

Ashgabat hosts Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee celebrations: speech by Ambassador

Good evening guests, friends and colleagues! Welcome to those observing Ramadan. And a special welcome to our Guest of Honour, Mr Muhammetgeldi Serdarov, Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan. You are very welcome.

A particular warm welcome to those in the room tonight who have made the effort to join us despite the humanitarian crisis affecting their families, friends and homes in Ukraine – our thoughts are with you and thank you for joining us. The UK will continue to stand with you against the violence and aggression you are facing and hold those responsible to account.

Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate three important events. First, we are celebrating Her Majesty the Queen's 96th birthday. Second, we are celebrating Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. And third, we are celebrating 30 years of diplomatic relations between the UK and Turkmenistan. This follows Turkmenistan's celebration of 30 years of independence last year.

I'm delighted to say that tonight we are all at the first Queen's Birthday Party event in Central Asia for almost three years and at one of the first, if not the first, Queen's Birthday Party events anywhere in the world in this Jubilee year.

I'd like to start by saying a few words in honour of Her Majesty the Queen. She was born in April 1926, meaning she turns 96 next week and she was crowned Queen in 1952, meaning this year she marks 70 years on the throne. These 70 years have brought many opportunities and many challenges. When she became Queen, the world had just emerged from a global conflict and was led by figures including Churchill, Truman and Stalin.

During her reign, 14 British Prime Ministers and 14 US Presidents have taken office. During her reign, the world has witnessed the birth of space travel, the fall of the Berlin wall, the invention of mobile phones and the internet, world population rising from 2.5 to 8 billion people, the ending of some global health threats and the emerging of new ones and the certainty that serious action is needed to eliminate the existential threat of climate change.

Throughout Her Majesty has been a symbol of stability and continuity in a changing world. She has lived and worked by principles of service, duty and hard work, principles which those of us in public service strive to emulate. She is, quite rightly, taking on lighter duties at almost 96, something which I think we would all agree she deserves! I am glad you have been able to join

us to mark both her birthday and her Jubilee.

We are also here tonight to celebrate 30 years of diplomatic relations between the UK and Turkmenistan.

The UK and Turkmenistan's business and economy links have been a major part of our relationship over these 30 years. Our relationship is always developing and innovating. These days our focus is on the green economy.

When I met His Excellency Foreign Minister Mr Meredov in January, he asked the UK to be 'practical and active'. And so we have been. We are working actively to build links in the green economy – in hydrogen, in solar, in wind, in emissions capture and in more efficient use of water resources.

Practical and active defines our relationship. Shared principles also define our relationship. Both countries are strong supporters of the UN system. Both countries regularly express support for the principles of sovereignty and the importance of international law. Both countries have set out how investment in women and girls and in education will help create a better future for everyone.

That better future for everyone depends on us tackling climate change – together. In the UK we are experiencing climate change in yes – even more rain and yes – even heatwaves. Here in Turkmenistan hotter and drier summers, are making life more difficult for people, plants and animals. The UK will remain a steadfast partner of Turkmenistan in its work to tackle the causes and effects of climate change. And of course the UK was pleased to host His Excellency Mr Serdar Berdimuhamedov, now President, at the Glasgow Climate Change summit last November.

I would now like to turn to some thanks.

Many people who have worked very hard to put this Birthday Party on for you today.

I would ask you to put your hands together at the end of my speech for them.

Thank you to the wonderful work of the British Embassy team, all of whom have worked together to make tonight happen. You have done us proud.

Thank you to our sponsors, JCB, for supporting us to hold this event.

Thank you to Hypervision for providing the holograms.

Thank you to the Yyldyz team for looking after us tonight.

And thank you to the orchestra, conducted by Mr Rasul Klychev with Maysa Niyazova who are playing a great selection of British – as well as international – music.

Finally, let me propose two toasts.

I propose a toast to the health and success of the President, Government and People of Turkmenistan!

I propose a toast to the health and happiness of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II!

Thank you for your attention and now I would like to invite our guest of honour, His Excellency Mr Muhammetgeldi Serdarov, Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan to say a few words.