

View from the House

All the political parties use the conference recess time to meet their members and supporters across the UK. Labour has recently been using venues beyond the traditional seaside resorts and this year we returned to Liverpool. I and other West Midlands MPs are banging the drum for Birmingham to be a future host.

HM Opposition Labour Party has re-elected Jeremy Corbyn MP as the Leader and the Government's party have a new leader and PM addressing their conference - something which was not expected following the referendum vote.

It is timely that the new prime minister will be in Birmingham this week having suggested that she will soon make a decision on the Heathrow or Gatwick expansion and give MPs a free vote. In my view the environmental cost alone should rule out Heathrow expansion. I hope she is persuaded whilst in Birmingham that investment in Birmingham Airport would provide a much needed economic boost to apprentices, jobs and the economy in the West Midlands and help rebalance the national economy away from over-investment in London and the South-East. And Birmingham's bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2026 would also boost Walsall. I wholeheartedly support Birmingham in their bid and I hope you will join me.

I was saddened to read of reports that two hospitals administered by Medicin Sans Frontiers were attacked in Aleppo, Syria. One of the principles of International Humanitarian law is to protect people not taking part in hostilities. Medics and health care workers should be safe under international law but many have been killed looking after the injured. Whilst the US is in talks with Russia, the Russians have continued the assault on Aleppo. The United Nations will have to do more than consider options; the UN needs to take action now to prevent as they put it a "humanitarian catastrophe" unlike anything seen so far. Unless the war is ended, the refugee crisis will continue as people flee war zones from the Middle East to Europe.

When I am asked how conflict ends, I usually cite the peace that was won in Northern Ireland which now has its own Assembly despite seemingly intractable positions. It is possible to build peace just as been achieved in Columbia after 50 years of war, over 220,000 dead, 5 million people displaced and 4 years of hard negotiation. The Columbian people's views on their peace deal seem divided. They should seize peace.

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