

UN Human Rights Council 61: UK Explanation of Vote for the draft resolution on unilateral coercive measures

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UK Explanation of Vote for the draft resolution on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. Delivered by UK Human Rights Ambassador, Eleanor Sanders.

Mr President,

The debate on so-called unilateral coercive measures is at risk of going nowhere.

When every autonomous measure is described as unlawful or coercive, the distinction between lawful accountability tools and genuinely abusive practices disappears. That may be politically convenient for some, but it does not advance human rights.

The United Kingdom is clear about what it does — and what it does not do.

UK sanctions are lawful, targeted and transparent. They operate within our jurisdiction, include due-process safeguards and access to legal challenge, and are used to respond to serious violations of international law, particularly when the Security Council cannot act. They are not designed to punish populations, and they are implemented with humanitarian protections.

Those protections matter in practice. Humanitarian exemptions, general licences and sustained engagement to address overcompliance with both humanitarian actors and the financial sector are fundamental to the UK's approach.

The difficulty with this resolution is not that it raises humanitarian concerns. It is that it treats fundamentally different State practices as though they were the same. That replaces analysis with accusation and weakens this Council's authority.

The focus must shift from politicised labels to changing outcomes on the ground, and recognition that legal, proportionate, and transparent measures with humanitarian safeguards and accountability can make a positive contribution to that.

For these reasons the UK will vote against this resolution.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-61-uk-explanation-of-vote-for-the-draft-resolution-on-unilateral-coercive-measures>