

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Lords Written Answers

NHS: Drugs

Baroness Tonge [HL5277] To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the total cost to the NHS of purchasing generic drugs from the Israeli pharmaceutical company Teva in the last financial year.

Lord O'Shaughnessy: Information on the cost of generic drugs supplied by Teva is not collected centrally but supplies from Israeli company Teva represent a significant and important part of National Health Service medicines provision. We estimate that the total reimbursement cost of these medicines dispensed in the community may be in the region of £0.5 billion. This does not take account of the margin that pharmacies earn on the medicines they dispense. This margin is subsequently taken into account as contributing towards the target level of funding for community pharmacy as part of the community pharmacy contractual framework.

Israel plays an important role in helping supply medicines for the NHS. Some 100 million prescription items for medicines used in the community in England are estimated to come from companies based in Israel. Teva also funds clinical development in the United Kingdom, including research into dementia.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-06/HL5277/>

Gaza: Egypt

Lord Hylton [HL5212] To ask Her Majesty's Government what efforts they are making to ensure the re-opening the Rafah Crossing in Gaza, at least for medical cases; and what means of international verification of its re-opening are available.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We continue to call on the government of Egypt to show maximum flexibility in opening the Rafah Crossing into Gaza to help facilitate travel in and out of Gaza. We are concerned about the closure of the Rafah crossing and its impact, particularly on urgent medical and other priority cases in Gaza. The crossing has been mostly closed since October 2014.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-03/HL5212/>

Gaza

Lord Hylton [HL5213] To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the report

published by the UN Conference on Trade and Development on 1 September 2015, what international planning, if any, is underway to prevent the Gaza Strip becoming uninhabitable by 2020.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK remains deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza and the report's warning that Gaza could become uninhabitable by 2020. UK aid has supported economic development, provision of basic services, and enabled reconstruction through support to the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. However, as the report makes clear, aid alone cannot solve the problems in Gaza. We welcome Israel's decision in 2015 to increase the water supply to Gaza, as well as other commitments which permit the construction of essential energy infrastructure. Improvements in energy and water provision are essential to improve the daily lives of the people living in Gaza. The UK Government frequently stresses to both parties the importance that these commitments are implemented quickly, and continues to press for a sustainable political solution for Gaza which will address Israel's legitimate security concerns whilst opening up movement and access.

The UK remains committed to supporting vulnerable Gazans. Our support includes humanitarian work such as funding for basic service delivery and development programming such as working with the private sector. The Programme Examination being conducted by the UK Government will confirm the best mix of programmes going forwards, while ensuring maximum impact and value for money for the UK taxpayer.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-03/HL5213/>

The report referred to above can be read at

http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tdb62d3_en.pdf

United Nations

Secretary-General, in Message to Palestinian Rights Committee, Urges End to Occupation, Saying Political Horizon for Two-State Solution 'Slipping Away'

... This year Palestinians will enter the sixth decade of occupation. A political horizon towards a two-State solution is slipping away. Meanwhile, in Gaza, Palestinians are subjected to stifling closures.

The parties and the international community must act to establish an environment that is conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations and that will advance our common goal: an end to the occupation that began in 1967, and the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition with the State of Israel. The United Nations will continue to strongly support this process.

The recent announcement by the Palestinian Government to hold municipal elections throughout the country on 31 May, if they can take place both in Gaza and the West Bank, should present an opportunity to renew the democratic legitimacy of the Palestinian leadership and institutions.

I encourage all to participate in these elections. The formation of a single, legitimate, inclusive Palestinian Government, on the basis of the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] principles would greatly contribute to advancing the Palestinian cause. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sgsm18441.doc.htm>

Special Coordinator Urges Israel, Palestinians to Contemplate Future Carefully amid Extremism, Displacement in Middle East.

... "The two-State solution remains the only way to achieve the legitimate national

aspirations of both peoples,” Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov emphasized as he briefed the 15-nation Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. ... he suggest[ed] that Israel could stop constructing and expanding settlements to preserve that prospect, while the Palestinian leadership could tackle the challenges of violence and incitement on their side.

Although the leaders of both sides agreed on the need to continue security cooperation, there was increasing anger on the streets, he said, pointing out that radical views were hijacking the discourse as moderate voices were increasingly vilified and cast aside. ...

However, today’s unilateral actions were returning the parties to a high-stakes collision course, he said, noting that Israel’s parliament had adopted the so-called “Regularisation Law” ... which would allow the use of privately owned Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank for the construction of Israeli settlements without the owners’ consent. ...

While welcoming the Palestinian decision to hold the postponed local elections, he took note with regret that Hamas had rejected that decision. ...

Turning to the Gaza Strip, he cautioned that the situation there was not sustainable unless the pressing needs of its people were addressed more systematically, and another escalation was likely. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12720.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

Assisted Dying Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/culturalpropertyarmedconflicts.html>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/promotionofisraelipalestinianpeaceunitedkingdomparticipation.html>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes today**

Consolidation and revision of the school governance regulatory framework in Wales (closing date 17 February 2017)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/consolidation-and-revision-school-governance-regulatory-framework-wales>

**** closes in 4 days**

Measurement framework for equality and human rights (closing date 21 February 2017)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-measurement-framework/measurement-framework-consultation>

Racism at work (closing date 27 February 2017)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RacismAtWork>

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland) (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

The UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process (closing date 30 March 2017)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/middle-east-peace-process-inquiry-16-17/>

Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/wtucdiversity>

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