welcoming foreign investment and ensuring that it serves the national interest. That is exactly what these changes will achieve. The investment will secure 7% of the UK's electricity needs for 60 years, helping replace existing nuclear capacity, which is due to be decommissioned in the decade ahead. The electricity generated will be reliable and low carbon, and so completely compatible with our climate change obligations.

Hinkley Point C will inaugurate a new era of UK nuclear power, with UK-based businesses benefiting from almost two-thirds of the £18 billion value of the project, and 26,000 jobs and apprenticeships will be created. All of these developments are good for Britain. It is now right that we support this major upgrade, the first of many, to the infrastructure on which our future depends”.

2.29 pm

Lord Grantchester (Lab): I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement in your Lordships' House today. I also thank her for contacting me this morning to let me know that she would be making this Statement.

I say at the outset that Labour supports the development of new nuclear power as part of the UK's energy mix, to ensure the country's energy security, to deliver thousands of high-skilled jobs across the country and to deliver clean energy in compliance with our legal obligations on meeting climate change targets. Labour has always been critical of the strike price being set at £92.50 per megawatt hour; we have called for a price in the mid-£80 per megawatt hour range.

Critically, this investment must be delivered on time and on budget—two features that all Governments seem to be unable to improve on. Being on time is critical, as old energy plant is phased out, leaving a vulnerable period in the nation's security of supply in the 2020s. The Government's Statement today makes no mention of amendments on this following the review. This side of the House has argued that any future delays, which have already added five years to the project at a cost of £6 billion, should result in a penalty clause with a taper being applied to the price. While we may all be second-guessing whether the deal will be a good one in relation to future energy pricing, the country's need for a new low-carbon energy supply coming on stream is well documented. Any cost overruns should be recognised and welcomed as a cost to EDF, and any underruns are to be shared.

Although the price at £92.50 per megawatt hour may well reduce to £89.50 if Sizewell C is built, nevertheless this is above the price agreed in France for Flamanville. It can be stated with a certain amount of confidence that the technical issues around the developments in light water reactors will find innovative solutions. We do not have a particular issue with this.

The Government were right to subject Hinkley Point to review, but the review should have taken place far earlier than at the 11th hour, when the room for renegotiation and manoeuvre is severely limited. This deal will set a precedent and benchmark for the future. Key review dates should also be set along the way to ensure that this project delivers to plan. The quality mark of having received approval from the globally recognised gold standard of the ONR will be much prized.

I am also wondering why the Government are rushing the Statement out today, the last day of this September sitting, with three weeks' interval before Parliament returns in October.

I learned that, last night, as energy supplies through solar came to an end around sunset, a price hike occurred with an interconnector to the continent also being unavailable pushing pricing up well over £120 per megawatt. Will the Minister ask Ofgem to monitor and investigate price volatility through the winter months to guard against any possibility of manipulation for whatever reason?

On the Statement, I have a few questions that I would be grateful if the Minister could clarify. The review has concluded with a few alterations around the issue of control. The Government will now be able to prevent the sale of EDF's controlling stake prior to completion. This is being done via an exchange of letters. Will the Minister clarify what is the legal form or basis under which this agreement by exchange of letters is enforceable? What would the implications of non-compliance be? Will the letters be made public? I would be most grateful to understand better the legal context to this agreement.

After completion the Statement refers to the new legal framework under which the Government will be able to intervene in any sale of EDF's stake. Can the Minister give any further indication what form this intervention may take and how? Will this intervention be limited to ownership issues only?

The Statement continues with reforms to future foreign investment in British critical infrastructure and highlights three elements: namely, a golden share; reports to the Office for Nuclear Regulation regarding changes in ownership; and new processes within government to scrutinise foreign ownership for national security reasons. In the context of comments made by Mrs May on her appointment as the new Prime Minister, the position of foreign control in takeovers of important British companies was identified as a key issue for the new Government. Given her position within the wider business department that now includes energy and climate change, can the Minister clarify what the next steps and milestones will be and whether this scrutiny will be limited to investment in critical infrastructure only? What will be the parliamentary oversight of these new powers?

Regarding future investments, can the Minister clarify whether the contract includes assurances and guarantees that Bradwell and other plants are committed to the same investors? Does this also include commitments that key personnel and skills will be available to British companies throughout the British economy? Can the Minister give precise terms and details of any link between this and any future investments?

On the wider issues regarding the Statement, why have the Government refused in this review to demand a better deal for bill payers, who will be funding this for decades—at a cost of up to £30 billion according to the National Audit Office?

This investment will result in 25,000 high-skilled jobs with possibly 550 apprenticeships, which should be widely welcomed. It is vital that this contract fulfils in delivering high-skilled jobs and key positions within the organisation for British companies. Will the Minister give the House assurances regarding the timetable and transparency over the contract to ensure job security as well as the security of energy supplies that this country so desperately needs?

I am grateful to the Minister for the Statement and look forward to receiving this vital further information.

Lord Teverson (LD): My Lords, I, too, thank the Minister, but I have a different take on the pricing side. Some time ago, we had the resignation of the finance director of EDF. I have looked at the share price since the announcement was made, and it is going down. Does the Minister expect EDF to be solvent by the time this project is due to be delivered? That is a real risk, given the other problems at Flamanville and—I am not brave enough to pronounce the town in Finland—the Finnish nuclear station. Will EDF survive this? What are the contingency plans?

This decision was originally made some three years ago, and we have had this soap opera ever since, but time and technology have moved on. Given the assessments on smart grids, energy storage and the Government's brave and correct interconnector plan, is this nuclear power station—and fleet of nuclear power stations—necessary? I for one am not against nuclear technology as such, but is this the right technology to go forward? The previous Minister in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for DECC, Amber Rudd, was very keen on small nuclear reactors. I would be interested to know whether the Minister is still pursuing that area.

I accept and welcome the various measures put in place to protect taxpayers and the public sector against the future costs of decommissioning, but I am concerned about the nuclear waste issue. I cannot see that there has been any movement by the Government in terms of their nuclear waste strategy or where we are going to put even old nuclear waste, let alone new nuclear waste. How can we be sure that the funding that will be put in place for decommissioning will reflect such an undefined nuclear waste strategy for the future?

Now that we have got through this period of constipation on energy decision-making, when can we expect a decision on the Swansea tidal lagoon?

I want to take up another major element in the Statement that is really interesting and that I have debated with the Minister on previous occasions. The Government are saying that they will take a golden share in future nuclear and other critical energy projects. The Minister will not be surprised if I ask her whether the Government have consulted with the Office for National Statistics about this strategy. She is quite right to be sensitive about the issue and wanting to make sure that, in having even slight government control over a company or a project, it does not become part of the public sector and go on to the public sector balance sheet. However, this seems quite incautious in comparison with previous government policy, and it is quite likely that at some point this project, which is worth £18 billion, will be put on to the public balance sheet. If that is the case, surely we should have put our own public money into it, at a more or less zero long-term interest rate, rather than bother with Chinese and French investment because it is going to be on the public sector balance sheet anyway.

I shall leave my questions at that. Again, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I thank the noble Lord, Lord Grantchester, for his support. I agree that we do not want any further delays, although I take comfort from the fact that the costs are borne by the developer. Under the contract for difference, if the plant is not generating by 2029, the period in which the developer has increased price security will decrease and the Government have an option to cancel if it is not generating in good time.

I shall try to answer some of the noble Lord's testing questions on the legalities. He asked about the legal basis of letters. Clearly, letters are not legally binding in the same way as the contract for difference, but they provide a clear political reassurance that we trust EDF will stick to. We have a mutual interest in this important project.

Perhaps I might go through the protections and thus respond both to the questions of the noble Lord, Lord Grantchester, and to those of the noble Lord, Lord Teverson. We will have a special share which would allow the special shareholder to intervene in any transaction where there were national grounds for doing so. That will not apply to Hinkley, which is being dealt with by an exchange of letters, but it will apply to future reactors. We have the Office for Nuclear Regulation which is a world-class, independent regulator that has a range of existing powers to intervene in

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developments. Under our proposals, we will require notice from developers or operators of any change of ownership or part-ownership. Most significantly, we will make proposals to establish a legal regime that allows us to consider the national security implications of all significant investment into our critical infrastructure, including nuclear. That will be the subject of widespread consultation on the details and will require legislation, so there will be opportunities to consider the proposals as we go forward.

For the Hinkley arrangement, we have tried to reach an agreement with EDF which—subject to its agreement to the project going forward—puts us in an improved position compared with where we were in July. That is what the Government have now decided, in part also because of the benefits in terms of security and reliability of supply. With a nuclear baseload—this will provide 7% of the UK's energy needs—the advantage is that the energy continues to be produced whether the sun is shining or the wind is blowing.

As has been said, 26,000 jobs is a lot. The £30 billion figure that was mentioned is an NAO construction which used a different discount rate of 0.7%, which is much lower than our own 3.5% and is equivalent to the top end of our projections, which of course I covered in the Statement.

The noble Lord, Lord Grantchester, compared this proposal to the French situation. Perhaps he would like to know that the French figure is a regulated price for electricity generated by all the power stations; there is a mix of both new and old in the French nuclear fleet, so it is not just Flamanville. The British price is a CFD for a specific new-build project, and furthermore it reflects the fact that the construction risks in Hinkley are borne by the developer alone and not the British consumer. I very much agree that the ONR is well respected and we are lucky to have that body.

The noble Lord also asked why the Statement is being made today. I thought that noble Lords would welcome the fact that, having said that we would make an announcement in the early autumn and then that we would do so in September, we have been able to get to the line today, so that it is possible for us to have a short debate on this ahead of the Conference Recess.

The noble Lord, Lord Teverson, in his inimitable way, made a lot of interesting points. I can confirm that we are looking at the small nuclear reactors he mentioned. He will recall that we are looking at an innovation competition in that area, with funding having been earmarked.

The noble Lord was right to say that the decommissioning of nuclear waste is an important issue, but he is wrong in that we do have a good system in this country. One of my earliest visits was to Sellafield, and I was impressed by the progress that is being made there. We are making a large public commitment—£2 billion at Sellafield alone—and of course we have built decommissioning into Hinkley, and we will do the same with the new nuclear fleet so that we do not get landed with a large legacy of decommissioning for which the public sector has to pick up the tab. However, a lot of good work is going on at Sellafield on nuclear waste from 30, 40 and 50 years ago, including defence waste as well as civil waste.

2.47 pm

Lord Lawson of Blaby (Con): My Lords, my noble friend—for whom I have the highest regard, as she knows—will also know that I am in no way anti-nuclear. The Statement refers to the fact that this is the first new nuclear power station for a generation. The last one was Sizewell B, for which I authorised the public inquiry when I was the Secretary of State for Energy in 1982. Is she not also aware that every single independent energy expert of whatever stripe has said that this is a thoroughly lousy deal, for reasons which will not be affected in the slightest by the changes she announced in the Statement?

It is charming, in this post-Brexit era, to throw out a lifeline to EDF, which as the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, pointed out, is on the verge of bankruptcy and has never built a power station of this kind. As he rightly pointed out, the company has two power stations under construction—one in France and the other in Finland—and both of them are hopelessly behind schedule and in deep, deep trouble. Can my noble friend give an assurance that, if this power station appears to be getting behind schedule and suffering the same sort of problems that are affecting Flamanville and the project in Finland, the Government will have no hesitation in ending this contract, whatever penalties there may be? I ask that because it is a lousy contract, and the sooner it is ended, the better.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: While I agree with my noble friend about Sizewell B, which I had the pleasure of visiting during its construction phase all those years ago, I cannot agree with him on the general approach. For reasons that I have already explained, nuclear is a central part of our future and I have explained what would happen if the Hinkley power station is badly delayed. I do not believe it will be. We have learned from Flamanville and from the troubles in Finland. Our own chief scientist has given us reassurance on that. I have visited CGN myself. It is producing a nuclear power station in Taishan on similar technology, which is nearly ready for operation. We cannot afford to wait, because the existing fleet is coming offline. By 2030, except for Sizewell B—my noble friend's legacy—we will not have any nuclear power stations, unless we invest now in a new nuclear fleet. This proposal is on the table and we have decided, having looked at all aspects, that it is right to proceed.

Lord Berkeley (Lab): My Lords, I am not against nuclear at all, but the Minister has tried to say that this technology is proven and works, yet nothing I have heard in the Statement or in other noble Lords' comments this afternoon indicates that that is the case. The Finland scheme is years out of date and is not finished. The last thing I read about the one at Cape Flamanville was that the French nuclear regulator had said it could not generate more than 60% of its planned output because the basic design of the welding inside the core, surrounded by concrete, was faulty. It looks as if that means the whole thing has to be broken apart and started again, if that is possible.

It is fine saying that we have learned from their mistakes, but how many more mistakes have yet to be uncovered? It seems to me pretty irresponsible for the

Government to commit maybe in the end £16 billion of taxpayers' money to a technology that is not proven when there are so many other technologies for generating electricity that are. I cannot think of any precedent—maybe the Minister can give me an example—of such profligacy with government funding apart from, of course, in the MoD. I leave them to one side.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I cannot agree with the noble Lord. In business you learn from mistakes and—I remember this well—from other people's mistakes. As I have explained, EDF has learned from Flamanville and Finland, and CGN is already producing a reactor of this kind. The consortium is taking the construction risk. That is one reason why we believe this is a good approach.

Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield (CB): My Lords, there is a curse on our country when we talk about civil nuclear power. I am old enough to have read the *Eagle* comic in 1954 and cut out a picture of Calder Hall, which was to provide the first civil electricity in the world. Indeed it did: we had a world lead. The story is tragic ever since. I hope we will not make a mistake of that magnitude this time.

I congratulate the Government on boosting the national security element in future civil nuclear procurement but, alluding to the contribution of the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, I ask the Minister that the submissions her department receives on the small modular reactors be placed in the Library for the illumination of your Lordships. Before we go in for these huge concrete and steel water reactors, maybe the future lies in smaller, safer and cheaper.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I will certainly look at what we can do about transparency relating to small nuclear reactors. It is something that, as a new energy team, we are in the process of looking at, as I have already said. The noble Lord, as always, makes a good point about the need for testing this idea.

I did not answer the point from the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, on tidal lagoons. We will take a decision on the future role of tidal lagoons in the UK's energy mix following the conclusions of an independent review being undertaken by Mr Hendry, the former MP.

