Thank you Mr President

I would like to thank Mr Kial for his visit, his report and express our strong support for his mandate.

The UK takes very seriously the rights of freedom of assembly and association. We are confident that our legislation fully meets our international human rights commitments whilst allowing police to make operational decisions, independent of Government, to facilitate peaceful protest and ensure public safety and security.

As such we welcome Mr Kial’s recognition of the UK as a country where the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association are widely exercised and we will certainly give due consideration to the recommendations in his report.

Our detailed response to his report is on OHCHR’s website, but allow me now to touch on the main areas he considers.

The Special Rapporteur called for an enquiry into the under-cover policing case involving Mark Kennedy and recommended a tighter definition of ‘domestic extremism’.

We will ensure the police have a definition of ‘domestic extremism’ which gives them necessary clarity to continue to do their job effectively.

On undercover policing, an investigation called Operation Herne, should be allowed to run its course, including any criminal prosecutions or misconduct proceedings. If there remain legitimate unanswered questions, we will consider whether it is appropriate to hold some form of inquiry. However, the Government does not consider that recent cases demonstrate that a fundamental review of the legislative framework is necessary.
The Special Rapporteur raised some concerns about the **police use of force**. The Government has worked with the police to ensure that they comply with their human rights commitments. For example, a document is given to all officers during training and immediately before any operational public order deployment to remind them of their legal responsibility to use appropriate and proportionate force.

Furthermore, the newly formed College of Policing will ensure that all forces operate to the highest professional standards.

We agree with Mr Kiai that public confidence in the **police complaints system** is vital. Oversight and scrutiny of the police exists in the form of the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary. I would like to note that a 2011 Commission survey found that 85% of people thought a complaint against the police would be treated fairly.

We also agree with Mr Kiai that the Commission’s capacity to deal with the most serious cases needs to be increased. That is why the Home Secretary announced on 12 February 2013 the intention to expand the Commission to deal with all serious and sensitive allegations.

Turning to **parades and processions**. Legislation does enable the police to impose conditions on the holding of processions which may lead to serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to life of the community. But I wish to stress that the police must consider Human Rights implications stemming from domestic case law, the European Convention on Human Rights and that their action is necessary and proportionate in all the circumstances.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur’s positive remarks on the nature of parades, the dialogue between different bodies and the role of the police in **Scotland**.
In Northern Ireland, Mr Kiar warns against blanket bans on public processions and meetings. Allow me to stress that Police Service of Northern Ireland have to date never sought to ban an open-air public meeting. Consideration would only be given to doing so in the most extreme circumstances and in accordance with our domestic and international legal obligations.

We acknowledge comments that the Northern Ireland Parades Commission may not enjoy full support across the community however we would stress that the Commission continues to have the full support of Government and it remains the only body with the authority to regulate on parades. It is ultimately in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland to find a locally agreed solution to the issue of parading and we continue to urge all of those with influence to continue to work towards this.

Finally Mr President

We welcome the SR’s positive comments about freedom of association enjoyed by the vibrant and flourishing civil society sector in the UK.

Allow me to mention that even though there is no express right to strike under British law, strike action is protected and employees who take part in official strike action are protected from dismissal.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Special Rapporteur of the UK’s continuous support for his mandate and wish to thank him again for his visit and report.