

Thank you and welcome everyone. This is indeed the first time that the major donors have jointly convened an event on the Rohingya refugee response. And I would add my thanks to our friend and partners the United States, our colleagues at the European Union and UNHCR as joint sponsors of this important donor conference.

More than three years since it began, keeping the Rohingya crisis on the international agenda remains absolutely vital. So too does finding a sustainable solution that enables the Rohingya community to return home safely, with dignity and voluntarily.

In this regard, I pay tribute to the resilience, courage and indeed tenacity of the Rohingya people. And I also want to add my voice and that of the United Kingdom to commend the generosity of the government and the people of Bangladesh for hosting the refugees in Cox's Bazar, particularly when one considers the impact on the local population and environment.

As part of our continued commitment, the United Kingdom, I am also today pleased to announce that the United Kingdom has allocated a further £37.5 million in new funding for the Rohingya response operation in Bangladesh.

This will help to sustain the humanitarian operation in Cox's Bazar. Indeed from the start of the crisis in August 2017, this brings our total commitment close to £300 million in Bangladesh. The additional funding will provide lifesaving help, reduce the impact of natural disasters and disease, and support the 860,000 refugees with food, with healthcare, water and sanitation, and importantly also care and counselling.

It will also support local communities. The Cox's Bazar district will receive development funding to further mitigate the economic and environmental impact that the Rohingya crisis and now indeed the COVID pandemic, COVID-19, is having on local communities.

We want to ensure that the international response benefits all of the district's population and a district level plan would help marshal further resources.

Therefore, we are also committing a further £10 million to help Bangladesh to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and natural disasters. Taking our total commitment of new announcements to £47.5 million. And indeed the new funding we've announced today is in addition to what we are already providing across Bangladesh, which totalled £241 million last year.

And we are also supporting 600,000 Rohingya who of course remain in Myanmar.

In conflict-affected Rakhine State, the United Kingdom has provided over £44 million to all communities since 2017. This includes over £25 million for the Rohingya communities for the purposes, importantly, of education, for nutrition, for water, health and sanitation and livelihoods support.

We all recognise that conflict exacerbates the challenges and indeed the discrimination faced by the Rohingya and other vulnerable communities in Rakhine. The Government of Myanmar must allow all communities equal access to healthcare and other essential services.

Holding the right piece of paper should not be the difference between life and death.

The United Nations and other humanitarian organisations must also be allowed unfettered access to Rakhine to provide lifesaving assistance.

And in addition, it is vital that we support those Rohingya elsewhere in the region, be they in India, in Indonesia, Malaysia or Thailand.

Wherever they are, the Rohingya community requires sustained help and funding. And I urge everyone attending or watching to donate generously.

Furthermore, the governments of Bangladesh and Indonesia have done some sterling work rescuing fleeing Rohingya stranded at sea. Yet this is not the sole responsibility of just a couple of countries; this crisis requires a regional solution.

The Rohingya people have suffered horrendous atrocities and are recognised as among the most vulnerable and oppressed in the world. Their voices must be heard and they, like everybody, should be free to lead safe and fulfilling lives.

We must also therefore strive to expedite the necessary conditions that will let the Rohingya return to Myanmar but they must do so voluntarily, with safety and security and with dignity.

In the meantime, providing education for Rohingya children and skills and livelihood opportunities for adults is essential. Otherwise we will lose a generation. This is also the best protection that we collectively can offer against domestic violence, criminality, and tensions between the refugee and host communities.

To conclude, the United Kingdom will continue to stand with the Rohingya people, it will continue to stand with Bangladesh and indeed other countries across the region who are hosting them.

And let me assure you, we will continue to do everything we can to continue to protect and support the Rohingya community and work towards sustainable returns, whilst also assisting Bangladesh and other host governments in supporting the Rohingya community.

This is what we mean when we say we see the United Kingdom to be a global force for good. And we all should recognise this is a human rights crisis, it's a human rights tragedy and it requires all of us to put our shoulder to the wheel and bring an end to the plight and suffering of the Rohingya community which has gone on for far too long. Thank you.