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): Would my noble friend accept that this was an incredibly difficult decision and that there were huge risks whichever way the decision might have gone? Would she agree that the main risks of going ahead—although, as I said, there were huge risks in not going ahead—are not so much the Chinese security issue, which has received a lot of press, as the rocky financial state of EDF, which the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, rightly raised, and of its supplier, Areva; the untried design, which still has not been proven and still is not working; the possibility of further cost inflation in the construction; and the enormous delay? Having visited Flamanville, I have seen how extensive that is: it is six years behind time and three times over budget.

Of course, as the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, again said, there are the new technology possibilities coming along by the time this produces electric current, as well

as the possibility of falling renewable costs and the present possibility of very low oil and gas prices for years ahead. When I launched a programme in 1979 of nine new reactors—only one, Sizewell B, was ever built—it was the weak oil price that completely undermined the economics of the situation. That is the problem we face again today. Would my noble friend accept that it might have been wiser, faced with this Hobson's choice, to at least have gone at it more sequentially and built just one reactor the same size as Flamanville to start with, and then see how matters developed from there, working with the Chinese and the French, not involving huge compensation and delay? One at a time might just have been a wiser course.

Finally, can we have a careful examination of how this decision ever came about and how my noble friends in the Government were confronted with it, so we are not caught out a second time?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I very much agree with my noble friend that we should learn from our experiences. That is something I always try to ensure we do in any area I am involved with. That obviously includes this. The honest truth is that this has been a difficult decision. That is one of the reasons why it was delayed, although we ended up with a decision in September, which was the most recent scheduled date.

My noble friend asks why there will be two reactors instead of one. There are two answers there. There are economies of scale. We have the skills and capability. The second point is that the consortium, led by EDF, came forward with a proposal for two reactors allowing for all of that and bringing many benefits that were weighed against the difficulties. We have made some changes, particularly relating to security protections, but we believe this project represents value for money for 7% of supplies of electricity over 60 years, of a sort that is a secure and reliable baseload, as they call it in the industry.

Lord King of Bridgwater (Con): My Lords, can I cheer up my noble friend by welcoming this Statement on behalf of the people of Bridgwater, who have helped to ensure that Hinkley A and B have both provided loyal and continuous service over very many years to the nation? If there was to be a new nuclear power station, Hinkley is precisely the right place to put it. It is also a bit of a relief to everybody. My noble friend may know, and other noble Lords who have seen the pictures on television will know, that half the groundworks have already been done in anticipation of what they thought would be a favourable decision. It is a great relief that this has been decided.

I take seriously the points made by the two former Secretaries of State for Energy and by others. There are concerns about the experiences of the two power stations under construction. I hope that the advantage of coming third is that those lessons have all been learned. I hope the Government are fully satisfied in that respect. I do not think it is sufficient to say, "Well, it won't be our cost if they're not", because the problems that would flow from it would be very substantial.

Something that is also very important indeed and is quite different from Hinkley A and B is that we never had cyberwarfare in the times of Hinkley A and B.

[LORD KING OF BRIDGWATER]

That will become an ever-growing threat to critical national infrastructure. The need to ensure we protect the critical national infrastructure is enormously important.

As it is, I say to my noble friend that what is now happening is the relaunch of British involvement in the nuclear industry. I welcome the fact there is to be a nuclear college in Bridgwater for the training of nuclear engineers and apprenticeships. Now at last we will see a real chance to rebuild the position we used to have in the nuclear world and which, sadly, we have seriously lost.

I have only one other criticism. When we go back into the nuclear business, one comment in the Statement was that it will put out electricity for 60 years. That will certainly be a great improvement on the length of time that Hinkley Point A and Hinkley Point B managed. Is that a realistic assessment?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I am grateful to my noble friend for his support. I completely agree: this is a good deal for Britain and especially for our nuclear industry, which used to be world-leading and could be again. It is also excellent news for the south-west. I talked this morning to the local MPs and the local council. They are very pleased. They had the sword of Damocles of a loss of a very important project to that area hanging over them and are delighted by the news today.

I agree with my noble friend about the college. It is extremely good that, with the help of EDF, we were able to set up a facility for training in the nuclear industry. That can be of merit right across the UK.

Cyberwarfare is a new reality. It was obviously one thing we took into account in looking at all the different components of this deal. We strengthened the security protections and of course we have a civil nuclear police, who I am looking forward to meeting and talking to shortly in my capacity as the new Energy Minister.

Lord Crickhowell (Con): My Lords, I am strongly in favour of the development of nuclear power but the Statement says that the changes made will allow the UK Government to take a fair and consistent approach to the national security implications of all significant investments in critical infrastructure, including nuclear energy, in the future. How far have the critical issues been addressed as far as this project is concerned? My noble friend gave assurances about the future; we are interested about whether the Government are absolutely satisfied about the security implications here.

On the point raised by so many about the construction risks, it may be true that consumers will not pay a penny unless and until the plant generates electricity but, if the plant is not constructed, the losses incurred because we do not have a working nuclear plant will be just as important as the financial ones.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: As I explained in the Statement, on the Hinkley project we will, following the changes to the deal, have a veto over change of ownership. The project will also be subject to what everybody agrees is the world-class oversight of the Office for Nuclear

Regulation, which can intervene in development, construction and operations, and amend site licences, among other things. That is a very important control. Then we will consult on proposals to establish a legal regime that allows us to consider national security implications in all significant investments in critical infrastructure. Once that becomes law it will apply to major infrastructure in the UK.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend not think that there is a certain irony that after the nation voted to take more control of its own affairs we are asking two foreign Governments to take control of 7% of our future energy requirements? In particular, what actual transfer of risk is happening here, which presumably justifies the very high price that consumers will have to pay for this energy? Is there really a transfer of risk given that this technology is untried? No one has been able to make it work. What is plan B if it turns out that this thing does not work, to maintain energy security for our country? Finally, I very much welcome the emphasis placed on the importance of security and so on, but does the Statement not rather reek of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: As I explained, the risk of construction falls on the consortium. We have a deal at a pre-agreed strike price which will produce a supply of electricity over an estimated 60 years. Everyone in this House this afternoon seems to take too gloomy a view of the prospects of building this facility. We looked at this very carefully over a number of months. Our Chief Scientific Adviser gave us reassurances that learnings have been taken from other nuclear facilities. However, the consumer does not pay a penny until Hinkley generates electricity. The risks are borne by the developer.

Calais: Refugee Camp

Question for Short Debate

3.05 pm

Asked by Lord Dubs

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the decision by the Government of France to dismantle the refugee camp in Calais on children living in the camp.

Lord Dubs (Lab): My Lords, I am pleased to have secured this short debate. Anybody who has been to the Jungle in Calais will have been shocked by the squalid conditions there. We see those conditions on television and in our newspapers but there is nothing as awful as being there and seeing them first-hand. Our special concern is of course with the children there. I am also obviously concerned about unaccompanied child refugees in Greece and Italy.

There are two categories of children here. Let me explain this because there is some confusion. There are what are colloquially called Dublin III children: those who have arrived in Europe unaccompanied but who have relatives in this country. Clearly, if they have relatives in other countries then the responsibility

would be to ensure that they join those relatives elsewhere. The Dublin III children have relatives in this country. Indeed, their right to come here was always there, long before we had the debates on the Immigration Act.

Secondly, there are children specifically covered by the amendment to the Immigration Act that I moved. They are unaccompanied child refugees who arrived in Europe before 20 March—that is the Government's wish—and who are now in Greece, Italy or Calais. They are different from those under Dublin III although there is some tendency to confuse the two. I appreciate that the wording of the amendment did not necessarily distinguish between them but one cannot always reword an amendment that has got through after many hours of debate from lots of people.

Who has come to this country so far? From Calais, only Dublin III children have done so. The main ones who have come have been identified by British NGOs, in particular Citizens UK. As I understand it, they were not identified by either French or British officials, or by the French NGO France terre d'asile. As far as I know, even to date, no children have come from any of the locations—but certainly not from Calais—covered specifically by the Immigration Act. Maybe there are some in the pipeline but my understanding is that not a single one has come so far. As I said, Citizens UK identified those under Dublin III of whom there are 100 or so, the larger number having come from Calais. It was the British NGO that identified them. I pay tribute to the NGOs who work there. There are some wonderful NGOs with people working there for nothing—no pay at all—to give support to very vulnerable people, including children.

I am also aware that local people in Calais are very unhappy at the existence of the Jungle. Who would not be? Some 9,000 people live there with not much hope, desperate to move forward in their lives. They sometimes use illegal techniques to stop the traffic so that they can get on the back of a lorry. This is pretty tough for the HGV drivers—British and others—trying to get their vehicles across. It is a very unhappy situation and only a week ago there was a demo in Calais protesting about the existence of the camp. Nobody is happy about the camp. The question is how we move on.

On my second visit to Calais, I had a chance to talk to the Prefect. As I learned, the Prefect is a government official and his main concern is his links to the Minister of the Interior in Paris, unlike the Mayor of Calais who of course has a locally elected constituency. I did not meet the Mayor of Calais, although other people who went to the Jungle have. The Prefect said to me that there was no procedure in place to begin the process of identifying the Immigration Act children, which explains why none of them has come here. My information may not be accurate but that is what he said and he speaks fluent English. He then confirmed that the intention was to bulldoze the camp.

Some time ago—a year or so—half the camp had already been cleared. I was not there, so I know only from what people have told me that the methods used were pretty harsh. One can see that a whole area has been cleared but a church there survived, due to legal action. I was told that the authorities used teargas and

rubber bullets to move the people on. If they did that, I find it rather shocking. All I know is that the little row of shops in the Jungle had on display teargas canisters and rubber bullets, so presumably there must be something in the view that they were used. When I asked why these harsh methods were used, I was told that the concern in Calais was that the National Front was quite strong there, so they were being tough with the people in the Jungle. My view is that if you behave like the National Front, you do not discourage it but give it more credibility. However, that is a matter for the French authorities and how they have acted.

The critical issue now is how the relocation of people from the Jungle is to be achieved. I hope that the British Government will be able to work closely with the French authorities. This is not in our country and it is a French responsibility but I hope that we can help them. We have spent a lot of money providing barbed-wire fencing and a week or so ago, we were told that a wall was to be built. Having had a helpful chat with the Immigration Minister earlier this week, I understand that proposals for a wall have been around for a long time. But I said that it would send quite the wrong signal by suggesting that the camp is there permanently, which neither the French nor we want, and have negative connotations. If we are to spend that sort of money we would do better to provide better facilities, jointly with the French, to relocate the children who might then be on their way here. I hope that we will not waste our money on a wall; anyway, it will not be that difficult for people to walk around the end of it.

My first key point is that it is important that all people in the Jungle, but particularly the children, are fully informed of what their rights are on claiming asylum. There is a view there that they do not want to claim asylum—that they have been persuaded, and want only to come to this country. Although I concede that quite a few have in the end claimed asylum, the ones who I spoke to thought that their only option was to come to this country. There is a feeling that they would not be treated that well by the French. I think they probably would be but as long as there is this misunderstanding, it will be hard to make progress. Of course, it is believed that there are traffickers and people smugglers in the Jungle, who have a vested interest in persuading others not to claim asylum in France. That way, they can get some money from them by helping them to get on a truck or jump on the train.

If we act in the best interests of the child, as we must, then the relocation of the children is a sensitive matter, but it is important that it be done on the basis of the young people being fully informed and of their being assured that their assessment for eligibility to come to Britain will be carried out quickly, for those who qualify. Such a sensitive approach, if it is demonstrated to be sensible, could work well and give those who are eligible a better chance to come to this country. I hope very much that the lack of knowledge and confusion in the Jungle can be overcome.

We cannot of course go in there and start telling people what their situation is. That is up to the French authorities, which would probably agree that having

[LORD DUBS]

the people better informed would be an advantage. When I was there a couple of weeks ago, I spoke through an interpreter to some 14 and 15 year-old Ethiopians who said that they had been given no information by anybody in authority. Nobody on behalf of the British Government or the French Government had spoken to them or told them what their rights were. When I asked them why they want to come to England, one of them said that it was the English language. Of course, the English language is a pull but it is hardly a sufficient reason in itself.

I urge that we do everything we can in conjunction with the French to make sure that the people in Calais are told what their rights are so that when the relocation happens, they know that it is not a negative step. They will otherwise resist any such move, but it is a positive process. I hope that the French will play their part in providing that information for the adults in Calais, who have no particular qualification to come to this country. Surely it is not beyond the wit of the two Governments to agree to do this.

I am drawing my remarks to a close. The Government have said that they would act on the letter and spirit of my amendment to what is now the Immigration Act. My criticism of the Government is that nothing is happening. If it is happening, we ought to be told about it. If it is not, we want to know why—and would the Government please get a move on? It is the Government's obligation and I hope that they will act on it.

3.16 pm

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Con): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, for this debate and for his relentless campaigning on this subject.

I declare an interest as a board member of UNICEF UK, which arranged for me and my noble friends Lady Morris of Bolton and Lady Hodgson—neither of whom can be here today, sadly—to visit the refugee camp in Calais at the end of July. This was a trip facilitated by Citizens UK. I take this opportunity to thank it and the volunteers, not just for arranging the visit but for the wonderful work they do in the camp, especially their support for children. All the volunteers, including those working in the kitchens to feed the refugees, are doing amazing work. I also pay special tribute to the extraordinary Liz Clegg, who lives with those children in horrible circumstances. She has no background in humanitarian aid but is loving and caring, and is supported only by contributions from those who visit. We felt humbled by them all.

We too were shocked by what we saw and heard: children afraid to leave their tents during the day, in case everything they had was taken from them, while every night they risk their lives in trying to enter the UK illegally. We saw no government advice on the Dublin III family reunion process, or the provision in the amendment of the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. Instead, those children are reliant on the relationships built by a small voluntary group formed by Citizens UK. We were told that before the intervention of these volunteers, children who have family members in the UK had no idea that there was a safe and legal way of being reunited with them.

It is difficult to discount the pull factor with regard to the broader stance on the French and European migrant crisis; indeed, we met a number who wished that they had not come and were trying to get the message home to others not to make the journey. But when it comes to unaccompanied children who are eligible under Dublin III we must take action, as the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, said—and fast. I fear history is likely to be unkind to us if we do not. There is no valid reason for our Government to keep children in Calais when they have families in the UK ready to receive them, take on the responsibility and have a duty of care. This is distinct from opening the floodgates and being overwhelmed.

