

Speech: Britain and France: Past, Present and Future

It is a great pleasure to be here in Paris this morning, in this historic setting.

This is – to use a little English understatement – an important moment in the future of the relationship between our countries.

There have been many such moments in the long sweep of our history, and we know, without a doubt, that there will be many more in the decades to come.

What matters is what we decide to do with those moments.

Those decisions fall to each generation.

To plot their own course and determine their destiny and that of their countries.

What is unique about the relationship between Britain and France is the extent to which those decisions, those destinies, have been, are, and will be, entwined.

That long history has, as we all know, had...let me put it diplomatically... its high and its lows.

And it is a relationship of competition and cooperation, similarity and difference.

Indeed my view is that it is precisely that mix which gives it its strength – because we have made a choice – for nearly 200 years – to work together.

And it is my contention that the relationship between our countries – born of shared geography, history and culture, and forged through joint struggle and sacrifice, is as important today as it has ever been; that our fortunes are as bound together as they have ever been; and that the case for the closest possible partnership between Britain and France is as strong as it has ever been.

But how that partnership evolves depends on the decisions we make now.

So today I want to look at things in the round – to consider our past, our present and our future – the future that, yes does mean getting Brexit right, but which goes beyond that and will be for the next generation to build.

The Past

But I want to start with the past.

This week – of all weeks – our shared past has particular resonance and

weight.

This Sunday, at 11 o'clock, it will be 100 years exactly since the guns fell silent on the Western front.

At the Arc de Triomphe here in Paris and at the Cenotaph in London, and in towns and villages across France and Britain, our countries will commemorate the end of the War.

Tomorrow, the French President and the British Prime Minister will be together in the battlefields of the Somme – scene of some of the bloodiest fighting.

They will remember our shared sacrifice. The British Army lost 20,000 dead in a single day on 1 July 1916. The Somme was our Verdun.

This was a war which changed our countries and our continent forever.

It was a war in which our destinies as nations were yoked together – in which we fought and bled side by side for over four years – and in which, in the end, we prevailed.

We sometimes forget that in the closing months of that war, the two million soldiers of the British Army fought under French command for the first time.

The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, said that Marshal Foch was the 'only general in the field with the necessary decision and vision to plan out such a campaign'.

After the Armistice, Foch said 'I am conscious of having served England as I served my own country' – words carved in stone beneath his statue near Victoria Station in London.

But the victory that Franco-British cooperation made possible came at a terrible price.

Across France, 575,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers lie buried, alongside 1.4 million French comrades who fell alongside them.

Row after row of silent white headstones speak more eloquently than we ever could on the strength of our alliance, and the depth of our shared sacrifice.

I am fortunate to come from a generation which has never known such horror, and which has been blessed by the peace and friendship we have built with Germany, something we will also mark this weekend.

But if our shared history has taught us anything, it is surely to value peace – and never to take it for granted.

Of course, our history goes back much further than a hundred years.

Britain's long and complex relationship with France is one of the most important that we have with any country in the world.

We are approaching 1,000 years since William the Conqueror landed near Hastings, and the Duke of Normandy became the King of England.

The Bayeux tapestry – which chronicles the story of William's arrival in England – turns out to have been just the opening chapter in the Franco-British story.

If we brought the tapestry up to date, it would stretch all the way from Paris to London and back.

It would tell of our highs and our lows, our friendships and our enmities, our triumphs and our defeats.

That is why President Macron's decision to lend the Bayeux tapestry to Britain – announced at the Sandhurst Summit earlier this year – so captured the public imagination on the other side of the Channel.

It represents – literally – the common thread of our shared history, going to the heart of both countries' identity.

That sense of similarity and difference runs through the next nine centuries.

And it extends into the most recent period of our story during which – for nearly 200 years now – Britain and France have not only been at peace, but in alliance, standing together against danger and when, twice in a century, the very existence of our nations was threatened.

The Present

Why does all this matter?

Because it is not the stuff of books and museums.

It is the underpinning of the world we built – together.

