

Answer of Under Secretary Merron to questions of MP Lidington and of Minister of State Lord Malloch on questions of Lord Avebury

1. UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the UK plans to (a) sign and (b) ratify the UN Convention on Enforced Disappearances; and if he will make a statement. [263171]

Gillian Merron: The Government are currently examining the potential impact of the UN Convention against Enforced Disappearance on the law of the UK. In particular, lawyers are analysing the extent to which common law provisions may need to be replicated in statute law, and the introduction of one or more specific criminal offences.

If the Government decide to ratify the convention, these changes to the law would require primary legislation, which would be introduced when parliamentary time allowed. Decisions would also need to be taken in due course on whether the UK required any reservations or declarations upon ratification. These are complex issues requiring further consideration and analysis which will take some time to complete.

Asked by Lord Avebury

To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the Written Answer by Lord Malloch-Brown on 14 November 2007 (WA 20), what progress has been made since that date in satisfying the conditions for ratification of the International Covenant for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; what conditions remain to be fulfilled; and how long it will take to fulfil each condition. [HL2226]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown): The Government are currently examining the potential impact of the convention against enforced disappearance on the law of the UK.

In particular, lawyers are analysing the extent to which common law provisions may need to be replicated in statute law, and the introduction of one or more specific criminal offences. If the Government decide to ratify the convention, these changes to the law would require primary legislation, which would be introduced when parliamentary time allowed. Decisions would also need to be taken in due course on whether the UK required any reservations or declarations upon ratification. These are complex issues requiring further consideration and analysis which will take some time to complete.