Let me give an example. Earlier this week, I met a volunteer who has been working in the Jungle. She met two such children in Calais: Huda, who is 14, and her brother Ibrahim, who is 16. They are Iraqi Kurds whose mother is in Birmingham and whose father was killed in 2005 by a bomb in Iraq. They became separated from their mother immediately after the bomb, in tragic circumstances, and left Turkey on their own last August—Huda having begged Ibrahim, as she was desperate to find her mother. My contact was heartbroken to see these children cold, vulnerable, upset and hungry. They were insulted and belittled by the CRS police in front of her eyes. She quickly raised £3,000, got them out of the camp and paid a local host family in Calais—themselves volunteers—to look after them while legal proceedings ensued. The process took over nine months and involved two separate tribunals, Home Office lawyers, UK lawyers, barristers, French lawyers, French care systems, DNA testing and hundreds of hours of correspondence before the UK finally took charge of the children. This example demonstrates the psychological trauma that so many children experience. The apparent inertia of the French and British authorities ultimately meant a greater cost to our taxpayer, while causing extreme emotional hardship on these children.

From a cost-benefit analysis—economically, politically, and socially—it seems that we should expedite processing Dublin III children. For those lacking UK family ties the solution is more complex, although a child's safety should be paramount along with a concern for their future, be it in the UK, France or elsewhere.

I have three ideas for my noble friend the Minister to consider. When the previous camp demolition occurred, hundreds of children went missing. This makes it critical that the processing of these children is speeded up and that they are kept safe in appropriate accommodation during this period with access to the legal and social care they need. A group should be mandated to identify unaccompanied children with a legal right to be in the UK and to provide the legal advice they need to be processed. We should take on the traffickers and smugglers by ensuring that refugees are aware of their legal rights at the start of their journey as well as in Calais, as the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, said.

Collectively our countries have achieved so much for humanity and have so much to be proud of, and it saddens me that there appears to be no solution to the plight of these desperate children in Calais.

3.20 pm

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD): My Lords, I, too, appreciate the work that the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, has done. He has done as much as a parliamentarian can, and more, to keep this issue at the top of our agenda. I add my heartfelt thanks to him for all his effort and work in doing that.

The noble Lord has covered the issues that the Minister needs to answer this afternoon. I shall add some comments as the trustee of a charity, Articulate, which works in the camp in Calais with its partner Hummingbird. These charities work to provide a safe space for children in the camp where they spend some hours doing things that children normally do, such as drawing and playing. I want to pay tribute to all the volunteers who go over to Calais for these charities, at their own expense, often giving up their own work to do so. The conditions they work in are really difficult, and there is no structure to rely on, a point I shall come back to at the end of my speech. I shall share a few of their comments with noble Lords and then ask the Minister a question.

The first comment from one of our volunteers is: “I used to worry when I read about the refugee crisis and the so-called Jungle in Calais in our newspapers, or saw images of children in the camp living in squalid conditions on my TV screen. But now I worry when I don’t—when I know that what is happening is going unreported”.

The second comment is: “I have been working in Calais with children and young people since April, and each week that I go I see the situation deteriorate. Now with winter approaching, hope in the camp is diminishing and the boys are taking greater risks to get to the UK. I now worry each week when I leave the camp that a child we have got to know over the past five months will become another name on the ever growing list of children who have disappeared or lost their lives crossing borders”.

The third comment is: “A deaf boy who we see regularly in our safe space drew me a picture of the different ways he attempts to get into a lorry each night to get to the UK. The image only highlights to me the absolute danger this child is in”.

The volunteers mention many of the health issues—“weeping, itchy eyes from the CRS firing tear gas into the camp, children who have terrible coughs, children who have scabies. These children certainly need proper medical attention”.

The final comment is along the lines that were mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Jenkin, in her powerful contribution: “The camp has no protection from within, you could say it is pretty lawless. CRS who guard it are known to be physically abusive to the children and the children report this to us frequently. There is no one official to tell when things are happening at night. The worst thing about the camp, they said, was the lack of protection. The youngest we work with who is unaccompanied is eight, and there are children with disabilities and high needs in the camp”.

My comment to the Minister echoes that of the noble Baroness, Lady Jenkin, and the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. Surely the very least that can be provided

by two of the wealthiest nations in western Europe is temporary accommodation that is fit for children, regular, nutritious food that they can count on and medical attention that addresses their basic needs while they are going through the lengthy processes that they will inevitably have to go through. From time to time, Ministers have said that this would not be possible because it might create a pull factor, but it can be ring-fenced to the children there now—not a huge number. The fact that we in Britain and France cannot get our officials and Home Secretaries together to provide something like this in the next few months, until these children get their passage, is something the Minister needs to explain this afternoon.

3.25 pm

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, I, too, pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Dubs, whose persistence in gaining justice for unaccompanied child refugees, including hundreds of psychologically scarred and terrified children in Calais, has been and continues to be extraordinary. It is also extraordinary that no child has yet arrived under what one might call the Dubs amendment. After all, the amendment was agreed by the then Home Secretary, who is now our Prime Minister.

My home is two hours away from London, yet it takes just one hour to get to Calais where about 9,000 people are living in deplorable, insanitary, lawless and inhuman conditions, with more arriving every day. These are our fellow human beings whose courage and tenacity know no bounds, yet it is as if they are existing in a different world. These are some of the most traumatised and vulnerable people on the planet, many of whom have fled wars and terror, seeking security. The children on whom we are focusing today have travelled thousands of miles, encountering dangers that we cannot even imagine. At least 387 of them should now be in this country with their families. Like others, I pay tribute to the volunteers, and I particularly thank Clare Moseley of Care4Calais.

The Minister tells us that some progress has been made, and this is welcome, but I have to question the figures. She suggested that 70 children had been accepted for transfer to the UK, but I understand from charities on the ground that only 30 have actually been transferred. I would be grateful for the Minister’s comments. In addition, the Government tell us that the UK contributed £530,000 towards a project run by the French NGO France terre d’asile to identify and protect vulnerable people in the camp. Apparently the organisation ran a project in June and July to assist in processing the applications of unaccompanied minors, but, of 20 cases identified, only eight were completed before the project shut down because it had run out of money. Further action needs to be taken.

So what is really happening to speed up the process? Colder weather is coming and the camp is due to be dismantled by the end of the year. Speed is of the essence. It is critical that the Government ensure that there is a plan in place for safe closure and that particular responsibility is taken for unaccompanied children with a legal right to be in this country. We know who these children are, so what are the Government doing to expedite the collation of information about them

[BARONESS ROYALL OF BLAISDON]

and their families and the necessary documents and to assist them through the process of making a claim through the French asylum system and getting their asylum claim transferred to the UK? If 70 children have been accepted this year, that is about two a week, as the noble Baroness said earlier this week, so suddenly it seems highly unlikely that the 387 children left will arrive before the camp is dismantled. What work are the Government doing with the French Government to provide suitable accommodation for the unaccompanied children, together with the legal and social care they require?

A leaked document from the French Interior Ministry highlights plans to keep under house arrest individuals whose asylum request concerns another EU country when the transfer is arranged. From mid-October, children with valid claims to come to the UK could be in detention. This is unacceptable for asylum or migration purposes, and I wonder what representations the Government have made to the French.

Last week, the Minister assured the House that local authorities receiving the traumatised children who arrive in this country will be fully funded. I ask for further assurance that the Government will continue the funding for as long as the children need expert help and support. Local councils are desperately underfunded, so I do not blame them, but I criticise the Government and I am deeply ashamed at the contrast with Germany and Sweden in terms of both numbers and resources.

I understand why the decision has been taken to demolish the camp, but it is not a long-term solution to the situation in Calais. In February, more than 50% of the camp was destroyed, but it is now bigger than it has ever been, and there has been an increase in the number of people living in smaller camps along the northern coast of France.

The evidence is that, despite the demolition, refugees will continue to arrive. This is a humanitarian crisis that has become an intractable political problem, and it is not going to go away. I strongly urge the Government to work even more diligently with their French counterparts to find a sustainable, long-term solution that will help the refugees, the hauliers and the people of Calais. I hope that next week's high-level summit at the UN General Assembly will be a catalyst for real action.

3.30 pm

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (LD): My Lords, I was encouraged by the Minister's answers last week that the pledge to accept 20,000 refugees by the end of this Parliament was on track, that the infrastructure was there and that more than 100 local authorities were ready to co-operate in making sure that these people were able to come. That is of course encouraging, but do we have to wait until 2020 to receive those people? If it is on track and local councils are prepared, could we not bring that forward, say to 2018? The sooner we get folk here, the fewer will lose their lives, as the sooner they will give up trying to arrive by illegal and dangerous means. Could the Minister carry the message back that we do not have to wait until 2020 to receive these folk? We could receive them at a steady pace, say over the next two years.

My second point is that as well as the 20,000, we had the amendment from my noble friend Lord Dubs—I can call him that—that we had hoped would allow us to bring in 3,000 people. Unfortunately, that amendment was not carried, but an unspecified number of young people can be accepted here. Like everybody else in the Chamber this afternoon, I am so disappointed at the slow progress. With winter coming, the kids are in the cold and facing a winter with many dangers in the camps. They are not like our children, who have parents to look after them or grandparents to give them comfort. These are lonely children who have been traumatised. The longer we allow this to continue, the more we are sowing the seeds for more terrorism in the future. If we do not let people have a wee bit of hope, we could very well have a massive catastrophe on our hands.

There are about 10,000 refugees altogether in the camps. Where are the children going to go if the camps are demolished? We must step in. It is our moral duty to do so. I am sure other noble Lords read the dreadful report this week about the state of the children who are in Greece. They are the same age as our youngsters, and I would like to see the children of the UK able to lend a hand to bring the refugee children from the crisis areas into the UK. Let the children share. It will benefit the children from the other side of the channel of course, but it will also benefit our children to be part of an operation that will show what a difference offering true help will make. Children on both sides of the channel would benefit.

There are 387 children who are registered in one way or the other and eligible under my noble friend Lord Dubs's amendment or under Dublin III. That list was given to the Home Office some time ago, but no reply has been received. We are still waiting. I feel sometimes that the Minister is really on our side and not on the Government's side—I hope that is the case—whereas most of the Ministers who sit on the Front Bench are reading a brief and are not really convinced of the arguments that they are presenting. I suggest to her that we could do this, and make sure that the children in Calais, Dunkirk or wherever are registered and have gone through the procedures. It is no use keeping them over the winter—we want to register them now. The families who are going to receive them should also be registered and go through the CRB checks, so that they are ready to accept the children as soon as possible. Can the Minister tell me, once we have that, what the obstacle would then be to, let us say, a convoy of school buses going through the tunnel to Calais to bring these children over here? We could do that and show the compassion that is part, I hope, of our core nature.

I have a daughter who is involved in the night shelters at Christmas. They tell me that if we wanted bedding and so on, they have the beds. All this could be put together very quickly. Let us do it positively and give the children of Calais the chance of sharing the joy and the comfort of the children of the United Kingdom. I hope very much that we proceed in that direction.

3.36 pm

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): My Lords, I am glad to follow that impassioned speech by the noble Lord, and I share entirely what he had to say. I am co-chair

of the parliamentary group against human trafficking and modern slavery, so my particular concern, as your Lordships might imagine, is of course the dangers to the children in Calais. I would add, along with everybody else, my admiration for the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, for his persistence and effectiveness in keeping this terribly important subject before the House and of course the Government.

There is not much to add, as it has already been said so powerfully by others today, but there is an urgency, as the camp is about to be demolished. There are two groups of children that we have been told about. I can understand that those who do not have family here will have to go through a procedure to find homes for them and local authorities prepared to take them, but that is not in fact a very difficult procedure, one would have thought. As for the 387 children who have a right to be here, we should all be very ashamed of the story told to us by the noble Baroness, Lady Jenkin, about the children who have a right to be in Birmingham but who spent nine months trying to get here. I fail to understand why children with a right to come to this country because they have family here are not being brought within weeks. I cannot see what the hold-up is, and in so far as there is a hold-up, for goodness' sake, can everybody not get off their backsides and do something about it?

3.38 pm

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab): First, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Dubs on putting down this most timely Question for Short Debate today. Unlike some noble Lords, I have not visited the refugee camp in Calais. I have relied on the media reports and talking to people such as my noble friend Lord Dubs and my friend in the other place Keir Starmer MP, who have visited. It is a desperate, nightmare situation, with people, many of them unaccompanied children, living in squalor and at risk of being the victims of violence and abuse. The damage to their mental health and long-term well-being that this trauma must be causing is unimaginable.

The horror of the predicament the children find themselves in is truly shocking, and we should all be ashamed about that. We have a moral duty to help these children. The United Kingdom has a reputation as a safe, tolerant and generous country. Our history shows that when called upon we step up, do our fair share and do not shirk our responsibilities. I am sure that the noble Baroness, Lady Williams of Trafford, will have a raft of statistics to illustrate what the Government are doing. I have no doubt that we have very able and dedicated staff doing everything they can within the constraints they are working to. I thank them and pay tribute to them for the work they are doing. I also join my noble friend Lord Dubs in paying tribute to the NGOs and all the staff they have there working very hard in Calais.

But it is the Government's responsibility to up their game. Can the noble Baroness, Lady Williams of Trafford, tell me whether there is a proper system in place, organised by the French authorities, to register people, particularly the children, to find out who they are and see who is eligible to be brought into the UK?

If it is determined that they are eligible and can come to the UK, it is important to get them in urgently, as the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss, just said.

How are the Government going to up their game? What assistance are they giving to the French authorities and other agencies? Why has so little happened since my noble friend's amendment was accepted by the Government? Yesterday during Questions, reference was made to the 400 children on the list, and the noble Lord, Lord Roberts of Llandudno, referred to them today in his contribution. These are the ones who campaigners believe are eligible to be settled here, either under the Dublin III regulations or under my noble friend Lord Dubs's amendment. The list was handed recently to the Home Office, so what has happened to it? What action has been taken to identify the children on the list? What action has been taken to verify whether they are eligible to get to the UK, and when are we going to bring them here? How many have been accepted?

