

I have been asked to share with you a recent development in UK law which may be of interest. On the 29 April this year the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was given Royal Assent. This Act marks the culmination of a long process to enable UK law to extend to certain criminal acts committed by UK nationals or residents outside UK territory. The acts in question include rape, sexual assaults and other forms of non-consensual activity, as well as certain forms of harassment (including put in people in fear of violence and stalking). This is a significant change in the law for us, as our common law system has traditionally been reluctant to extend extra-territorial jurisdiction to UK nationals when they are overseas. This step has been taken primarily to enable the UK to ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against women and Domestic Violence. However the assertion of extraterritorial jurisdiction that Convention requires is broad enough to make this a potentially important tool to bring to justice any UK national or resident who commits relevant offences while serving or on mission for the UN.

It is of course not the whole answer as there remain complexities about gathering evidence and trying offences that are committed overseas. However it does open the possibility of prosecution for a much wider range of offences than was previously the case. And, of course to the extent that the criminal law acts as a deterrent, it may in itself dissuade some wrongdoing.

And if I could say we look forward to renewed discussion of this and other practical measures we can take to ending impunity for offending of this nature, when the Sixth Committee resumes its discussion of these issues, under the agenda item of the criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on Mission.