

# Speech: PM statement at London Western Balkans Summit: 10 July 2018

Four years ago Chancellor Merkel established the Berlin Process, convening like-minded countries with the singular aim of advancing the prosperity of the Western Balkans.

I want to extend particular thanks to the Chancellor for this initiative.

For the welfare of the Western Balkans should be a high priority for all of us in Europe. And through working together under the Berlin Process, we have already achieved so much.

We've helped build up energy and transport links, enhanced economic integration and developed links between civil society and young people – ensuring the contemporary voice of the region is heard.

And today we've made further progress, establishing agreements that will help contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic Western Balkans – anchored to European values and integrated in the Euro Atlantic family.

We have agreed initiatives to expand connections between people, organisations and businesses, and improve access to finance for start-ups and small firms.

However, as we all know, long-term prosperity is intrinsically linked with security. And we need to work together to tackle the common challenges, such as corruption, organised crime and terrorism, that deter investment and undermine confidence in the region.

That is why I welcome the commitments made by the Western Balkan leaders today to ensure their countries work more closely together to tackle corruption and organised crime, and control the misuse and trafficking of small arms and weapons.

I also welcome the continued commitment to resolve outstanding bilateral disputes. I want to extend a special welcome to Prime Minister Tsipras from Greece, and pay tribute to him and Prime Minister Zaev for reaching an agreement on the Name Issue – showing that progress is possible.

History has shown us that a stable and secure Western Balkans region means a more stable and secure Europe.

That's why today I have announced an ambitious package of measures to help the region improve its collective security, stability and its capability to tackle threats in the future.

Alongside this, I have also announced that the UK is increasing our financial support to the region by over 95% to £80 million in 2020-21 which will go to fund projects that make a real difference such as:

- strengthening public administration in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and Montenegro
- promoting judicial reform in Kosovo and Albania
- nurturing the business environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia
- equipping up to a million primary school children across the region with the digital skills to help realise their potential in the modern world
- and strengthening democracy and the rule of law across the entire Western Balkans

The UK has always had a strong commitment to the region – from our role in the peace agreements that followed the conflicts of the nineties, through the post-conflict transition.

I know that some have seen our decision to leave the European Union as a sign that we are retreating from this role.

This is absolutely not the case.

Today I hosted this Summit to bring together leaders from across the Western Balkans and Europe to discuss our shared objective of ensuring our continent remains safe, stable, prosperous and free.

And let me be completely clear – when we are outside the European Union, the UK will be just as committed to supporting the Western Balkans.

Thank you.

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## [News story: Red diesel call for evidence roundtable held with industry leaders](#)

Representatives from the aviation, shipping, haulage and construction industries met with Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey and Treasury Minister Robert Jenrick as part of the government's call for evidence on red diesel.

Launched in May, the call for evidence is seeking views on whether red diesel for non-road mobile machinery discourages the purchase of cleaner alternatives. It forms part of the government's world-leading [Clean Air Strategy](#) – currently out for consultation – which aims to cut air pollution from all sources.

Red diesel, the fuel used by non-road mobile machinery gets different tax treatment to the diesel used in cars and vans. But it still produces the same nitrogen dioxide, a toxic gas that inflames the lining of the lungs. !!n Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This week Robert Jenrick and I met industry representatives to hear what they are doing to improve air quality.

With red diesel accounting for 15% of all diesel consumption in the UK, industry has a key role to play in reducing the harmful emissions. We must all play our part in looking after the environment and cleaning up our air.

Although it is often thought red diesel is mainly used in the agricultural sector, 75% of it is used across a range of other industries, including rail, shipping and in construction, mining and airport support vehicles. It also costs the public purse £2.4 billion each year, compared to if duty was charged at the main rate.

The [Call for Evidence](#) closes on 24 July 2018. Red diesel used for agricultural purposes and for fishing vessels is not in the scope of the call for evidence.

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## **[News story: Defence Secretary meets Australian defence minister following £20bn British warship deal](#)**

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson met with Australian Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne today, following the country's decision to buy a British warship design as part of a potentially record-breaking £20 billion deal.

The meeting between the two ministers, and Defence Minister for procurement Guto Bebb, came just a fortnight after British firm BAE Systems was chosen as the preferred bidder for Australia's 'SEA 5000' Future Frigate competition, securing the biggest international ship deal of the decade.

The agreement will see nine cutting-edge British Type 26 Global Combat Ships built in Adelaide, supporting 4,000 Australian jobs and boosting the two nations' military capabilities.