It is really important that this is not viewed as immigration. It is about children fleeing persecution and violence, and our responsibility as a nation to face up to its responsibilities and to do its bit urgently. As my noble friend Lady Royall of Blaisdon said, the French Government have announced that the refugee camp at Calais is to be demolished, although I do not think a timeline for that has been agreed. What discussions have the Government had with the French authorities about that decision, and what is their assessment of the safety of the children if the camp is closed and the people there dispersed over a wide area? People at the camp will need shelter, food, and clothing. Winter is coming and the children should be safe, warm, dry and fed, not homeless, cold, alone, hungry and scared.

I very much endorse the ideas that the noble Baroness, Lady Jenkin, mentioned in her contribution. I also pay tribute to Councillor Paul Carter, the leader of Kent County Council, and all the members and staff of that council and the other local authorities across the country who have helped, although Kent has undoubtedly taken the lion's share of the burden, when refugees reach the UK. What further assistance are the Government giving to local authorities? I refer the House to my declaration of interests.

In conclusion, I thank my noble friend for his diligence in raising this issue. We are all grateful to him, and I hope the Minister can give us some comfort when she responds to the debate.

3.42 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con): My Lords, I thank all noble Lords who have taken part in this debate, particularly the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. Since I have been a Minister I have answered a question almost every day on the issue of not just migrants in Calais but children in Calais. Not only does that show the importance this House places on the issue; we also join the country at large in being concerned about children who are, as many noble Lords have described, traumatised and in great difficulty and under the jurisdiction of other countries.

[BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD]

The Government are clear about our moral responsibility to assist those who are suffering as a result of the conflicts in the world, and we recognise that those fleeing persecution have a legal entitlement to protection. Refugee children are particularly vulnerable, as we know, and our priority is to protect them as best we can.

I shall set out the context of the wider situation, particularly with reference to the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Roberts. For those children in the Middle East and north Africa, we have set up a new vulnerable children's resettlement scheme, which will bring children most in need to the UK from the regions. Under this scheme we will resettle several hundred individuals in the first year, and up to 3,000 by the end of this Parliament. That is in addition to our commitment to resettle 20,000 vulnerable Syrians over the same period. To give the noble Lord some comfort, in the year ending June 2016, 2,682 people were resettled under the Syrian resettlement scheme, half of whom are children.

The previous Prime Minister announced earlier in the year that the much-needed Syrian relief effort would be doubled to over £2.3 billion, so that is a doubling of our efforts in terms of the money we are putting in. For those in Europe, we have made significant progress in improving and speeding up the existing processes. That is reflected in the number of children who have been accepted for transfer to the UK this year under the Dublin regulation, which currently stands at over 120.

In France, we continue to build on this progress and are working with the French Government to ensure that children in Calais with family links in the UK are identified, receive sufficient support and can access the Dublin family reunification process without delay. More widely in Europe, we are in active discussions with the UNHCR, other partner organisations and the Italian and Greek Governments to strengthen and speed up mechanisms to identify and assess unaccompanied refugee children and transfer them to the UK where that is in their best interests. The noble Lord might think it is in all the children's best interests to be in the UK but that is not necessarily the case; these things are more complicated. While I share his view that the welfare of children in Calais is paramount, I believe we should be acting in the best interests of the child, and for that reason we are focusing on prioritising family reunion cases.

Both the UK and French Governments are clear that those in France who require international protection should claim asylum in France. For unaccompanied children the UK will consider requests to take responsibility for an asylum application made in France when lodged by a minor with close family connections in the UK, and both Governments are committed to ensuring that such cases are prioritised. To start this process, the child must engage with the French authorities.

We have made significant progress in speeding up the transfer of unaccompanied children who already have family members in the UK, under the Dublin regulation. Since the beginning of this year, over 70 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been accepted for transfer

to the UK from France under the family provisions of the Dublin regulation. More than 30 of the Dubs children have met the Dublin criteria and most have been transferred. I said yesterday and I say again today that whether a child is a Dublin child or a Dubs child, they are a child, and more than 30 of them are now here.

Many noble Lords have talked about the co-operation between the UK and France. It is intense. We are working so hard to improve the operation of the Dublin process. We have established a permanent official-level contact group and will be seconding another expert to the French Interior Ministry in the next few weeks to build on the very real progress that has been made. We have also established a dedicated team in the Home Office Dublin unit to lead on family reunion cases for unaccompanied children.

On camp clearances, we recognise that there are indeed children living in the migrant camp in Calais. Noble Lords have told a variety of heartbreaking stories of what they have seen and heard, but we must make it clear that the management and protection of children in Calais is predominately a matter for the French authorities. The French Government have been clear that they intend to clear the camps in Calais by the end of the year. The noble Lord, Lord Kennedy, asked for a more exact timing. I cannot give it, other than to say that they have talked about the end of the year.

Both Governments understand that the camp clearances will have an impact on the children who are still there. That is why the UK and France are working more closely than ever before to ensure that the children in Calais have access to decent accommodation and the appropriate support services in France. The picture so far is that 5,000 people have taken up alternative accommodation, and I must emphasise that no one is forced to remain in the camps, although I appreciate some of the stories that noble Lords have told about the difficulty of getting out of them.

To assist with the clearances, I understand that the French Government intend to create additional places in temporary accommodation centres and asylum accommodation places across France by the end of the year. I understand that figure to be 12,000 in total. The British Government understand that the total number in the camp is about 7,600; NGOs estimate it to be more like 9,000; but if the number of places to be provided is 12,000, that is indeed welcome news. Ultimately, anyone impacted by the camp clearances in Calais has the option of engaging with the French authorities. We have assurances from the French Government that no child or adult has to stay in those difficult conditions and that care and support by the French state is readily accessible.

My noble friend Lady Jenkin, the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, and the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss, talked about identifying and informing vulnerable people who may be traumatised and not know what to do. The UK and France have put in place a programme—there was a question about it yesterday—the FTDA, to identify and help direct vulnerable people in the camps to the support that they require. Since November 2015, the FTDA has led

a project on human trafficking in Calais called Aide aux Victimes de la Traite, which means support to victims of human trafficking. The aim is to enforce identification and orientation of victims in the camp in Calais. The team comprises four field officers, who are multidisciplinary. Crucially, they have legal and social work skills, can speak English and Arabic, and conduct daily patrols of the camps to identify victims of trafficking. The people identified by FTDA as vulnerable or potential trafficking victims are mainly young women or unaccompanied minors at risk of sexual exploitation or coercion to commit offences, and victims of violence from other migrants, mainly smugglers. The British Government are contributing £530,000 to this project, and the French Government have tasked FTDA with identifying 150 unaccompanied minors with family links to the UK. The French Government have doubled the FTDA's resources, as I said yesterday, and extended the project at least until December.

On oversight of the project, which is important and which I mentioned yesterday but will say again for the benefit of noble Lords, the project steering group is made up of representatives from the Home Office, alongside officials from the French Interior Ministry, the Jules Ferry centre, the Calais prefecture and French law enforcement.

The noble Baroness, Lady Royall, asked about funding. I can confirm that it will be £41,460 per annum per child. The money to boost regional structures will be £60,000 per annum.

I am aware that I am about to run out of time. We all understand that the camp clearances in Calais will have an impact on everybody in them, particularly the children. That is why we are working closely with the French Government to deliver our shared aims. Any child in the camp has options available to them, and we are confident that the French Government are able to provide the appropriate services and accommodation for those impacted by the clearances. We will obviously continue to work closely with our French counterparts to ensure that children in the camp have access to the appropriate services, and that those with UK links can access the Dublin family reunification process without delay.

I thank all noble Lords for taking part in the debate.

Lord Roberts of Llandudno: My Lords, before the Minister sits down, can she assure us that the 387 children whose names are already with the Home Office will receive immediate consideration, before the winter, which we hope will not be harsh, sets in?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I am pleased that the noble Lord asked that, because the other day, there were 110 names, according to the right honourable Member in the other place, Yvette Cooper. Yesterday, I understood from the noble Baroness, Lady Jowell, that it was 300, and the noble Lord has given me a different figure. All those names are being considered. There may be crossover, we do not know, but they are all being considered and processed in the usual way.

Conflict in Fragile States

Motion to Take Note

3.55 pm

Moved by **Lord Loomba**

To move that this House takes note of the effect of conflict in fragile states on the rate of human rights abuses and the number of widows.

Lord Loomba (LD): My Lords, I begin this debate by saying that I will focus on just a few of the many countries that are suffering from conflict at present, on the effect that this is having on rising numbers of human rights abuses that are being experienced worldwide, and on the impact on widows. I declare an interest as founder and chairman trustee of the Loomba Foundation—a charity that helps widows worldwide.

We have spoken today in this House about Syria and the ongoing humanitarian crisis that is proving impossible to resolve. It is a crisis of immense proportions that has brought with it human rights abuses and much suffering. As the noble Lord, Lord Collins, pointed out, there are many thousands of refugees who are trapped and cannot return home. The destruction of war can be seen in the footage of Aleppo, shown on the news this week while the ceasefire has been in operation.

What can be seen are the bombed-out ruins of buildings in what was once a thriving city. What cannot be seen is the human pain and distress that is sometimes so terrible that it cannot be put into words, including the horrific suffering of young children that was mentioned in the House today. While we have seen that some conflicts have beginnings that appear to be with all good intentions, the outcome cannot be predicted and the need to consider future strategies for minimising the suffering of innocent citizens who have become caught in the middle is paramount. I welcome the Government's efforts to restore peace and stability, and ultimately democracy, to the area.

Only last week in this House, we also spoke about the Yemen. A Statement was made on the escalating crisis with regard to alleged breaches of international humanitarian laws. Save the Children has noted that there is,

“significant credible evidence that violations of international law have been committed by all parties to the conflict”,

and has described the country as having,

“the highest number of people in humanitarian need in the world right now”—

an estimated figure of 21.2 million.

Syria, the Yemen and Sudan are on very high alert with regard to fragility, and it is recognised that the situation is worsening and critical. What is also recognised is that this factor increases the risk of human rights abuses. It is the reality that in any such conflict women and girls often suffer, especially with regard to human rights abuses, as has been shown by the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, spearheaded by the noble Lord, Lord Hague, and Angelina Jolie, which raised awareness and aimed to end the practice of using rape as a weapon of war.

[LORD LOOMBA]

In relation to widows, the Loomba Foundation has recently published a global report on the issues affecting women and girls who are widows. The World Widows report highlights how the numbers of widows are increasing in many areas globally, particularly in areas where there is a conflict. The report has been presented to the UN Secretary-General, the UN Deputy Secretary-General and the Prime Minister of India, as well as to both Libraries in Parliament. It is the only comprehensive study of its kind.

The World Bank, recognising the increase in fragility, conflicts and violence, emphasised:

“The challenge is widespread and not confined to low-income countries. The last few years have seen a spike in conflicts with an increase in casualties, and almost 60 million people are displaced globally—the highest level since the end of World War II”.

This increase in the number of displaced people has happened on an unprecedented scale in the last few years. Those who are increasingly marginalised often have more complex needs and struggle alone, often bringing up young children without the support of vital networks of friends and families to call on. This increase in recent times, coupled with the difficulty of collecting data in fragile and conflict states, underlines the importance of not underestimating the numbers of widows who are suffering. The Loomba Foundation report estimates that there are 258 million widows globally, and the figure increased by approximately 9% between 2010 and 2015.

Afghanistan is another conflict zone, and the report estimates that just over one-fifth of the female population of marital age there is widowed. Taking just this one country as an example of the number of widows in conflict states shows just how many women are suffering not only from conflict but from bereavement and the additional problems that come with the responsibilities of childbearing and putting a roof over their family's heads in the most difficult circumstances. As the report points out, remarriage is often unlikely, making social deprivation and poverty long-term.

Given that many of the countries where there is conflict are also countries that do not value a woman once she becomes a widow, their problems become even more acute, with the loss of property rights, sexual abuse and banishment from their community, which can lead to poverty and destitution. As male deaths may often be related to fighting and conflict situations, many widows are young—and may even be children themselves if they have been forced into marriage at an early age. This leads to a life that is unfulfilled, as they start out from an even more disadvantaged position than other women and girls in their communities. At the other end of the age demographic, it is recognised that many older women suffer terribly on being widowed. Age International has also noted that older women are often ignored in data compilation, and figures that show the true numbers of older women suffering from conflict are not readily available.

Many fragile states have multiple issues that need resolving, and a more targeted approach to the human side of the suffering may speed up the process, especially if it focuses on women, girls and widows. The UK Government have recognised that fragility and conflict

impact on aid redelivery. This at the very least affects costs, and at worst stops help getting to those who need it most.

All these ongoing issues will also have an impact on delivering the sustainable development goals. Syria is one place where implementing any of the sustainable development goals is a far-off ideal. Basic bread and water, medicine and a roof over their head are fundamental needs for many citizens right now. But delivering aid within such a framework, and with a longer-term view than just immediate relief, will perhaps give an impetus to change, if it empowers the people who are suffering to begin to take charge of what is happening there. We hope that this would lead to less violence and fewer human rights abuses in the long term.

Finally, I ask the Minister what steps the Government are taking to eliminate or at least reduce the effect of human rights abuses and to help widows in fragile states.

4.05 pm

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab): My Lords, I hope that the whole House will feel indebted to the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for keeping what I hope he will not mind my calling an unfashionable issue before the attention of the House and British Parliament. It is essential for us, as well as the grand themes that we adumbrate and pursue in this place, to keep an eye on the questions and the subject that he has so wonderfully and with such assiduity pursued for so many years. We are grateful for that. I hope that he will not mind my appearing to subvert his debate by picking on one place in the list of fragile states to illustrate the very points that he has made. I have never had such a generous amount of time in which to speak, and I promise not to try to turn it into a Methodist sermon; I am getting into my comfort zone at 15 minutes. There are some important points to make.

From the lovely briefing note from the Library we can see that the Fund for Peace has a fragile states index, and so does the OECD 2015 *States of Fragility* report list a number of countries. All the countries on both lists are actually from the African continent or the Middle East, except for one, which appears on both lists—that country to which I will refer in the rest of my remarks, Haiti. It is an extraordinary country in the middle of the Caribbean, 90 minutes' flying time from Miami in Florida. It is in an entirely different geographical context, so one wonders how that little country has been dragged into this list of extremely fragile countries, whose fragility is often related one to the other because of their proximity to each other and the fact that they have the same demographic, economic and military situations.

The OECD 2015 report says that the five things that put these countries on to the list are, first, the levels of violence present in the country; access to justice; the effectiveness and accountability of institutions; the degree of economic inclusion and stability; and the ability of the country to withstand potential, “social, economic and environmental shocks”.

