



Mr Chair,

I would like to start by thanking Deputy Secretary General for introducing this segment on the rule of law activities at the national and international levels. We also thank the Secretary General for his report on ‘strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities.’

The United Kingdom is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We believe that these are the absolute foundations on which open, stable and prosperous societies thrive. The United Kingdom promotes and defends democracy, human rights and the rule of law through membership of international organisations, including the Commonwealth, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, and through a range of activities at both the national and international levels.

As we noted in our statement last year, the Covid-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented threat to rule of law. It has challenged all legal systems to find new ways to ensure access to justice and dispute resolution continues in unprecedented circumstances. The UK and other countries have been able to respond positively to this challenge by embracing widespread adoption of technology to support virtual hearings in the courts and tribunals. Sadly we also note in many countries Covid-19 has been used as a pretext for increasing pressure on those who defend the rule of law, including human rights defenders, journalists and legal practitioners.

As the pandemic continued, we saw some countries introduce legislative measures which limit the rights of individuals and restrict access to justice and fair trials. Such restrictions went beyond providing a safe environment for those accessing their justice systems.

In countries where this has happened, the relationships between governments and citizens were therefore damaged. The confidence in the rule of law, to varying degrees, was eroded, in most cases by the very institutions intended to



Finally, we also have the challenge of incorporating lessons learnt during the pandemic. We should continue to apply them to deliver maximum benefit with a hybrid approach in strengthening the rule of law, and not reverting to the pre-covid norms. A combination of in-person and remote co-operation will as a result, reach those who need access to justice, further and faster.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom has been a strong partner in support of Ukraine and in

We look forward to the developments in these committee discussions, the Secretary General's continued efforts in promoting the rule of law and his new vision on the rule of law.