We must step up efforts together to safeguard international waterways from disruption: UK statement at the UN Security Council

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Statement by Steven Doughty MP, Minister of State for Europe, North America, and the Overseas Territories, at the UN Security Council Meeting on the safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain.

Thank you to Bahrain for bringing us together and for your leadership in this Council.

That leadership is more important than ever, in the face of growing threats to maritime and indeed regional security from the Black Sea to the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea to the Strait of Hormuz, or indeed globally, as pointed out from the Russian shadow fleet.

With reckless attacks and actions putting security and prosperity at risk, we must step up efforts together to safeguard international waterways from disruption, to protect mariners who find themselves in dangerous waters, are denied passage and put at risk, and stand up for all of those most affected, including some of the world’s most vulnerable people, particularly when it comes to food security or supplies of critical products and medicines.

The United Kingdom, with its long history as a seafaring nation, has long been committed to maritime security.

And I say that also as a Member of Parliament for the diverse port city of Cardiff, with a proud merchant marine tradition and heritage throughout history. I am particularly glad to join Bahrain and this Council in that effort today.

The most pressing issue, of course, before us is the Strait of Hormuz.

This crisis is not just affecting international shipping, it is driving up costs and sending shockwaves throughout energy markets and supply chains far beyond the region with impact for all of our citizens, our communities and their cost of living.

So, we must get the Strait reopened fully and unconditionally.

Freedom of navigation must be restored, in line with international law. Shipping and seafarers must not be used as leverage, and there is no place for tolls or permissions in international straits.

Freedom of navigation means navigation must be free.

Throughout this crisis, the UK has been clear: Iran must not be able to hold the global economy hostage or indeed threaten regional and international security.

That is why we need renewed action to protect supply chains, uphold freedom of navigation, and the primacy of UNCLOS.

We must also broaden collaboration within the International Maritime Organisation, which, of course, the UK is proud to host.

That is exactly how the UK has been approaching these critical challenges.

In early April, my colleague, the Foreign Secretary, convened more than 40 countries to coordinate action on the Strait of Hormuz.

And on the 17th, she supported Prime Minister Keir Starmer and President Macron in convening over 50 nations to work on getting the Strait open and protecting vessels.

In recent days, she has engaged in meetings across multiple countries with a dozen Foreign Ministers.

And yesterday, our Prime Minister Keir Starmer and President Trump discussed the urgent need to get shipping moving again.

So, the UK will continue to play its part, and this Council has a vital role to play.

That is why, with 135 others, we welcomed Resolution 2817, led by Bahrain and the GCC, condemning Iran's reckless and unacceptable attacks against regional neighbours, and its disruption of international trade, energy security, and the economies of all of us.

We are grateful for Bahrain's efforts to pass a further resolution, underscoring the importance of protecting navigational rights and freedoms.

It is regrettable that Russia and China vetoed this resolution, protecting Iran.

Therefore, the UK will continue to work with Bahrain, Council members and partners to uphold international law, defend freedom of navigation, protect innocent seafarers, and keep our international sea lanes open and secure.

Because global stability depends on us stepping up, together, and we welcome this discussion.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-must-step-up-efforts-together-to-safeguard-international-waterways-from-disruption-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council