



HOUSE OF LORDS

International
Relations
Committee



The House of Lords is an essential part of the UK Parliament. Its committees investigate public policy, proposed laws and government activity. The remit of the International Relations Committee is ‘to consider the United Kingdom’s international relations’.

Background and role

Why it was set up

The committee was reappointed on 27 June 2017 to consider the United Kingdom’s international relations. The appointment of the committee followed a recommendation from the House of Lords Liaison Committee in its October 2015 report, which was agreed by the House in November 2015.

What it does

It investigates public policy areas related to international relations.

How it does its work

The committee decides subjects to investigate and takes evidence from individuals, organisations and government ministers to gather material for its reports. Using the evidence gathered, the reports provide analyses of the issues and make recommendations to government and others for change.



See all International Relations Committee reports at www.parliament.uk/hlcommittees

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Membership

The committee benefits from the experience of its 12 members with backgrounds in foreign affairs, industry, politics and academia.

Members

Lord Howell of Guildford (Chairman)

Former secretary of state for transport and energy and former minister of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Lord Balfé

Former MEP

Baroness Coussins

Adviser on corporate responsibility

Lord Grocott

Former MP and former chief whip in the House of Lords

Lord Hannay of Chiswick

Former ambassador to the UN and EU

Baroness Helic

Former senior special adviser to the foreign secretary

Baroness Hilton of Eggardon

Former commander of the Metropolitan Police

Lord Jopling

Former minister of state
(Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)

Lord Purvis of Tweed

Former MSP

Lord Reid of Cardowan

Former home secretary

Baroness Smith of Newnham

Academic (European politics)

Lord Wood of Anfield

Former special adviser to 10 Downing Street and former leader of the opposition



International Relations Committee chairman
Lord Howell

Investigations and reports

Middle East

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is undergoing a period of revolutionary change. A transformation of power is catalysing radical changes to the order and organisation of the region. It is challenging to forecast how the region might evolve, but it is likely to be unstable, involve high levels of violence, and constitute an ongoing challenge to policy makers. They will have to be prepared to take account of power structures, outside the traditional ones of governments.

Reshaping policy

'The Middle East: Time for New Realism' was published in May 2017 after evidence was taken from a range of international and UK-based witnesses. It explores the transformation of power, which is disrupting the whole region, and calls for a reshaping of UK policy.

It recommends that the UK should recognise there can no longer be automatic reliance on American leadership, or the direction of its policy. It also says the UK should work on rapprochement with Iran following the nuclear deal and that relying on Saudi assurances about their use of UK arms exports is not adequate.



The report explores:

- the transformed context of the region
- British policy positions
- transformative shifts in social change, communications and demography
- role of external powers
- evolution of Middle East states
- power beyond the state
- trade and economic policy
- future British policy requirements and trends.

UK priorities for the new UN Secretary-General

The International Relations Committee investigated the priorities, from the point of view of the UK's interests, for the new Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres.

In 'The UK and the UN: Priorities for the New Secretary-General', published in November 2016, it finds that the UK will have to build fresh alliances with European states and demonstrate continued value as a permanent member of the UN Security Council after Brexit.

Challenges ahead

The UN is the indispensable forum for addressing and resolving the great global issues of our times. As the UK plans its EU exit, its value and relevance are more important than ever.

Yet the UN is operating in a world transformed by a revolution in communications and connectivity, filled with unprecedented threats, violence and human suffering. A new injection of organisational vigour and leadership is needed to meet these formidable challenges.

Main items in the in-tray

The committee recognises that a new Secretary-General alone cannot achieve change on the scale needed, and some aspects of reform remain outside his powers. But, he can identify priorities, invigorate the agents of change and set overall tone and vision.

The report sets out both immediate issues and longer term goals for António Guterres. Priorities include:

- institutional reforms to overcome the fragmentation and incoherence of the past and position the UN to face new conditions
- upgrading of UN peacekeeping operations, including preparation and resourcing
- forging a new global consensus on handling the volume of refugees and migrant movements worldwide
- commitments on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement.

The report concludes with a chapter on the UK and the UN, the consequences of Brexit and the best ways in which the UK can build on partnerships to uphold the effectiveness of the UN in the 21st century.



Find out more

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House of Lords Communications

 0800 223 0855 (freephone) or 020 7219 3107
Textphone 18001 020 7219 3107

@ hinfo@parliament.uk

 House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

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Contact the International Relations Committee

 020 7219 7412

@ hlintrelations@parliament.uk

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