And in that world our countries are as closely connected, our story is just as interwoven as it has ever been.

Geographical neighbours; separated by 33 kilometres of what Churchill called that 'strip of salt water', but joined now by a tunnel through which 57,000 pass every single day.

Hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens choose to live in each others' countries, where they make such a valued contribution.

I would like to take this opportunity to repeat the Prime Minister's commitment to the French people in Britain – and all EU citizens – protecting their rights after we leave the EU. And I am sure that the same assurances will be offered to British citizens living here in France.

About 12 million Britons visited France last year – and more French people visited the UK than any other nationality.

It is a relationship that is underpinned by human ties of friendship.

And at a Governmental level, by the fact that Britain and France are both European nations with a global vocations, who share the same values, and who see the world in broadly the same way. We helped fashion the global order, and we share an interest in defending it.

We face the same terrorist threats, and we know that we must work hand in hand to defeat them.

We both know that sometimes to defend the peace, you need to be ready to use military force.

We know that the threats to European peace and security are more serious than they have been for a generation, and that as Europe's only two major military powers, we need to confront those threats together.

We both believe in nuclear deterrence, and in maintaining our deterrents for our own defence and the defence of our allies.

That is why we so often form joint positions, including on the Security Council where we both have permanent seats, to deal with an increasingly unstable world.

That is why when our countries have been attacked by terrorists, there was such an outpouring of mutual solidarity.

We will never forget the moment after the Manchester attack when President Macron walked from the Elysee Palace to the British Embassy to express France's solidarity, and the crowd at the Stade de France sang the British national anthem – nor, when, after the Bataclan attack the crowd at Wembley sang the Marseillaise.

That is why, after the chemical weapons attack in Salisbury in March, France rallied to the UK's side, leading a robust European response, working together to expel scores of Russian diplomats from our continent.

And in April, British and French aircraft, with our US allies, acted together to strike chemical weapons installations in Syria, and to enforce the global ban on the use of chemical weapons which was itself born out of the suffering in the trenches 100 years ago.

That is why our defence cooperation – rooted in the Lancaster House accords – is so deep.

RAF Chinook helicopters are flying missions in the Sahel, transporting French troops as part of Operation Barkhane.

Together we have forged a combined joint expeditionary force, which will be combat capable by 2020.

This year our warships have both upheld freedom of navigation by sailing through the South China Sea.

And our cooperation extends far beyond the security domain to genomics, artificial intelligence, cyber and space.

The scale and breadth of cooperation is probably closer than it has ever been.

The Future

Which brings us back to Bayeux.

Now, as President Macron said at Sandhurst, we are weaving a new tapestry.

What path will it follow, what scenes will it depict?

Because we are at a moment of decision, and the answers we give in the coming weeks and months could determine the shape of Franco-British relations, and of relations between Britain and her European partners, for many years, perhaps decades to come.

Which brings me, of course, to Brexit.

And here our history is again relevant: for all our similarities, we are also different.

I understand that for so many in France that the outcome of the referendum result was disappointing.

I know that in France the Brexit vote is often seen as Britain pulling up the drawbridge, turning its back on Europe and reaching out for 'le grand large'.

But that is not how we see it.

And this is where our peculiar mixture of similarity and difference is important.

France sees the EU as vital to its destiny, to the stability of the continent and above all to its relationship with Germany.

We recognise that. We understand it. We value it.

But Britain has never felt quite the same, for the simple reason that our experiences have been different.

Yes, we are similar in that we are both European countries who cherish our global role.

But we differ, I believe, in our view of the process and goals of EU integration. The reality is that our public has always been reluctant about the political character of the Union and uncertain about its ultimate destination.

That made the experience of the pooling of sovereignty which the EU entails uncomfortable for us – and I think that goes a long way to explaining the result of our referendum.

Indeed for most British people, their concept of Europe has never been synonymous with the European Union.

Whereas for so many people in France, I believe, the European Union is at the heart of their notion of Europe.

Why does this matter?