Discussing future cooperation between the two nations at the Australia–United Kingdom Ministerial Equipment and Industry Dialogue today, ahead of the annual AUKMIN talks later this month, Mr Williamson and Mr Pyne agreed to deepen their countries' equipment relationship and explore future industry collaboration.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

In the face of intensifying threats, it is more important than ever for great allies like Britain and Australia to stand together.

The £20bn Global Combat Ship deal struck between BAE Systems and the Australian Government marks the start of an exciting new era in our nations' defence and industrial partnership, creating jobs for generations and keeping us safe.

It is also a major vote of confidence in British design, British engineering, and British innovation at a vital moment in our history. It also highlights the importance of our Armed Forces having a presence all over the world.

From my meeting with Minister Pyne today, it is clear that both our nations have a shared desire to work more closely together to strengthen and equip our militaries to defeat the threats of a darker and more dangerous world.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb added:

Ensuring our forces have the cutting-edge equipment they need is extremely important and today's meeting with our Australian counterparts is part of our mission to do just that.

Innovation is at the heart of equipment capability and working with allies to develop world-leading military technology will be of huge benefit to both our nations.

During the dialogue, the ministers discussed the importance of working together to leverage the strengths of each other's industries while maximising access to cutting edge defence capabilities from both countries.

They also spoke about improving and driving down costs across the supply chain for naval ships, discussed defence industry up-skilling initiatives and agreed to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to support industry and equipment collaboration.

Mr Pyne expressed interest in gaining a greater insight into the United Kingdom's approach to growing a skilled workforce to support its shipbuilding programme.

The pair also reaffirmed their commitment to enhance capability, interoperability and innovation through deepening the countries' industrial base ties.

The talks follow the deployment of a third Royal Navy ship, HMS Argyll, to the Asia-Pacific region, following on from HMS Sutherland and HMS Albion, and marking the first time three British warships have been sent to the area. Australia offered to host the next Ministerial Equipment and Industrial Dialogue in January 2019.

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## [Press release: Minister for Asia praises successful Thai caves rescue mission](#)

Commenting on the news, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, the Rt Hon Mark Field MP, said:

I am delighted and relieved to hear that the boys, the coach, and the rescue divers have all emerged in safety from the Tham Luang caves in Northern Thailand. We wish everyone involved a swift recovery in the coming days.

This rescue operation has been an uplifting example of intense bravery and exemplary skill. The volunteers of the [British Cave Rescue Council](#) have played a crucial role, under the careful and focused leadership of the Thai authorities. Their courage is only matched by their modesty and dedication to do their best to help those in danger.

It is also a time for quiet reflection on the tragic loss of Petty Officer First Class Saman Gunan in the course of the rescue operation. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

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## [Press release: New Attorney General appointed](#)

Commenting on his appointment as Attorney General, Geoffrey Cox QC MP has said:

It is an honour to be appointed Attorney General for England and Wales. I look forward to building on the successes of my predecessor and I want to thank Jeremy Wright for his distinguished four years in the role.

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) is a unique and historic government department. I am proud to be joining the AGO, which has the highest staff engagement score in central Government. I look forward to working with the Solicitor General to play my part in making law and politics work together at the heart of the UK constitution.

The Prime Minister appointed Geoffrey Cox QC MP as Attorney General on 9 July.

As the Government's chief legal advisor, Geoffrey Cox will advise the Government and attend Cabinet. The new Attorney General will also oversee the work of the Law Officers Departments which include the independent prosecuting authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office, and the Government Legal Department and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate.

Geoffrey Cox will cease all private practice as a barrister, as previous Law Officers have done on appointment.

The Attorney General and Solicitor General also carry out a number of functions in the public interest, such as considering unduly lenient sentences, and take action when there has been a contempt of court. These functions are carried out independently of their role as Government ministers.

Notes Geoffrey Cox QC MP was appointed Attorney General for England and Wales on 9 July 2018. He replaces Jeremy Wright QC MP who is now Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

The Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, remains in post.

Geoffrey Cox's biography:

Geoffrey Cox has been MP for Torridge and West Devon since May 2005. He lives in West Devon, near Tavistock, with his wife, Jeanie and his family. They have a daughter and two sons, Charlotte, James and Jonathan who attended the local school. Geoffrey was born and brought up in the West Country.

Geoffrey Cox QC was called to the Bar in 1982 and made Silk in 2003. He co-founded Thomas More Chambers in 1992.

Geoffrey Cox has appeared in many high profile cases receiving national and international publicity from trial to appeal before the Court of Appeal, the Privy Council and the Supreme Court. His advocacy has been described by a professional court journalist in a recent book as "extremely persuasive".

Geoffrey is a member of the Criminal Bar Association.