

400th Anniversary of the Mayflower

Mr Speaker, Madam Speaker, Lord Mayor, Your Excellencies, Congressman King, Congressman Holding, parliamentary colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to close today's proceedings on this auspicious occasion.

I am reassured by the fact that not even a global pandemic could stand in the way of two old friends, ensuring an anniversary is marked properly!

But as we do so, some watching our proceedings, may regard these commemorations as a nostalgic, or a sentimental backward look at the past – but I believe this would be a mistake.

Because while our commemorations certainly acknowledge the past, they also represent the opportunity to celebrate the enduring friendship between our two countries and importantly, allow us to look forward with confidence to what more we can achieve together.

Current UK-US partnership

Today's commemorations remind us of our two nations' inextricable links to each other. Indeed, the Mayflower story is as much about Plymouth in Devon as it is Plymouth, Massachusetts; as much about Billericay in Essex as it is Billerica, Massachusetts.

And this shared history has shaped our values, and our values have set the basis for our global outlook, which explains why we see the world, with both its challenges and opportunities, so similarly.

It is therefore no surprise that no other countries do more together than the United Kingdom and the United States. Indeed, as a joint citizen myself, born in the Empire State of New York, I can attest to that in person.

We are each other's closest allies and our shared understanding means we are able to offer the world truly global leadership on the big questions and significant challenges which we face today.

Next year the UK will chair the G7, as Speaker Pelosi said, and host the COP26 summit, providing us both with an ideal opportunity to demonstrate global leadership in action by boldly shaping the solutions to ongoing global challenges. We will work with our partners to ensure that the global free trading system on which our economies are based remains fair, competitive and secure.

As part of the UK's wider leadership, we will also continue to push for an end to disputes and tit-for-tat tariffs between trading partners. Instead of escalating, we need to work together towards swift negotiated settlement.

Whether this be the climate crisis, terrorism, or rising trade tensions, the lessons of history could not be clearer – the answers to the big questions,

however complex or difficult, are always found when the UK and US stand to shoulder-shoulder.

Northern Ireland

Within that context, we are reminded of the pivotal and constructive role played by the United States in the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Securing the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, and the consent of both communities in Northern Ireland, should never be taken for granted, and the UK looks forward to continuing to build on the momentous developments of this process, all well as protecting Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom.

And it is these commitments which explain why in no circumstances could we ever allow a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

UK-US Trade

With today's anniversary in mind, we should not forget that aside from those seeking to escape religious persecution, passengers onboard the Mayflower also included tradesman, clearly aware of the commercial opportunities between the Old World and the New.

400 years later, we can clearly see the fruits of this early entrepreneurial spirit – today the US is the UK's largest single trading partner, with total trade in 2019 reaching over £232bn, approximately \$300 billion.

Every day, a million Britons turn up to work for American-owned companies; and, every day, a million Americans turn up to work for British-owned companies.

We have more than \$1 trillion invested in each other's economies creating high-skilled jobs and economic growth.

And before the onset of the pandemic, this was an economic picture that was booming with total trade between us growing 11.3% in 2019.

With both our countries now committing to 'build back better', we are confident these figures can return to pre-pandemic levels and reach new heights.

UK-US FTA

It remains the case however, that despite our historical and cultural ties, and ever-growing trading relationship, our two countries do not have a formal trade agreement.

The UK would be the largest economy with which the US has ever signed a comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement.

Our analysis shows that an ambitious FTA could increase GDP in the US alone

by approximately \$10 billion.

And as impressive as that figure is, we should not forget it would represent the cumulative product of the expertise and enterprise of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.

Indeed, this deal would unlock the potential of our small and medium size businesses who stand to gain the most from this FTA.

It would be a win for the High Street as well as Main Street...

A win for consumers, with a wider range of affordable products potentially meaning more 'bang for their buck' or being 'quids in' depending on which side of the Atlantic they shop!

An FTA between us would not only enhance our partnership but also send a powerful signal that free trade and open supply chains lie at the heart of the global economic recovery from COVID-19.

We could set international standards on labour, make further strides on women's economic empowerment while ensuring we lead the world in the future of digital trade and the protection of intellectual property. It can also support our climate change objectives by promoting new job and business growth opportunities in low carbon technologies, services and systems.

And as Minister for Trade Policy, I have spoken to countless business men and women in many parts of the UK and the US, who are buoyed by the exciting opportunities of an Agreement.

I firmly believe that a UK-US FTA can be part of our work together to reassert global leadership and cooperation based around open economies and vibrant democracies.

Conclusion

As I conclude, I would like to return to the experience of those Pilgrims onboard the Mayflower 400 years ago.

It took considerable courage and fortitude for those pilgrims to board that ship, undertaking a perilous journey across the Atlantic to an unfamiliar land.

Plagued by disease and material hardship, it was only with the assistance, knowledge and experience of the Native Americans, that the Colony was able to survive.

While we regret the often painful history of relations between European settlers and Indigenous Americans, this experience serves as an important lesson for us – that through cooperation and the building of trusting relationships, combined with resilience and resourcefulness, we can achieve the most together, and with that, offer the most to the world. And I am delighted that so many of the commemorations taking place on both sides of the Atlantic this year and next involve at their heart participation from the

indigenous communities so impacted by the arrival of the Mayflower.

My sincere hope is that when generations to come commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Mayflower's voyage, they will recognise our generation as one which immeasurably strengthened the partnership between United Kingdom and United States, for the benefit and prosperity of our all peoples.