Because so far in our recent history we have been able to draw strengths from our similarities, but recognise and respect our differences in the choices we have made together.

And we have now reached another such moment of decision, and the decisions we take as Governments will have far-reaching consequences.

Our people have voted in a referendum to leave the EU and its decision-making bodies.

We must respect their democratic choice.

But we intend to remain a European power into the future, as we have always been in the past.

A European power, whose values remain European values.

A European power committed to the security of the European continent.

A European power with a European economic model, with universal public services and the highest standard of consumer and environment protection.

A European power, whose children continue to do exchanges with each other and get to know and treasure each others' countries – as I did at the age of 7 in Angers, in France; whose students study together; whose scientists and researchers and Nobel Prize winners continue to push forward the frontiers of human knowledge together.

That is the strategic choice we have made in our approach to these negotiations. From our perspective we see no contradiction in wanting to continue to work together even as the institutional relationship changes.

And so?

What does this mean for our future, and for this negotiation, which is now entering its crucial endgame?

I would suggest three things.

First, our shared past, does not, of course mean that we do not remain two nations, each pursuing our national interests as we judge them, in the interests of the people we are elected to serve.

But, having thought deeply about these issues, my view is that just as our interest and choice is to remain close to Europe, the EU's interest lies too in close cooperation – for our security, our economies and our peoples.

So I hope that we can redouble our efforts to reach an agreement.

Second, we each need to make a particular effort to understand the other's perspective.

I know there are concerns that a deal which allows the UK to have the advantages of membership without the obligations, could lead to unfair competition and ultimately to the unravelling of the EU.

I want to be 100 percent clear. We have heard those concerns, and we believe that we can address them. Indeed that the only way to address them is for an ambitious agreement that provides the kind of guarantees necessary.

Remember this basic fact.

From 29 March next year, we will be on the outside, not the inside.

There will be no British Prime Minister turning up at European Council meetings, no Ministers deciding new legislation, no British MEPs, no British judges on the European Court of Justice.

So we are not, as is sometimes suggested, even occasionally here in France, trying to have our 'cake and eat it'.

But we have offered a framework for our future relationship which should give you confidence that we are not going to pursue a race to the bottom, and which would allow our economic and security relationships to continue, not as they were before – but on a dependable basis on which we could continue to build in the years ahead.

A relationship in which the UK will be a third country – but would remain tied by bonds of friendship and commerce for decades to come.

The alternatives do not deliver that certainty. They make a choice for friction – at our border with queues at Dover and Calais, in the exchange of information between our security services and in greater divergence in our rules and regulation.

That choice would seem to me to be a mistake.

My last point is this.

This is not a dry, technical discussion, although sometimes it can seem that way – with all the talk of regulatory standards and implementation periods and the like.

At heart, it is about the destiny of our ancient nations – and of our ancient continent – and how best we shape our future as European nations.

About how we weave the next chapter of the tapestry and what story it will tell.

That is why I feel so passionately that we need to get this right, that we

need to make the right choices in the weeks to come.

So that the generations who come after us and look across the Channel will see that in 2019 Britain left the European Union, and a chapter ended.

But the story of the European Union continued, and that the story of Britain's friendship and alliance with Europe and above all with France not only endured, but grew in strength.

In other words the end of a chapter did not mean the end of the book. Far from it. It mean the beginning of a new chapter, in which we found new ways to work closely together.

Those future generations will see, I hope, that confronted with the common threats before us, and which are growing, we faced up to them together.

That together we defended the post-war international order and institutions that are today under threat.

That we together stayed true to our values and democratic principles that are being challenged – in practice and in theory – as never before in my lifetime.

That we together adapted to the challenges and opportunities that globalisation is posing to our economies and more importantly our societies.

I know it is not easy but that is my hope.

That is Britain's hope.

I believe that is France's hope, and that of our European partners.

Let's find the political will – as friends, as allies, as partners – to turn that hope into reality.