I confess to having a special interest in Haiti, having lived there for 10 years, and I shall lay before the House one or two statistics—if we can be patient with

that at the fag-end of a parliamentary day such as this. At the five-year mark for the violence and military action in Syria, 250,000 were reported to be victims of the strife. I want to compare that with the 250,000 who died in Haiti in 2010 in five minutes, after the earthquake that destroyed so much of the capital city and surrounding areas in that year. Compare that with 300 recently in Italy and 85 in Christchurch—although I recognise that these comparisons are odious. Some 1.5 million people ended up in tents scattered around the city in every conceivable piece of land. If you take that as a proportion of the population of Haiti and translate it to the United Kingdom, it would mean that the entire population of London would be living in tents. So it was an extraordinary shock; half the government institutions were destroyed, as well as the records contained in those institutions—mostly paper records at that time. The presidential palace went, the cathedrals went, the main streets went—the destruction was extraordinary. That is the first thing that puts Haiti in a very vulnerable position as far as anybody wanting to perpetrate deeds that deny human rights or exploit human weakness is concerned.

On the second point—I hope noble Lords can be patient with me—we have just celebrated the way that the Ebola outbreak in west Africa has been brought to a conclusion. We note the resource that was directed towards that problem and the commitment of people such as the nurse who has just been cleared of potentially misleading the National Health Service. We recognise that this was a good news story. Ten thousand people died, but the matter has been dealt with because of the rallying of states and countries around the world.

In Haiti, 12,000 victims of cholera have died in the last five or six years and more are still dying. Perhaps that fact would not be noteworthy except for one salient phenomenon: cholera was introduced to Haiti by soldiers from Nepal serving in a peacekeeping force. There had been no cholera in Haiti before their arrival; the country will now not be without it for a considerable time. The United Nations has only in the last month been prepared to admit publicly its liability in this respect. Those 12,000 victims have attracted very little interest, I have to say, with huge amounts of denial from the United Nations and others around the world. It is an ongoing problem and it seems not unfair to me to mention it in the same breath as the 10,000 people who died of Ebola in west Africa.

Thirdly, there has been a peacekeeping force in Haiti for 12 years, although there has been no war to protect people against. There was an insurrection in 2004, which displaced a democratically elected Government. The usurpers—the coup effecters—were led by a man who was a convicted murderer yet got the support of the western world, displacing the appointed, elected President and Administration in the country at that time. The British Government—I have been speaking to both DfID and the Foreign Office—pumps money into the maintenance of the peacekeeping force; indeed, that is the prime way in which the United Kingdom offers its aid to Haiti. But the force's mandate is manifestly inadequate for the task: it keeps peace where there is not any war. I was in Haiti at one time when the two countries providing the peacekeeping force were India and Pakistan—by the way, it was

called a beach-keeping force rather than a peacekeeping force—and was invited to dinner with officials of Islamic Relief. My friends knew the Pakistani overlords and I was invited to the headquarters of the Pakistani force and, lo and behold, we were joined by the top brass of the Indian force. There was more amity between India and Pakistan on the occasion of that dinner than on the ground in the subcontinent itself, from what I have perceived from the newspapers. I thought it was worth pointing that out, just for the sake of it. They have a great deal of fun.

The United Nations pumps money into countries to help them to support the charges laid against maintaining a standing army. They are hugely subsidised by these peacekeeping exercises. I have been in Haiti so many times. I travel on foot, I know everybody, I speak both languages and I feel at home. But when I went there a couple of years ago with a party from here, I had to go in a convoy of vehicles from the peacekeeping force. I could not divert from my path by 20 yards without previous approval from the necessary authorities, because nobody would otherwise accept responsibility for my safety—a crazy business. If the relevant people would build a few bridges, or a hospital or two, or help to build capacity in the realm of public administration, that mandate would have fruits and a legacy. As it is, they are hated and people cannot wait for them to go.

As regards the constitutional crisis, Haiti's constitutional Government came to an end in February this year. The President at the time, a former pop singer, “Sweet Micky”, was approved by Washington—he was the man it wanted. There is evidence that the election that got him the presidency was rigged. However, the Haitians lived with that for five years. When last year's elections seemed to be producing a similar result, the Haitians objected that time. They annulled elections that the international community had said were good. That meant that from February, instead of a new Government, there was nothing. Therefore, there is no constitutional arrangement in Haiti at the moment at all. The Haitians are hoping that the elections scheduled for next month will hold good, and that soon there will be a constitutional Government.

This uncertainty is bound to lead to all kinds of mystifying things happening on the ground. There is a known drug-running business running through Haiti and people in high positions make their money out of it. Capacity building is of the first order. I tried to arrange to bring people to this country and go there with a group from this House and the other House to interest Haiti in building a parliamentary capacity. It has never had an effective parliamentary Government since dictatorship is the model it is accustomed to. I wonder whether the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, which after the Second World War was very useful in providing shelter and cover for countries in transition, but which has done no real work for a long time, might not be a useful vehicle for helping countries such as Haiti to get some stability, build capacity and become equipped to run their own affairs.

Corruption is talked about. Where did all the money go? However, when I spoke to the President of Haiti, he said to me, “Well, we may not be administering the money that we get very well, but, let me tell you,

[LORD GRIFFITHS OF BURRY PORT]

that of all those millions you read about in the paper, five cents in a dollar is what I administer, 95 cents in the dollar is what the international community administers. If there is corruption, ask the question somewhere else". The Dominican Republic shares an island with Haiti and the former's constitutional court has ruled that Haitians who have lived in the DR for years—generations, in fact—but have no papers can be repatriated. This is retrospective legislation but deportations are taking place right now of people who have lived there for a very long time and whose children have been born there. In all these ways, we are looking at a country that is not only fragile but vulnerable to forces within its own borders and to any predator that comes its way. When I lived there, I had the good fortune to travel the length and breadth of the country. In fact, I think I probably know it more than most Haitians do.

Eighty per cent of the population of Haiti live outside the normal economy. The levels of education are very low but the Haitian people, who seized their independence from the French in 1804—it was the first black republic in the world—are proud and resilient. To my knowledge, nobody who goes there comes away anything other than charmed by the experience. Fragility is on the cards and one worries about an uncertain future. The breaking of human rights, the potential for human slavery and the fact that children have very little opportunity to live educated and flourishing lives all preoccupy me. How does one bring a country like Haiti into the public mind, when the public mind is filled with the words "voodoo" and "backwardness", neither of which typify the country in my experience and knowledge?

I once again offer my thanks to the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, and hope that he will not feel that I have subverted his cause, but merely added a case history to the points that he made.

4.20 pm

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD): My Lords, I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Loomba, not only for securing the time for this debate on this incredibly important subject but for the way he introduced it.

There has been rather a dreadful irony this week in Westminster. The Foreign Affairs Committee published its indictment of Cameron's actions which led to Libya joining the failed states list, while at the same time the new Secretary of State for DfID, Priti Patel, has been busy telling us how she will reform the aid budget according to a very different set of criteria. I have no problem with her wish to target corruption and seek transparency but surely the aid budget should be linked firmly to a criterion of need and not to criteria of what will benefit the UK most in trade terms, which is what she seemed to be saying.

The Government must realise that of all the refugees in the world, 50% are children, yet globally they receive about 4% of the funds set aside for refugees. Every day, some 17,000 children are forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict. Those sorts of people should be at the top of the priority list for our aid budget.

The charity War Child, from where those figures come, is at the sharp end of the result of failed or failing states. Yesterday I met a War Child member of

staff who had just come back from the Zaatari camp in Jordan, the second-biggest refugee camp in the world. The group she was working with in the camp were girls—we would call them girls, given their age, but war and refugee life is turning them prematurely into young women. In her work with them, one of the most traumatic issues for them, and indeed for the boys in the camp, that they have had to deal with—even given all their experiences—is the way their education has just come to a halt with no prospect of it being renewed unless one of the NGOs can afford to put in place temporary schools.

Yet, time and again, we are reinforced in our knowledge that the importance of education in improving life chances is massive. Therefore, just at a point where these children's life chances have taken a massive dip, their educational chances have been taken away. I was struck by a powerful piece written by Gordon Brown in today's *Guardian* about the betrayal of half the current generation who live in the world as regards their chances of getting a decent education. I feel his anger at that. Therefore, if Priti Patel wants to make a difference, she should focus on aid to the next generation and on ensuring the educational chances of thousands of young refugees. That would have multiple benefits, not just to them but to the eventual rebuilding of the failed states and the migrant situation.

One small organisation that is starting to make a dramatic difference to children from failed states and their education is called PositiveNegatives. I will take a little time to explain its work and the effect it has. It produces what your Lordships would recognise as comic books; noble Lords may have seen a couple of examples in the *Guardian* this year. These books are about humanitarian and social issues in fragile states such as Somalia, Eritrea, Syria and Guinea-Bissau. They work in the following way. People in such countries or refugees from them tell their stories to PositiveNegatives, which then puts them into book form, using the accounts of the people affected, and an artist converts the story into illustrations and speech bubbles. It is at once an immediate, powerful and gripping way to address the issues.

Next week, Obama's forthcoming leaders' summit on refugees and migrants at the UN General Assembly will feature one of the most recent projects, of particular relevance to this debate. That project, with Care International, is about a Syrian mother whose husband was kidnapped, presumed killed by ISIS. She subsequently fled with her two young children. She is stuck in a refugee camp in Serbia, which is where the PositiveNegatives researchers interviewed her. The comic explores the vulnerabilities and dangers that war widows and women in general face while making these horrendous journeys with young children.

I accept that, in this instance, the word "comic" is not suitable, but that is what we in this country call illustrated books of this nature. These comics have a very powerful impact because they are real stories from real people. No matter what their ethnicity, age, gender or literacy levels, people can understand and empathise with such human stories.

Given the hostility, ignorance or lack of understanding that refugees often face, these books form a great resource for schools. Let me give your Lordships one

example, from *Fleeing into the Unknown*, a comic adapted from the Overseas Development Institute's report from *Journeys to Europe: The Role of Policy in Migrant Decision-making*. This comic tells the story of Merha, an Eritrean woman who escaped forced conscription to the Eritrean army and fled to Europe. The comic follows her across Sudan, Libya and the Mediterranean to the UK. On her journey, she faces extortion and sexual and physical abuse, and her experiences in north Africa are very difficult. That is before she makes the perilous journey across the Mediterranean.

This book became a resource in a secondary school in south London. I should emphasise that the books are not just available in printed form; they are available electronically for tablets and computers and are highly interactive. If you want to know, for example, more about Eritrea, you can click on the "history of Eritrea" bar on the left and learn more. It is, at once, a real-life human story but you can also get to the facts behind that story. An Eritrean student at the secondary school read the comic and so did her classmates. This is what she said: "The comic has allowed people in my class to understand what my mother and I experienced on our journey. People just know about crossing the sea, but there were many experiences before that". She felt that, after reading the comic, her classmates were far more willing and able to be friends with her because they understood something about her background.

This resource should be more widely available in our schools. It is about geography, history and, ultimately, many of our neighbours. I hope that the Department for Education, and the Minister this afternoon, will take back those thoughts. Given the rise in hate crime after Brexit, given the need for this sort of resource, and given the need for children to have something in front of them that is not just a dry text, this is exactly the sort of material that we have a great need for. For as long as there are failing states and a volume of refugees fleeing them, the need for this material will become ever-more crucial.

4.28 pm

Baroness Tonge (Ind LD): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Loomba for securing this debate and, indeed, for securing enough time for us actually to say what we want to say, for a change—that is a great luxury. I declare an interest as chair of the All-Party Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health. We recently produced a paper entitled *Population Dynamics and the Sustainable Development Goals*, which demonstrates the connection between population, economic growth and climate change and famine, which leads to fragile states and conflict. Read it, my Lords.

Noble Lords may have wondered this afternoon why I have been flitting around the Benches. It is because on this very warm day I have been trying to find a warm place in this Chamber. I am frozen. It made me think that the energy being used to make my teeth chatter here this afternoon is contributing to that global warming, which will cause climate change, which will cause famine and drought and will lead to fragile states, which is what we are talking about. Think on it.

I will concentrate on conflict and how it affects the lives of women, and in particular the lives of women of reproductive age. One quarter of the 125 million people in humanitarian need are women in this age group. One in five is likely to be pregnant, leading to the horrible statistic that over 500 women in these situations die every day from the complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The maternal mortality rate is 60% higher in these situations than the global ratio of 210 per 100,000. Seven out of 10 women are exposed to sexual violence in these situations and they desperately need help from us in the form of sexual and reproductive health services. Many are at risk of trafficking, as we have heard, and many of these women are already widows. At this point, I again pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Loomba, who has done so much work for these women.

I have had some experience of the plight of these women in many parts of the world over the past 20 years or so. For instance, in Tirana, raped and sexually mutilated women were coming into the hospital, fleeing from the Serbian soldiers as they swept through Bosnia when we and the Americans were bombing Serbia. These women were terrified to admit—many women are in this situation—what had happened to them for fear of certain rejection by husbands and family. In South Sudan, the conflict continues after 50 years, with women fleeing in every direction to escape the Dinka and Nuer tribes of rival soldiers, responsible as ever for the children whom these women are trying to keep alive. Sometimes, their only hope for their families is for the boys to join one of the marauding armies, where at least they will be fed and clothed, after a fashion.

As referred to by my noble friend Lady Miller, I also spent time in the Zaatari camp in Jordan. It is a good UNHCR camp. When I was there, there were 180,000 people there and the majority—I do not know the proportion—were women. In many ways, they were safe and had adequate food at last and they had good sexual and reproductive health services there, with family planning on offer and obstetric care being provided at that time by the Moroccans in a very good field hospital. But the stories I heard were disturbing even in that well-run environment. They were scared to go to the toilet tents because of the risk of rape. Young girls in particular were most at risk. As a consequence, the mothers told me that they tried to get their daughters married off as quickly as possible to any male who was willing.

Child marriage, with all its horrors, was rife in that camp. The only thing that really concerned the mothers in their predicament was not their daughters' immaturity, but that at home they said they would usually know the man chosen for their daughter, but in the camp it had to be anybody, just to keep them safe. That is something I have never forgotten.

Another sad fact was that, although sexual and reproductive health and family planning services were available, they were little used because I was told they wanted to replace the babies they had lost in the conflict. However, refugees from Syria and other countries in less formal camps and enclaves are not so fortunate as these women, even though they, too, are not in a good situation.