Press release: Prisons to deliver trailblazing £6m rough sleeping initiative

- Three prisons to pilot new scheme to support at-risk offenders
- Dedicated housing funding to provide stable accommodation for up to two years
- Support to help prisoners integrate into communities for the long-term

Leeds, Pentonville and Bristol prisons have been chosen to spearhead the £6 million pilot programme aimed at helping vulnerable ex-prisoners find and

stay in stable accommodation.

Research shows that those who are homeless or in temporary accommodation are significantly more likely to reoffend within a year than those with a stable place to live.

The pilots are aimed specifically at prisoners serving short sentences who are at high risk of returning to prison. This represents the latest in a series of measures aimed at breaking the cycle of reoffending, from improving prisoners' employment prospects to reinforcing family ties.

The sites will pilot a new partnership approach between prisons, local authorities, probation staff, charities and others who will work together to provide the support prisoners need when they are released – such as signing up for benefits – but will primarily be focused on finding them suitable accommodation.

The two-year programme forms part of the Government's £100m Rough Sleeping Strategy announced over the summer.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

These ground-breaking pilots will help prevent rough sleeping among vulnerable ex-offenders and support them as they start a new life after prison.

As well as ensuring people have somewhere to live, dedicated key worker support will help ex-offenders manage the practical challenges of finding a job and other issues that come with trying to reintegrate into society.

Every time we help an ex-prisoner into a new life – with a stable home, strong relationships and a regular job – we increase the chances of seeing fewer victims of crime in the future.

Housing benefit top ups and rental deposits will ensure that accommodation will be provided from the day offenders leave prison, bolstered through wrap around support from key workers to address other needs which may normally cause the loss of a tenancy, such as attending appropriate probation and employment appointments.

Heather Wheeler MP, Minister for Housing and Homelessness said:

When leaving custody, ex-offenders should all have a safe and suitable home to go to and there is work to be done to ensure this is the case.

These pilots will prove pivotal to our understanding of the situation and to inform any future accommodation provision. This will help improve the outcomes for ex-offenders across the country.

Once the trial has completed, it will be fully evaluated to assess the potential for the scheme to be rolled out more widely across England. We will also be working with the Welsh Government to deliver a similar accommodation solution.

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) was launched in August 2018 and sets out to halve rough sleeping on England's streets by 2022 and end it altogether by 2027. It is backed by an additional £100 million and developed across government in conjunction with charities and experts.

The strategy lays out a 3-pronged approach to tackling rough sleeping, including preventing rough sleeping by providing timely support, intervening to help people already on the streets get swift, targeted support and helping people recover, find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives.

[Press release: Prisons to deliver trailblazing £6m rough sleeping initiative](#)

- Three prisons to pilot new scheme to support at-risk offenders
- Dedicated housing funding to provide stable accommodation for up to two years
- Support to help prisoners integrate into communities for the long-term

Leeds, Pentonville and Bristol prisons have been chosen to spearhead the £6 million pilot programme aimed at helping vulnerable ex-prisoners find and stay in stable accommodation.

Research shows that those who are homeless or in temporary accommodation are significantly more likely to reoffend within a year than those with a stable place to live.

The pilots are aimed specifically at prisoners serving short sentences who are at high risk of returning to prison. This represents the latest in a series of measures aimed at breaking the cycle of reoffending, from improving prisoners' employment prospects to reinforcing family ties.

The sites will pilot a new partnership approach between prisons, local authorities, probation staff, charities and others who will work together to provide the support prisoners need when they are released – such as signing

up for benefits – but will primarily be focused on finding them suitable accommodation.

The two-year programme forms part of the Government's £100m Rough Sleeping Strategy announced over the summer.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

These ground-breaking pilots will help prevent rough sleeping among vulnerable ex-offenders and support them as they start a new life after prison.

As well as ensuring people have somewhere to live, dedicated key worker support will help ex-offenders manage the practical challenges of finding a job and other issues that come with trying to reintegrate into society.

Every time we help an ex-prisoner into a new life – with a stable home, strong relationships and a regular job – we increase the chances of seeing fewer victims of crime in the future.