[BARONESS TONGE]

I want to concentrate for a few minutes on my next concern, which is the availability of abortion for women in conflict situations. It is a difficult subject. Under international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions, abortion should be available because the denial of abortion to a woman who has been raped in conflict threatens her life or could cause unbearable suffering. It is unthinkable, and I speak as a woman myself, that having been brutally raped by one or many more men, a woman has to face months of pregnancy, rejection by her partner if he is still around, and giving birth to a child as a result. In their response published in June this year to the House of Lords Select Committee report, *Sexual Violence in Conflict: A War Crime*, the Government reaffirmed their 2014 policy recognising abortion under the Geneva Conventions. I thank them for that and for the work they have done.

However, there is a problem. The USA aid packages for sexual and reproductive health specifically exclude abortion, but because funding for sexual and reproductive health from many different countries can be pooled to provide facilities in a conflict situation, there is still concern that the most humanitarian of services cannot be provided because of the USA ban. I understand that,

“DFID is in regular dialogue with USAID, State Department and ... NGOs with regard to improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, which includes reducing recourse to unsafe abortion”—

which, as noble Lords will know, kills many women in their desperation not to be pregnant—

“and improving access to safe abortion services”.

But it is still unclear whether abortion services have become available in these situations and in what numbers. Can the Minister clarify this issue in her response, or write to noble Lords on this issue? Since the DfID announcement of its policy in 2014, no progress report has been made on its implementation. I know that this field is difficult and contentious because I have worked in it. The work often goes on quietly and under the radar, but it must be possible to give us some reassurance that progress is being made.

I assume that this topic, together with emergency contraception which is also vital, must have been raised in one forum or another at the World Humanitarian Summit held this year in Istanbul. I was there for the fringe meetings, but I have not had access to reports or any feedback on this issue from the main summit conference. I apologise for labouring this subject—and indeed I apologise for the pun—but I have been working in this area all my life and I know about the suffering involved.

In fragile states and conflict situations, women suffer disproportionately in comparison with men and somehow have to protect their children. Finally, I would ask the Minister to clarify the new policy of directing more money to fragile and conflict-affected states. What exactly is the policy? Will it affect the money that has already been pledged for the Family Planning 2020 initiative by David Cameron’s Government back in 2014? Can we also be assured that, within that funding,

there is an element for the provision of sexual and reproductive health services for women who are caught up in these horrific situations?

4.39 pm

Lord Hussain (LD): My Lords, I too thank my noble friend Lord Loomba for securing this important debate. Human rights abuses do not just take place in conflicts in fragile states. They take place in many countries known as famous democracies. One of them happens to be India, particularly in Indian-administered Kashmir. As many noble Lords know, I was born in Azad Kashmir and I have family and friends on both sides of the line of control that divides the state between India and Pakistan.

The Indian Army has been in Kashmir since 1947, but it was given special powers in 1990 under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, which gives it complete immunity. Although I am aware that the Indian armed forces have enjoyed this immunity at different times in different parts of India, it has always been for a short time, whereas the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been applied in Kashmir without a break since 1990. Since then, more than 100,000 civilians have been killed. Many more have been injured, detained and tortured.

Lately, the forces have started using pellet guns, which has resulted in hundreds of people, mainly the young, being blinded in one eye or both. Many international human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, have highlighted these violations time and again. As lately as two days ago, the United Nations Human Rights Council made a formal request to India and Pakistan for free access to their respective areas of the former princely state. Pakistan has agreed to give free access providing India does the same, but sadly, India has refused completely.

Let me draw noble Lords’ attention to some surveys done some time ago on the plight of widows and orphans in Kashmir. The first is a report on a survey on the impact of the conflict situation on women and children in Kashmir, conducted by the department of sociology at the University of Kashmir and sponsored by the UK-based NGO Save the Children Fund in 2003. Here are some extracts:

“Srinagar—Shama Bano at 30 continues to struggle for survival along with her two minors, including a mentally retarded son, in militancy-hit Kashmir where living conditions of thousands of widows and orphans deteriorate day by day.

Bano’s life was shattered when she found her husband Manzoor Ahmed Bhat’s bullet-riddled body outside the residence on December 15, 1992, and still finds it hard to believe it with seven-year-old mentally retarded son Amir groaning and grumbling about the fate of his father.

After the death of her husband, Bano moved into her brother’s house in the Lalbazar area here as her in-laws ill-treated and left her and children in the lurch and dependent on income hardly sufficient to feed the family.

The plight and misery of Bano and other widows and orphans came to light”,

during the study, which was,

“carried out by nine researchers under the guidance of Dr Bashir Ahmed Dabla, Head of the Department, with 600 respondents (300 widows and 300 orphans) taken in six districts of Kashmir. In all, 100 respondents (50 widows and 50 orphans) were taken in each of the districts of Baramulla, Srinagar, Kupwara, Pulwama, Anantnag and Budgam and an attempt was made to understand

the prevailing conditions of the widows and orphans which emerged immediately after the death of their husbands and fathers, Dr Dabla, the director of the project said here.

According to the survey, significant groups of women and children have become widows and orphans as a result of death of their husbands/fathers who were the sole bread earners in their families with the result the living conditions of these have become worse as there is no organised, systematic and continuous financial support to them.

Dr Dabla admits that limitation of the study was its small sample as reliable estimates put the number of widows and orphans in Kashmir at 16,000-20,000 at present”.

This was in 2003. It goes on:

“A majority of the widows are illiterate and fall in the age group of 19-30 years and belong to lower middle class families with a monthly income of Rs 2000-4000. The survey gives the break up of incidents of death of husbands of all women respondents—cross-firing (21 per cent), killed by army/security forces (26 per cent), custodial killing (15 per cent), militants (9 per cent), surrendered militants (17 per cent), killed by bomb/mine blasts (7 per cent) and at the line of control (5 per cent) ... though after the death of her husband, a Muslim woman is allowed by the Shariah to marry again, the survey found 91.33 per cent respondents whose husbands had died didn't marry because they wanted to look after the children of their deceased husband, while only 8.66 per cent had remarried”.

The survey said that,

“most of the women face problems within and outside their homes like financial difficulties, psychological downfall, emotional stress, denial of inheritance/due rights, sexual harassment, physical insecurity, losing control over children, dead husband's liabilities, harassment by in-laws, social security and apathy ... The crucial problems faced by children, after the death of their fathers, are economic hardship, psychological setback, lack of love and affection and apathy on the part of relatives”.

The report said that the survey went on to say that:

“The devastating effect in the post-death period is that children could not pursue their education, while orphans had to drop out of schools, others had to face a tough time for continuing their formal education ... The survey found that the number of dropouts from schools in rural and urban areas has significantly increased during the past decade as death of fathers led them to work outside to earn for their families. ‘These children, who work in automobile workshops, home service, handicrafts, face undesirable conditions as they are exploited which leads to child labour’”.

Let me give another quotation, this from the *Hindustan Times* of 14 March 2010. It reports:

“There are over 32,000 widows and 97,000 orphaned children in violence-battered Jammu and Kashmir, a new study has found, suggesting that the unending conflict in the border state has only made things worse for the vulnerable sections of society ... ‘There were 32,400 widows and 97,200 orphans in 2008 in Kashmir and the number is growing. With the continuity and intensification of armed conflict, their life conditions have deteriorated to miserable sub-human levels,’ says the study ... The study says that widows and orphans in the state, which has been battling a separatist war since 1989, have not received adequate help from the government ... ‘Neither the state nor NGOs have been able to help them in an organised and systematic manner. The tragic aspect of the situation is that the state has not adopted any specific social policy and programme in this regard. Their problems accumulate and intensify day by day’”.

Let me share another article from 2013 and mentioned in many newspapers in India: “The Shocking Tale of Half Widows and Half Orphans”—a term noble Lords might not have heard elsewhere in the world. It talks about Kashmir and was written by Ana Kandwal. It says:

“While I was in Kashmir, I was hoping to witness the beauty of ... paradise but what I witnessed instead were the gloomy stories hiding behind a beautiful veil. Seldom does any tourist,

who visits Kashmir to feel the beauty around Dal lake, houseboats, Gulamarg and Sonmarg get to feel the touch of reality. I am quite sure that people have observed the disturbance which one can sense now and then, which comes with the endless Indian military convoys that pass by or the sight of jawans or Jammu Kashmir police supervising at every nook and corner, and of course those graffiti that one can see sprayed up on the walls, especially near Lal Chowk, that talks about the stories of rebellion and revolutions that are enough to give jerks and prick in your rose tinted glass. We sensed the same fear, disturbance, confusion and were incapable to understand the setting. But as they say, ignorance is bliss. We preferred to move ahead by making assumptions about the natives of Kashmir to calm down our conscience. I think we have become habitual of making assumptions. Isn't it the easiest way to run from the reality or from our duty? ... Since childhood, we were taught that Kashmir is a part of India, that it's a paradise on earth. What we were never taught was that Kashmir is a disturbed area where people still believe in”.

not living under colonial rule.

He went on to ask,

“why some people want self determination? What is it and why some people want to repeal”.

the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. He said:

“We were taught only beautiful things that made us patriotic and anyone or anything that talks against these beautiful teachings or tried to cross check the reality are labelled as anti-national. And here I was, at the place which gave me many reasons to be bothered. I was ripped off my own so called identity and beliefs. The Kashmir that I always believed to be mine was not so mine. Till Jammu, everything was just like India but when we reached Srinagar, I started sensing that I am in a different country. There was nothing like India except that the Indian military could be seen at each and every place. Our whole lives we read something, accepted somethings and the reality seemed to be starkly different. Something that shocked me was the graffiti on the walls stating ‘Go India Go’, ‘Free Kashmir’, ‘1947: Indian independence or occupation?’, ‘Revolution is loading’, ‘AFSPA license of offence’ etc. I was aware of the disturbance in Kashmir valley through all those media news which we get to hear of but was completely ignorant about this different angle of the whole issue”.

I will shortcut my speech, because it may just run over, but I would draw your Lordships' attention to this: between 1989 and 2009, the actions of India's army and paramilitary forces in Kashmir have resulted in 8,000 enforced and involuntary disappearances and 70,000-plus deaths, including through extrajudicial or fake encounter executions, custodial brutality and other means. Lawyers have reportedly filed 15,000 petitions since 1990 inquiring, largely unsuccessfully, into the location and health of detainees and the charges against them.

Seven thousand unmarked graves exist in Indian-administered Kashmir. According to a recent finding, when 53 graves were found in a particular district of Kashmir, after the exhumation of the bodies 49 were found to be of the local villagers who had disappeared from nearby villages, while three were unidentified and one was that of a militant. The finding is so chilling that it shows the extent of the violation of human rights, and the degree of the ignorance within the institutions. It urges the Indian Government to cease such activities and calls for justice.

Finally, will the Minister ask her right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary to use his good offices to persuade India to lift the curfew order imposed on most cities and towns of Kashmir for the past 68 consecutive days, to allow free access to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to investigate the human right cases in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir,

[LORD HUSSAIN]

to withdraw from Kashmir its military and its draconian laws such as the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, and to allow the people of Jammu and Kashmir a referendum to decide their future as we gave to the people of Scotland?

4.55 pm

Baroness Flather (CB): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for obtaining this debate. By now all noble Lords probably know that my main interest is women, all kinds of women, but especially those who are deprived and mistreated. There are an awful lot of them in an awful lot of countries, whether they are fragile or in a good state. Women are not where they should be. It is frightening because I wonder whether they ever will be. We keep saying that it will be all right when they get educated, but how are we going to get them educated? It is not an easy task to educate grown women—it is easier to educate girls. Let us make sure that we at least start on the road to educating girls because even now in many countries the boys get to school and the girls do not.

Let us remind ourselves that the rape, torture and degradation of women is used as a weapon of war. It does not just happen; it is made to happen. Degrading, torturing and raping women helps invaders or groups of people who are trying to put down other groups of people. How is it possible that in this day and age we do not focus on it enough? We do focus on it, but clearly not enough. We have forgotten that this has been going on for ever, throughout the history of humanity. We have reached the 21st century, when we are supposed to be civilised and caring and to think about other people, and it is going on even more.

We talk about fragile states. Their number increases almost every week—this country is not doing well, that country is not doing well. So many countries are not doing well and are not controlled by those who rule them. The noble Lord, Lord Hussain, said that democracy does not mean the protection of everyone. He is quite right. There are all kinds of so-called democracies where there is no protection for anybody, whether they are men, women or children.

The plight of widows is particularly severe because they are treated so very badly. In India, even widows with families are thrown out and sent to places where people gather to pray. They sit there as beggars. They have children and brothers and sisters but nobody takes care of them.

In Africa, they take everything a widow has, and quite often they throw her out of her home. I have a very close friend—actually I have adopted her unofficially and treat her as my daughter. She is from Nigeria. Her father died suddenly when she was six years old. He had no siblings, but he had cousins. They came and took everything saleable in the household, every single thing. There was not that much, but there were a few things. He had a motorbike, for example, and that was the first thing to go.

Her father had three wives, and they took the two younger wives as well. They did not take my friend's mother, because she was older. They left my friend's mother with 13 children—the children of all the women. This is not made up; this is my closest friend. Her mother

had 13 children and nothing to feed them with: no work, and no money anywhere. I asked her what her mother did, and she said she gave a child to whoever would have one. They went to neighbours, friends or relatives; my friend went to her uncle. She then got a job cleaning toilets in a hospital and took all the children back. Women are so amazing—I am going to cry in a minute—and suffer so much, but still come out of it shining. I do not know why that is. Then there is religion. Women do more religious praying than the men do, and yet no religion has ever supported women. Sometimes religions do verbally, but not in practice. No religion has supported women, which I do not understand, as they are supposed to be there for everyone.

We all know that widows are like pariahs. If an old man dies, that is one thing, but in India, if a younger man dies, they are sure his wife has killed him. She is a very bad omen for the family and they want to see the back of her as soon as possible. These things are not of today; they are of the day before yesterday. We all have to fight them in whatever way we can. If a widow has female children, it is worse. If she has a son, sometimes the family will let her stay, because they want the boy. Once again, they do not want the girls; they want the boys. Then we have something new happening today—Daesh. What is it doing to girls? Can we believe what it is doing to them? I am sure your Lordships have all read or seen something about those two girls who managed to escape from Daesh. What treatment; what a life. I do not think I would live like that. I would try every way to kill myself.