Housing benefit top ups and rental deposits will ensure that accommodation will be provided from the day offenders leave prison, bolstered through wrap around support from key workers to address other needs which may normally cause the loss of a tenancy, such as attending appropriate probation and employment appointments.

Heather Wheeler MP, Minister for Housing and Homelessness said:

When leaving custody, ex-offenders should all have a safe and suitable home to go to and there is work to be done to ensure this is the case.

These pilots will prove pivotal to our understanding of the situation and to inform any future accommodation provision. This will help improve the outcomes for ex-offenders across the country.

Once the trial has completed, it will be fully evaluated to assess the potential for the scheme to be rolled out more widely across England. We will also be working with the Welsh Government to deliver a similar accommodation solution.

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) was launched in August 2018 and sets out to halve rough sleeping on England's streets by 2022 and end it altogether by 2027. It

is backed by an additional £100 million and developed across government in conjunction with charities and experts.

The strategy lays out a 3-pronged approach to tackling rough sleeping, including preventing rough sleeping by providing timely support, intervening to help people already on the streets get swift, targeted support and helping people recover, find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives.

[News story: MOD sets out vision to diversify supply base](#)

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) new procurement plan outlines a programme of major projects and contracts for the next five financial years.

This includes work to construct new buildings, such as housing and accommodation, the refurbishment of current facilities; as well as services such as catering, waste management and cleaning.

The plan also sets out ambitions to establish a broader and more diverse supply base, including doing more business with small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).

Currently, around 75% of spending on maintenance at defence sites goes directly or indirectly to SMEs, and further diversifying the supply base will help build resilience into projects and provide more opportunities for smaller companies to work on key defence projects.

By listing all the major projects and contracts, the procurement plan will make it easier for existing and potential suppliers to plan ahead, by offering advice on bidding for this work and greater transparency on working with the MOD. These measures will help in particular small businesses, who don't always have the skills and prior experience of working with the MOD in such areas.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

The defence estate is where our brave armed forces live, work and train and so it's crucial we give them the best supplies and facilities possible.

Working with industry is critical to delivering this, and our new Procurement Plan ensures the private sector has a head start in bidding for this crucial work.

Opportunities outlined in the Procurement Plan include the £4billion Defence

Estate Optimisation Programme, the Future Defence Infrastructure Services contracts – which will provide facilities management across the UK’s military bases- and the £1.3bn Clyde Infrastructure Programme.

The plan also details several prominent works that demonstrate DIO’s key role in supporting defence throughout the UK. These include essential maintenance work worth £568 million to support nuclear infrastructure capability at HMNB Clyde, as well as a £58m investment in a modern submarine training facility at the base.

Alongside this, there are plans for an £8m investment in Bovington Camp to support the AJAX armoured vehicles which will enter service in 2020.

Jacqui Rock, DIO Commercial Director, said:

As DIO we recognise that our current and future suppliers are key to our success. We have worked with industry to produce the Procurement Plan and we are committed to building a broader, more diverse supplier base.

We believe in being as transparent as possible in our procurements and through this new approach we are encouraging new entrants, including small and medium sized enterprises, to consider the benefits and opportunities that working with DIO can deliver.

The Procurement Plan will help achieve the goals set out in our first ever Commercial Strategy. This set out our vision for how we do business and how we will work effectively with our suppliers.

The Procurement Plan also sets out how DIO can deliver social and economic benefits throughout its supply chain by working to contribute to the government’s aim of recruiting 20,000 apprentices through construction procurement and promoting sustainability through its supply chain.

By 2020, DIO has committed to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 30%, a 30% reduction in domestic business flights, a 50% reduction in paper usage and reducing waste going to the landfill to less than 10%.

[The full DIO Procurement Plan can be found here](#)

The DIO Commercial Strategy sets the direction for future DIO Procurement Plans. [The full DIO Commercial Strategy can be found here](#)

[Speech: The Future of ASEAN-UK](#)

Cooperation, Post-Brexit: Minister Field

Good morning and thank you to Chatham House and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs for hosting this expert gathering. I know a great deal of time and effort has gone into arranging it, and it could not have been better timed.

The UK is making greater efforts than ever to broaden our international horizons and deepen our global partnerships, preparing the way for a new approach once we have left the EU. Strengthening our relationship with the ASEAN community is a really important part of that, so I am delighted to have the chance to hear your thoughts on how we might go about it.

There is an excellent range of topics on your agenda today. Over the next 15 minutes or so I should like to touch on just some of them, to offer some food for thought.

Since being appointed as Minister for Asia and the Pacific almost 18 months ago I have made it my personal mission to visit as many countries of the region as humanly possible, and to engage, face to face, with my ministerial counterparts.

Within the first year or so I achieved my key ambition of visiting all ten members of ASEAN at least once.

This is already my second visit to Singapore, and over the course of two frantic weeks in August, I visited Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

In Jakarta I set out our 'All of Asia' policy, through which we are engaging actively with all countries in the region, working with them to promote regional security, to build prosperity, and to strengthen the values which underpin the links between our people. Today I hope that we can substantively build on this work – as I say, taking the opportunity to discuss and explore together the ways in which the UK can remain the strongest of partners to ASEAN – maintaining and strengthening our common areas of interest – after we leave the EU.

Our vision is of a genuine deep, comprehensive partnership – one that builds up our already excellent cooperation right across the board. I will say more about that in a moment. It is really up to all of us – the UK and all the ASEAN community – to decide how we go about it.

I would like us to be really ambitious – to see where the UK-ASEAN relationship is now, to imagine how it might look in the future and to chart a course towards that goal.

Let's start with education – for the university academics among you, surely a subject close to your hearts.

I'm sure you don't need me to tell you how open ASEAN as a whole is to education opportunities of all kinds.

I am pleased to say that UK institutions and qualifications seem particularly popular: more than 42,000 students from the region attended UK universities in 2016/17.

That includes some 8,000 Singaporeans and 17,000 Malaysians.

In fact Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand all rank in the top 10 countries from outside the EU for sending students to the UK.

However, more and more of your young people do not even need to leave home to get UK qualifications. Approximately 130,000 young people are pursuing UK certified higher education courses right here in the region.

Respected British universities such as Nottingham, Newcastle, Herriot Watt and Coventry are all expanding their partnerships here.

I saw evidence of this first-hand in Vientiane earlier this year, when I had the pleasure of opening a new International Education Center at Panyathip School, hosting not one, but three UK institutions: Nottingham University, the Wimbledon School of English, and the Royal Academy of Dance.

It showed that our links are not just at tertiary level education – more and more schools across the ASEAN region are now teaching the British international school curriculum.

Education is a significant part of our relationship with ASEAN and I can see it really taking off over the coming years.

The same goes for research and innovation – where the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' offers huge opportunities for collaboration.

Some of you may be familiar with the work that has flowed from our Newton Fund for science and innovation, which has been running since 2014.

The UK is investing £735 million in the Fund worldwide through to 2021, with matched funding from partner countries. In ASEAN we are partnering with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, and these partnerships are delivering results.

They have already produced some outstanding research on sustainable rice production and food security, and we are working together to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities, improve forecasting of extreme weather, and tackle common diseases.

The range of our collaboration is truly out of this world. Through our Space Agency we are supporting research into the use of satellite technology to help our partners tackle problems ranging from illegal fishing in Indonesia to early warning of dengue outbreaks in Vietnam, and reducing illegal logging in Malaysia.

It may sound like science-fiction, but together with Singapore we are now firmly pushing the frontiers of 'science fact', with a £10 million joint initiative to build and fly a satellite quantum key distribution test-bed.

I won't try to explain in detail what that is, I can't claim to match Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau's knowledge of quantum theory .

However I can say that it is a significant commitment to cyber technology and will open up a global market estimated to be worth more than £11 billion over the next ten years.

Research and innovation is already an integral part of the UK-ASEAN relationship and this latest project demonstrates just how far-reaching the opportunities could be in the future.