Talking about killing oneself, I want to just remind noble Lords about Bangladesh. When Bangladesh, which was then part of Pakistan, rebelled, and wanted Sheikh Mujibur to become Prime Minister, western Pakistan attacked what became Bangladesh. When the war ended, 2,000 women who had been kept as what they now call comfort women were freed. They did not have any clothes, because if they had given them clothes, they knew they would have hanged themselves. These 2,000 women had no clothes, and were locked up for the use of the soldiers. When they got clothes, a lot of them did hang themselves. We should also remember that they had nowhere to go, as their families would not have accepted them. The families would not have said, “You poor thing, you have suffered so much, we’ll see what we can do for you”. Not a bit of it. They would have said, “Oh my god, what are we going to do with this? Go away”. They could have begged or they could have killed themselves—and a lot of them did.

This is not like today, yesterday or tomorrow; this is all the time. This is one of the most awful stories, and the other interesting thing is that no Pakistanis know about it, because it was never mentioned in Pakistan—I am sorry, I am not attacking the noble Lord, Lord Hussain, personally. Indeed, I am not in disagreement with a lot of what he has said about Kashmir. However, what I am saying is how it happened, and it is horrible to think that it did.

In sub-Saharan Africa the worst conditions are faced by women, who are evicted and not allowed to have any kind of life. Widows are regularly accused of killing their husbands. There is no limit. A widow

probably suffers more than a married woman, but married women suffer too. They are regularly beaten. Look at Mumbai, a big city. A lot of the women there work in the informal sector; they learn some skills and do cleaning, cooking and small-duty processes like doing massage and nails, so they get money. What happens to it? The husband takes that money and drinks it. The woman still does not get to keep that money, and if she cannot keep it then it cannot improve her life. If she keeps her money, what does she do with it? She does not drink, fight or gamble; she uses it for her family. Yet we treat these women as if they are worth nothing and not worthy of being cared for.

As I get older, I see that the situation in the world is getting worse, not better, and that begins to hurt very badly. For the last 10 years, all that I have cared about is how to change women's lives. I wish I had the power to do so but I do not, although I do what I can to get people to take an interest. I have set up a charity to see if we can get women into work in India and Africa, and to get British companies to employ poor women. Culturally, companies do not employ women. They will employ an educated woman, but they do not employ women in industry. Factories just do not give employment to women. I am sure that a lot of that goes for Pakistan too, although there they also have other constraints. In India, however, we have no constraints, nor are there any in Africa, except in what we completely incorrectly call "culture". It is not culture but social practice, and usually bad practice at that. We should stop using the term because people hide behind it: "Oh, it is their culture". Does it make it all right that you beat your wife every weekend because it is your culture? No. We have to start thinking about the person, not about so-called culture. Culture is usually something good, not something as appalling as what happens to women.

DfID has always said that it supports women and girls, never that it supports widows, women and girls. In a way that is right because widows are women, but in another way they have more to bear than other women. Perhaps one day DfID will be able to separate out groups of women. There are so many groups: for example, there are the girls who are taken to temples in southern India. They are there for the use of the people who come to pray and the priests. What kind of world is it for that to happen in a place of worship? It is not possible to take these things in. The girls are called devdases, the acolytes of the gods—well, some gods.

We need to be thinking all the time about women. At conferences they talk and talk but sometimes they never even mention the "w" word; they do not say anything about women. It is an uncomfortable subject and they just talk around it. I am so pleased that today there are so many men speaking. Quite often in a debate like this, you have one or two men and all the other speakers are women. So thank you, gentlemen, noble Lords, for speaking in this debate, and again I thank the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for tabling it.

5.09 pm

Lord Stunell (LD): I start by declaring what is not a formal interest but, until March this year, I was a governor of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which is largely funded by the FCO and DfID, and some of my remarks bear on its funding and work.

I welcome this debate and the opportunity to participate in it. I thank my noble friend Lord Loomba for it, and go further and thank him sincerely for the work he has invested in the Loomba Foundation over the years, first in India and then throughout the world. It is largely down to him that International Widows' Day was declared by the UN General Assembly in 2010; the work of his foundation led to that. He called for today's debate, and we have heard some passionate, heartfelt and well-informed contributions. Even those of us who have had concern for development for many years have perhaps missed the significant and often terrifying hardships faced by widows throughout the world, particularly in conflict zones but, as the noble Baroness, Lady Flather, reminded us, also in places where custom and bad social practice—I had intended to use the word "culture", but she has taught me something already—horribly magnify the impact of widowhood on the individual, as well as on their children and the society in which they live. My renewed thanks to my noble friend and his foundation, which published its report to coincide with International Widows' Day, which did not work too well in the United Kingdom this year, because it was 23 June, when other events were taking place.

We have already heard some of the appalling statistics, with the important qualification in the House of Lords briefing that all the figures in the report are almost certainly serious underestimates of the actual problem. Shocking as those figures are, and wake-up call as they undoubtedly give us, they are letting us off a little lightly: the real situation is even worse than the Loomba Foundation's report sets out.

I first worked on a refugee resettlement programme more than 50 years ago, in 1959. It was World Refugee Year, something lost in the midst of history, but at the time in western Europe there were 1 million refugees still living in camps following the end of the Second World War, mostly huts and ex-barracks in Germany. They largely consisted of German diaspora who had been expelled from countries in eastern Europe as the Soviet army advanced, where people had no intention whatever of provoking a future German Government to rescue them. World Refugee Year was a start to tackle that backlog of refugees in western Europe. It took more than five years to finish the task of rehousing and resettlement, and people's circumstances could be complex.

I worked with a small team to help a widow in Austria to build her new house a couple of years later in 1961—16 years after the war. For 16 years, she had lived in a hut in Austria, waiting for something to happen, and it was our task to help her to build her house. She had been born before World War I in Hungary, in a German-speaking community. In 1919, her village was incorporated into the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but she did not get Yugoslavian citizenship because she was a German-speaker. In 1945 she was expelled from Yugoslavia and finished up in Austria. So, was she Hungarian, Yugoslav, German or Austrian? It is a reminder that, then and now, we cannot fit refugees into neat bureaucratic boxes. What they need is not the correctly shaped bureaucratic box, but safety, security and a home.

[LORD STUNELL]

A UNHCR representative in Austria said in 1960 that,

“nothing is easier than considering the refugees after a while as a pest or as troublesome aliens. In reality they are neither heroes nor inferior individuals. They are quite ordinary people like everybody else, but they are living in extraordinary conditions”.

Catastrophically, 50 years on, the flow of refugees continues: from the Middle East, from Sub-Saharan Africa, and even in Europe from Ukraine, and certainly into Europe from all of the above, and others as well. In as much as those tragic exiles get noticed, it is now almost universally in the United Kingdom in a hostile, suspicious and demeaning tone—too often, I have to say, led on by journalists and newspapers that certainly ought to know better. The *Daily Mail*, having fought against the admission of Jewish refugees in the 1930s on the grounds of their religion, their doubtful loyalty and their alien lifestyle, has learned nothing. Now, it opposes the admission of Muslim refugees on exactly the same spurious grounds of doubtful loyalty, religion and alien lifestyle.

Just occasionally, a particularly horrific and photogenic tragedy opens a brief window of understanding and charity. The dreadful sight of three year-old Aylan Kurdi, drowned in the surf, did at least at last produce a reluctant, miserly agreement to admit 3,000 unaccompanied children. What grudging, slow progress has since been made on meeting that commitment. The noble Lord, Lord Loomba, starkly reminded us today that it is not just the photogenic children who merit and desperately need our help and who will die without it, but the girls and women—and in particular, the widows, who are always left at the bottom of the pile and ignored.

It would not be right in a debate such as this to overlook the United Kingdom’s leading role in international development. I, for one, was pleased to hear the new Secretary of State for International Development coming to terms in her remarks earlier this week with the utility and effectiveness of the work her department does. I hope that in due course we shall see her showing all the enthusiasm of a new convert to the way her department projects the United Kingdom’s soft power around the world: its contribution to poverty reduction, to children’s education, to disease elimination and, most relevant to this debate, to promoting gender equality and tackling HIV/AIDS around the developing world. In the meantime, I notice that, in a nod to the *Daily Mail*, she has expressed the view that too much development aid is “stolen or wasted”.

At the other end of the building I spent two years on the House of Commons Select Committee for International Development under the chairmanship of my noble friend Lord Bruce of Bennachie. I mention briefly a visit that we made to Zimbabwe in 2010. It is a well-kept secret that the British Government are the largest donor of international aid within Zimbabwe. I do not think that our Government particularly want to let people know that, and the Zimbabwean Government certainly do not want people to know that. None of that money is spent via funding of government institutions or through government services in Zimbabwe. It is all channelled through NGOs.

I wanted to mention one particular visit that we made while in Zimbabwe. As ever with Select Committee visits, it was designed to see whether the projects were value for money and were being properly run and administered, whether the objects for which they had been set up were being fulfilled, and to give a report to the House of Commons with recommendations. We visited a particular project—an allotment in a field belonging to a widow. It had a fence with a vegetable garden, and the paths between the vegetable beds were surprisingly wide. That turned out to be so that she could get round her allotment in her wheelchair. She is a disabled widow, and we were brought in to see this project. United Kingdom taxpayers had paid for the wheelchair, which seemed like a pretty good investment to me. She was going round her vegetable garden with her wheelchair and looking after her ducks. The British taxpayer paid for six ducks. The ducks lay eggs, the eggs are sold at market and she has a cash flow. Occasionally, no doubt, duck appears on the table as well.

On the point about stealing and wastage, we did bring back some criticism. In Whitehall, they know how many wheelchairs and ducks they have supplied to Zimbabwe. Not a wheelchair is rolled, not a duck clucks, without them knowing in Whitehall. Our comment was that the degree of monitoring, auditing and evaluation was grossly over the top. It is a wheelchair and six ducks, for goodness sake! I hope that the Secretary of State will understand that good results and outcomes can be achieved with very modest inputs, and that to fret too much about a lost duck or a punctured wheelchair is not good value for money in itself.

I invite the Minister, in responding to the debate, to cast some light on the plans the Secretary of State set out earlier this week, and to give us some assurance that the reinvestment of overseas development aid from EU programmes which she prefigured will not only be directed to conflict prevention and poverty reduction projects, but will also pay particular attention to the needs of women and widows and their families, highlighted so starkly by the Loomba Foundation report and by the many well-informed and passionate contributions to this debate. I also remind her that her own department has already shown her how it can do that.

5.22 pm

Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab): My Lords, I pay tribute to the valuable work done by the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, on campaigning to raise awareness of widowhood in the developing world. It is thanks to him that we observe International Widows Day every 23 June in honour of his mother. I thank him for tabling this important and timely debate on human rights abuses and the number of widows in fragile states.

We have been treated to a wide variety of speeches on diverse subjects. I particularly thank my noble friend Lord Griffiths of Burry Port for reminding us of Haiti, as he did with great passion in his maiden speech when we both joined the House in 2004. There are pockets of problems that society so readily forgets about, and it is important that we are reminded. The overall theme today, however, has tended to be the plight of women, particularly widows. I congratulate

Lord Loomba on the work of the foundation and its concentration on widows. My wife is involved with a charity in Bangladesh which started off as an orphanage, until it discovered that the children were foundlings and that much the better solution was to keep the widows and children together and upskill the widows. They discovered, as I think the Loomba Foundation has, that by investing in the widows themselves and upskilling them, they got a much better outcome for the children.

I turn more directly to the subject. Research conducted by the World Bank indicates that there has been an increase in conflict-related deaths in many fragile states. In Yemen, in 2010, there were 175 battle-related deaths. This rose to 2,330 deaths in 2012, a thirteenfold increase. The Syrian conflict claimed almost 120,000 lives between 2011 and 2014. Conflicts worldwide have created instability that has displaced large numbers of people. The World Bank estimates that 60 million people are displaced around the world, the highest number since the Second World War.

It is sensible that we use the term “fragile state” rather than “failed state”. The former president of the British Academy, Professor Sir Adam Roberts, has highlighted that the term “failed state” carries a terminal sense and gives the impression that the situation cannot be rectified. The 2015 OECD report on fragile states looks at what constitutes a fragile state. According to this definition, fragility is determined based on five aspects of society: resilience, violence, justice, institutions and economic foundations. Countries that show significant weaknesses in all five areas are the most fragile. This includes countries such as Yemen and Sudan. It is important to note, however, that this creates a sliding scale where many lower-middle-income countries can also have elements of fragility to them. This method of assessment helps us to direct the right type of overseas aid to the right countries.

There is a strong link between the fragility of a state and the rate of human rights violations. When measuring state fragility, the Fund for Peace looks at the status of human rights as one of the criteria. It breaks human rights violations down to torture and executions as well as protections, such as press freedom, civil liberties and political freedom. The Fund for Peace ranks Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Yemen, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as fragile states with the worst human rights records. It should be remembered that a history of human rights violations does not always correlate with an otherwise fragile state, as is evident in countries such as Iran, North Korea and Egypt.

The Loomba Foundation has conducted valuable research on widows in the developing world and the foundation’s report from last year, *World Widows Report: A Critical Issue for the Sustainable Development Goals*, draws the important connection between improving the situation of widows and achieving SDGs. Specifically, the standing of widows can be linked to the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and children, and the reduction of poverty, as well as improving people’s life prospects. Among other pertinent points, the report mentions that marginalising widows by, for example, depriving them of their property,

can lead to children leaving education to care for their parents. This can have a detrimental effect on the levels of education in a country. Widows being deprived of their property is an issue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among other countries. Widows cannot own the land on which they farm, potentially leading to poverty.

I take this opportunity to highlight the important work done by the House of Lords Select Committee on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Its report was published in April this year and emphasised that sexual violence in conflict is a war crime. It undermines societies’ ability to build sustainable peace; it breaks communities, destroys families and ruins lives. The report highlights that widows are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence in conflict situations. It noted that, according to the Gender and Development Network, widows in Nepal faced high rates of sexual violence.