Trade is another area where I see huge scope for cooperation and two-way growth – and for using our departure from the EU as an opportunity for us all to redesign and strengthen our existing relationships.

It is something that our Prime Minister Theresa May was keen to emphasise at the recent Asia Europe Meeting in Brussels, which I also attended. Take our investment in Singapore for instance. Over 4,000 British companies have a presence here, employing over 50,000 people.

The UK is the second largest European investor in Singapore, and sixth largest overall. There is a similarly positive picture across the ASEAN region.

In 2017, trade between the UK and the region was worth over £36.5 billion.

The UK remains ASEAN's second largest source of investment, and we invest three times as much as Germany or France in wider Southeast Asia.

UK goods exports to ASEAN grew by 19.9% between 2016 and 2017. Our overall exports were more than double those to India.

More than ever, we are urging and supporting UK companies to take advantage of opportunities overseas, and we are attracting inward investment into the UK too – not least for UK Smart Cities projects and align ourselves with the ASEAN Smart Cities Network.

We are also helping countries of the region to make themselves more attractive to foreign investment – using our Prosperity Fund programmes to cut red-tape, tackle corruption and promote a fair business environment. From within the EU we have been a cheerleader for its Free Trade Agreements with Singapore and Vietnam.

We are determined to ensure that these trade benefits are transitioned into bilateral arrangements immediately after we leave.

Alongside our bilateral agreements, we are also exploring accession to the CPTPP and ways to further develop trade and investment between us. We are doing all this with one goal in mind, to strengthen our partnership

economically, diplomatically and politically with ASEAN.

Alongside all these areas of positive collaboration, we recognise that there are also challenges.

I make no bones about our concern over the direction some countries are taking on democratic values or human rights.

The 'war on drugs' in the Philippines and the recent flawed elections in Cambodia are two such causes of concern.

The despicable treatment of the Rohingya community by the Burmese military also remains high on the agenda of the UK and indeed many other nations the world over, not least here in South East Asia.

We do not hide our views on these subjects or row back from our firm commitment to uphold a rules-based international system, upon which prosperity, security and freedom for us all depends.

We continue to encourage others to remain equally committed, and my colleagues and I continue to press for positive change. We will continue to do so after we leave the EU.

Of course many of the challenges we face are shared, and they are challenges that we shall face together, because the UK is committed to the security of this region.

We demonstrate that commitment in a number of ways – including our permanent military presence in Brunei, our participation in the Five Power Defence Arrangements and the deployment of Royal Navy ships to the region – three this year alone. All of them have participated in joint exercises – a key part of our support for the development and integration of the region's defence capabilities and our commitment to help address future security challenges.

Even in the defence sphere, our education links shine through. In the last five years, just under one hundred officers from ASEAN member states have graduated from UK defence establishments.

Today, the active Service Chiefs in four ASEAN countries studied in Britain.

It is not all ships, planes and people in uniform though. Our security cooperation is much broader than this, and cyber is a key element of it.

As you may know, Singapore, as the Chair of ASEAN, is spearheading an initiative to strengthen the cyberspace capabilities of all ASEAN states.

I am delighted that they have invited us to take part – we will be the only non-Dialogue Partner involved.

Counter Terrorism is another important element of our security collaboration.

We have established a regional Counter-Terrorism Unit to enhance the links between agencies and governments.

We have done extensive work in this area with Indonesia. We were a critical part of the JCLEC [Jay-See-LEK] process that led to hundreds of arrests – by Indonesian officers drawing on skills learned from the UK.

I hope that I have given you a good idea of the breadth and depth of the UK's engagement in ASEAN.

Not only that – I hope you have also got a sense of our ambition for our future relationship. I have seen first-hand what it is like now, and I know there is a huge appetite from both sides to maintain and strengthen this precious relationship after we leave the EU.

I believe we can afford to think ambitiously and I hope today's discussions allow you to do that.

I wish you a productive day and I look forward to hearing how you have got on when I come back this evening!

Thank you.