When looking at statistics on the number of widows published by the Loomba Foundation, it is striking that many fragile states that have experienced conflict have a higher proportion of widows as a proportion of the female marital age population when compared to the regional average. The percentage of widows in the Central African Republic is 7.6%, almost a percentage point higher than the regional average. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo the figure is 8.5%, almost two percentage points higher. The Loomba Foundation has indicated that the country with the highest proportion of widows is Afghanistan, with 21.3%. The foundation notes that it is difficult to obtain reliable data, but that figure gives a strong indication of the effects of decades of armed conflict. We can reliably assert that armed conflict results in an increased number of widows.

The Government’s strategy of deploying development aid has the aim of stabilising, “fragile and conflict-affected states”.

I was pleased to hear the noble Baroness, Lady Anelay, tell the House in July that the UK’s role in promoting stability overseas will be considered as part of both the strategic defence and security review as well as the national security strategy. The Department for International Development has published a number of case studies on helping widows in fragile states, but it would be useful if the department made firmer commitments to improving the standing of widows in the developing world. As the research I have cited earlier in my speech shows, the rights and standing of widows are directly linked to the stability of countries. Improving the rights of widows is also directly linked to improving the human rights situation as well as public health in fragile states.

Finally, I take this opportunity to highlight the problem of the UK selling arms to Saudi Arabia, which are then used in the ongoing conflict in Yemen. I understand that Ministers have raised this issue with Saudi Arabia, but highlighting it does not solve the problem of British-made weapons being used in another country to wage a war where international humanitarian law is being violated. I understand that a draft report on this—seen by “Newsnight”—produced by the Committees on Arms Export Controls indicated that it was highly likely that weapons had been used to violate international humanitarian and human rights

[LORD TUNNICLIFFE]

laws. The United Nations has estimated that at least 10,000 people have been killed in the conflict in Yemen. Clearly, it is now time for the UK Government to suspend arms sales to allow for a proper investigation into what appear to be serious breaches of international humanitarian law. Yemen is very much a fragile state and the ongoing conflict harms the situation of widows and leads to increasing human rights violations. Once again, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for introducing this debate and agree with him that we must focus on widows, because they give particular value where we improve their chances and up their life skills.

5.32 pm

Baroness Goldie (Con): My Lords, I also thank the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for securing a debate on this important issue, and I am aware that he has a distinguished record in relation to these very important matters. I welcome the contributions from noble Lords from all sides of the House because, as others have said, this has been a well-informed debate.

It is clear that conflict has a devastating effect on the lives of the most vulnerable. Violations and abuse disproportionately affect these groups, including widows. As the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, said, there is an invisible strain and stress—as I think he described it—which we must always be cognisant of. The United Kingdom Government are leading efforts to address these issues and to ensure that girls' and women's needs are reflected in international responses to conflict. This means ensuring that the differing needs and situations of women and girls are addressed, which also of course includes widows and female-headed households.

We are maintaining a focus on protection, while tackling the root causes of violence and inequality. We will ensure greater emphasis on empowerment, and increased voice, choice and control for women and girls. Recognising and supporting women and girls is vital throughout the conflict cycle. This means seeing them not only as survivors and beneficiaries, but as enablers and promoters of stability.

The meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes and decision-making in conflict settings is important for securing peace resolutions quickly and promoting stability. Through the women, peace and security agenda, the UK Government's ambition is to put women and girls at the centre of all our efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, promote peace and stability and prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

As mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Yemen have suffered particularly over 2016 as a result of conflict. They are all on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's human rights priority countries list and, as such, we monitor developments closely.

In Syria, we are working closely with NGOs and United Nations agencies to provide specialist assistance to those affected by sexual and gender-based violence. This includes clinical care, case management and counselling, reproductive healthcare and cash assistance to particularly vulnerable households. We are working

to ensure that all humanitarian programmes follow good practice and are sensitive to sexual and gender-based violence, child protection and the importance of women's participation.

In Iraq, through the Department for International Development, we have committed £129.5 million to the humanitarian effort to help those affected by Daesh. This support is reaching hundreds of thousands of people across the country, including the most vulnerable groups such as women and children. The United Kingdom also remains a key partner in supporting the implementation of the Iraqi national action plan on women, peace and security, and we are providing over £700,000 in funding.

In Afghanistan, UK efforts are focused on tackling violence against women, supporting women in terms of security and the police, and improving education and women's economic and political participation. For example, we are working to provide access to justice for over 30,000 girls and women survivors of violence, and providing response services.

In Sudan, the urgent need to tackle sexual and gender-based violence is a central part of our ongoing human rights dialogue with the Government of Sudan. UK-funded projects have provided legal, medical and psychosocial support for over 150 survivors of rape in Darfur, and contributed to the successful prosecution of members of the police and armed forces.

In Yemen, it is clear that the conflict has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. The incidence of gender-based violence has risen by 70% since the start of the conflict. Our humanitarian partners are working to ensure they meet the differing needs of women, men, boys and girls. We are also providing nutrition support to pregnant and lactating women, and cash assistance for vulnerable displaced women and female-headed households to access protection services. Politically, the UK is actively advocating for the inclusion of women in peace talks.

The UK Government are also committed to reaching all people, including widows, who are held back by poverty and exclusion. This promise to "Leave no one behind" was agreed as part of the new global goals framework at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. I am proud that the UK played a key role in securing international agreement to the stand-alone gender goal.

All widows should be protected by the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights treaties. However, as some contributors have indicated, in reality, interpretations of customary codes, as well as traditional mourning and burial rites, often deny widows many of their universally recognised rights. We are not only committed to promoting and protecting the rights of women, and those of particularly vulnerable groups such as widows and children, through our multilateral work with organisations such as the United Nations, but also bilaterally through diplomatic lobbying and development assistance.

We recognise that widows are not a homogenous group and face different challenges and forms of discrimination. We are therefore supporting them through

a mix of interventions. For example, in Uganda, we have provided targeted support to older widows through the senior citizens grant. In Bangladesh, through the chars livelihoods and economic empowerment of the poorest programmes, we have helped 96,303 extremely poor households headed by widows. These projects provide productive assets, cash grants for business enterprise, skills training, nutritional supplies and nutritional awareness. Some 85% of all of the households supported have been lifted out of extreme poverty.

The Government also have a large number of programmes that support marginalised and vulnerable children to access education. Notably, our support to the Girls' Education Challenge fund—£355 million between 2012 and 2016—is helping up to a million of the world's poorest girls improve their lives through education. DfID will continue this support and will provide education to a further 175,000 of the poorest, most marginalised girls in the world through a further £100 million three-year commitment in 2016-19.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for recognising the important contribution made by the former Foreign Secretary, William Hague, to ending sexual violence in conflict. My noble friend Lady Anelay continues to drive this important work, which remains a top UK priority. Over 17,000 military and police personnel have been trained on sexual violence issues, our team of experts has been deployed over 80 times and the United Kingdom has committed over £30 million in funding. In 2016, our primary focus is on tackling the stigma associated with sexual violence. Often, survivors are ostracised from their communities, shunned by their families, denied justice and cut off from support networks, all of which the Loomba Foundation's 2015 report on widows recognised. We want to challenge negative attitudes and misunderstandings that cause further suffering to survivors as well as the attitudes and prejudices towards children born as a result of rape.

Having given this insight into our approach, I will address some of the specific issues raised by contributors to the debate. The noble Lord, Lord Loomba, raised the important issue of the general fragility of states and the conflict with human rights. He set the tone for the debate and I thank him for doing that in a constructive way.

The noble Lord, Lord Griffiths, was understandably concerned about Haiti—we sympathise—and in particular the consequence of the earthquake. The UK Government provided over £20 million of support in response to the earthquake and we hope that that provided some meaningful help there.

The noble Baroness, Lady Miller, raised two important issues. She spoke of the removal of educational opportunities for children and asked in particular about refugee children. She also raised an interesting illustration of how we provide education in our own schools. I was much struck by the example she gave, and I am sure that that has been noted with interest. On child refugees and education, DfID has a £10 million Refugee Children Fund to protect children most vulnerable to exploitation, and between 2011 and 2015, the UK supported 11 million children in primary and lower secondary school and 7.5 million in countries considered

fragile. On Syrian refugees, we have provided £240 million for education in Jordan and Lebanon over the next few years, on top of £115 million already provided to give every child in the region access to education. UK Aid provided 920,000 children in Syria with psychosocial support and we have also provided 350,000 children in Lebanon with textbooks and have contributed £30 million to Education Cannot Wait, a new fund for education in emergencies. I hope that that reassures the noble Baroness that action is taking place.

I noticed that the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, had removed to what I thought was a warmer climatic zone in the far reaches of the Chamber. Earlier on, introducing one of our colleagues and clad in my robes, I thought I would expire with heatstroke, so I was relieved to find myself standing over an air conditioning vent somewhere in the vicinity of the noble Baroness, Lady Miller. However, I understand her reservations about the matter.

The noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, raised a number of important issues, not least complications in childbirth and the maternal mortality rate. I have already provided some general comment about that. She mentioned Sudan, and I hope that what I have been able to tell her about Sudan may address some of her concerns. She raised the very important and sensitive issue about availability of abortion. It is important that we respect that women and adolescent girls must have a right to make their own decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. Where access to safe abortion is highly restricted and maternal mortality and morbidity are high, we can help to make the consequences of unsafe abortion more widely understood and consider supporting processes of legal and policy reform. I realise that that may be a somewhat general response to the noble Baroness's comment, but she has raised an important issue and I am sure that it will be looked at with interest.

The noble Lord, Lord Hussain, referred in detail to the plight of vulnerable widows and orphans in Kashmir. He was anxious to know whether we had any contribution to make on some of the wider issues surrounding Kashmir. I have to clarify that the long-standing position of the United Kingdom is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting resolution to the situation in Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people. We do not consider that it is for the United Kingdom to prescribe a solution or to act as a mediator. We encourage both sides to maintain a positive dialogue but the pace and scope of that is for India and Pakistan to determine.

The noble Baroness, Lady Flather, made what I thought initially was going to be an encouraging contribution. I felt uplifted and slightly inspired when she talked very eloquently about the resilience and courage of women, but then, understandably, she gave us a fairly stark reminder of the continuing challenges. Her speech covered a wide canvas of issues and I hope that in my remarks I have been able to address some of the points that she raised.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, for acknowledging the UK's leading role in international development. He made a very interesting observation about the Zimbabwean allotment. That was a very uplifting example of what is possible when money is

[BARONESS GOLDIE]

provided. In that case, it was the UK providing money to fund both the wheelchair for the widow who owned the allotment and her stock-in-trade, which was ducks. It was a very interesting illustration of how, positively directed, such funding can have very important consequences. I thank him for raising that.

The noble Lord also specifically asked about the Secretary of State's plans on the general front of funding in relation to women and girls. Women and girls, including widows, will remain at the heart of our development aid. We will ensure that spending is focused on economic prosperity, security and stability, helping countries in the developing world leave their dependency behind. Aid spending is a means to an end; it is not an end in itself. Britain's role as a global leader means that we must use our influence to drive much-needed reform to the global aid system. However, as the noble Lord has seen and was good enough to acknowledge, the United Kingdom has a fairly proud record on these matters.

The noble Lord, Lord Tunnicliffe, raised some very interesting examples, particularly with reference to the Central African Republic and the percentages of widows in relation to areas of conflict. Again, that was a very stark reminder of what the issues are, how serious they are and how we are indebted to the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, and his foundation for keeping these constantly before us in such a cogent manner.

The noble Lord also raised the issue of UK arms to Saudi Arabia. The UK Government take their arms export responsibilities very seriously and operate one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria, taking account of all relevant factors at the time of the application. The key test for our continued arms exports to Saudi Arabia is whether there is a clear risk that those weapons might be used in the commission of a serious violation of law. Having regard to all the information available to us, we assess that that test has not been met.

I conclude by thanking noble Lords for their informed—

Baroness Tonge: Before the Minister makes her concluding remarks, may I ask whether she will write to me at some stage about the availability of abortion for women who want it who have been raped in conflict situations? It is a very particular situation. Under the Geneva Convention, they should be entitled to it. I did not expect the Minister to answer this afternoon, but if she could write I would be very grateful.

Baroness Goldie: I am happy to undertake to do that for the noble Baroness. I cannot provide her with the specific answer, but I can undertake to make the inquiry and see what information is forthcoming.

Lord Hussain: I asked two particular questions that I did not get answers to. First, will the British Government ask the Indian Government to give access to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which two days ago asked for free access to investigate human

rights violations and India refused? Will the Minister ask the Foreign Secretary to raise that with India to allow that access? My final question was with regard to the continued curfew orders in place for the last 68 days. All the schools, hospitals and colleges are shut and life is at a standstill. Can we ask that those curfew orders be lifted?

Baroness Goldie: I have a lot of sympathy with the noble Lord's concern. I can certainly make inquiries, but at the end of the day certain of these matters are outwith the control of the United Kingdom Government. I can certainly undertake to make inquiries on his behalf.

I conclude by thanking noble Lords for their thoughtful contributions. Widows are a particularly vulnerable group—alongside children, disabled people, women in general, people who are LGB or transsexual, and others—in conflict-affected and fragile states, and the international community has a responsibility to pay special attention to their needs. Far too many widows are still shut out of inheritance, land tenure, livelihood, a social safety net, health care or education. Far too many widows and their children must cope with not only grief at the loss of their husband or father but their own sudden loss of status and benefits in society. In places where a woman's status is linked to her husband, she may find herself suddenly shunned and isolated, and that quite simply is wrong.

At the same time, it is important to recognise the contribution of the world's widows, who raise families, run companies, sit in Parliament and play a full and active role in public life. We must continue work to promote and protect the rights and well-being of widows, and to help maximise the positive role they play in our societies and in our economies by removing discriminatory laws, policies and practices that impede widows from enjoying the dignity and equality they deserve.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, for his tireless work on behalf of widows through his foundation. All vulnerable groups should have a champion such as him.

5.53 pm

Lord Loomba: My Lords, I thank the Minister for her positive and very encouraging response. Many noble Lords have read the *World Widows Report 2015* and talked about it. I just want to say one thing about why I started this work. I actually grew up as a widow's son. I was only 10 years old when my father passed away and I saw the suffering and discrimination that my mother faced. She sacrificed all her comforts to educate her seven children, and I was educated in America. When she passed away, I set up this charity in her memory because I wanted to uplift the image of widows. They should not be treated in the way they have been treated.

Once again, I thank all noble Lords for participating in this debate, especially as it has been held quite late on the last day before the House rises. I look forward to working with the Government on these issues in the future.

Motion agreed.

House adjourned at 5.55 pm.