

# [Press release: UK closing statement at 39th UN Human Rights Council](#)

**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon gave the following statement at the 39th session of the UN Human Rights Council on 28 September 2018:**

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 39th session today with important resolutions on Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Burma and a number of other pressing issues.

As I said during my [speech](#) at the Council on 17 September, human rights remain under threat around the world. The United Kingdom remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rules based international system, of which the Human Rights Council is such an important part. It is essential that we work together with other UN member states to ensure accountability for those who violate the rights of their citizens.

While visiting the Council I was delighted to meet High Commissioner Bachelet during her inaugural session. Her extraordinary wealth of knowledge as well as her professional and personal experience will be invaluable in her role – I wish her well.

## **Burma**

I welcome the Council's establishment of a mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of the human rights atrocities carried out, primarily by the military, in Burma. This resolution, tabled jointly by the OIC and the EU, shows that the international community as a whole is united in its focus on Burma. The mechanism is an important stepping stone on the road to accountability and justice; Burma now needs to show it will cooperate with this mechanism. Burma's government and military must also show that its Commission of Inquiry will be an impartial, independent and credible process that leads to perpetrators of human rights violations being held to account.

## **Syria**

Turning to Syria, the Council must continue to shine a light on the dire situation there and I welcome the resolution adopted by the Council. The Commission of Inquiry has exposed the ongoing violations of international law, including the regime's persistent use of chemical weapons, torture and forced displacement. Further steps to protect civilians are urgently needed, and so the agreement between Russia and Turkey to avoid a military offensive in Idlib is encouraging.

## **Yemen**

I am pleased that the mandate of the Yemen Group of Eminent Experts has been renewed, though disappointed that a single consensus resolution was not

possible. Given the gravity of the situation in Yemen it is important to give the Group of Eminent Experts more time to fully examine the conflict and to ensure that their conclusions accurately reflect the conduct of all parties in future reporting. It is clear that many incidents and alleged violations, committed by all parties, have not yet been fully documented, particularly those by Houthis in Hodeidah and the rest of Northern Yemen.

## **Venezuela**

Elsewhere, I welcome the Lima Group's resolution on Venezuela which reflects the deep international concern at the sharply deteriorating social and economic conditions affecting the Venezuelan people.

## **Sudan, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Somalia and DRC**

I am pleased that the Council renewed the Mandate of the Independent Expert on Sudan and note the Government of Sudan's commitment to open a fully mandated OHCHR office. I also welcome the renewal of mandates of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and the Independent Expert for Central Africa Republic, as well as the Council's continued focus on the human rights situations in Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo.

I welcome the work of the Office of the High Commissioner to bring attention to the issue of the safety of journalists, and the strong message sent by the resolution adopted by the Council. States which stifle free speech and prevent or restrict media freedom do not thrive; politically, socially or economically. I condemn the increasing pattern of threats and intimidation of journalists, media workers and all those who want to freely express their views.

The work of the Human Rights Council is vital in bringing states together to protect and promote universal human rights around the world.

The UK Government plays, and will continue to play, an active role at the Council and will continue to support its efforts to hold to account those who perpetrate violations and abuses of human rights.

## **Further information**

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## **Further information**

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on Twitter [@tarigahmadbt](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

## **Media enquiries**

For journalists

Email  
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Newsdesk

## [News story: UK exports continue to grow following launch of Export Strategy](#)

- exports of goods and services increase by 6.4% to £630.2bn
- the trade deficit has narrowed significantly by £14.4bn
- service surplus widens by £10.4bn as London secures its place as Europe's financial centre

A 6.6% increase in goods exports was driven by a demand for high quality British manufacturing with service exports also continuing to boom (up 6.2%) due to the UK's reputation as a global leader in financial services.

Today's figures reveal that the trade deficit has also narrowed by £14.4bn over the last year, now standing at £17.9bn.

Non-EU countries remain a larger market than the EU 27, with total exports outside of the EU totaling £342.8bn. Services exports experienced a 3.3% growth outside the EU, with a total value of £168.2bn.

### **International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, said:**

Today's figures show that the demand from all over the world is continuing to increase for our high quality goods and services. As we leave the EU, we look to further our trading ties with key overseas markets such as the USA, Japan and China where our exports have risen by 4.1%, 7.4% and 7.5% respectively.

As an international economic department, DIT continues to help businesses export overseas – our Export Strategy will help ensure that they're making the most out of the global export opportunities that are out there.

The Department for International Trade recently launched a series of Free Trade Agreement Consultations, focusing on new free trade agreements with the USA, Australia and New Zealand, as well as the UK potentially joining to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Exports to the USA remain particularly strong, totaling £111.8bn in the year to June 2018, an increase of 4.1%.

Last month DIT launched its ambitious new Export Strategy. The Strategy sets

out how the government will support businesses of all sizes to make the most of the opportunities presented by markets around the world.

A government-led collaboration with business, developed after extensive engagement with a range of UK firms – the Strategy sets a new ambition from government to increase exports as a proportion of UK GDP to 35%.

It presents a streamlined and targeted offer for businesses of all sizes, set to raise productivity, boost wages and protect employment across the UK.

This is just the start – in the months ahead DIT will lead work across government to assess what more we can do to support UK business to achieve a step change in their exporting performance.

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## [Speech: FST speech to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council Dinner: 27 September 2018](#)

### **Introduction**

Chief Secretary, distinguished guests, Lords, ladies, gentleman, it is a pleasure to address you this evening.

As a finance minister, I am often told to keep things small, not big.

As the Minister responsible for taxation, I look to Hong Kong for inspiration.

Because your tax code is 270 pages. Our is 17,000.

So I have some lessons to learn!

### **One Country, Two Systems**

Ladies and gentlemen, over twenty years ago Deng Xiaoping and Margaret Thatcher agreed the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” ...

...a structure designed to protect Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy, independent judiciary, rule of law, and rights and freedoms of its residents and others in the Special Administrative Region.

And at the time, of course, it was not without its critics...

...many people felt a sense of trepidation about what was to come...

...with some prophesising a highly regulated economy or indeed, even economic

decline.

But the critics have been proved wrong, and Hong Kong has indeed stood the test of time.

“One Country, Two Systems” has protected the success of Hong Kong...

...and it is vital that this continues...

...as part of the faithful implementation of the Joint Declaration.

More than ever, Hong Kong has been characterised by strength and prosperity.

Today it stands as one of the most thriving and energetic cities in the world...

...like London, a global financial powerhouse...

...and the gateway to China – one of the biggest markets in the world.

And more than ever, we should perhaps reflect on Hong Kong’s legacy...

...and take on board the lessons of history.

Because in the immortal words of Mark Twain, history doesn’t repeat itself – but it does rhyme.

As the UK prepares to leave the European Union...

...to face the world ...

...we acknowledge that we will always be a part of Europe...

...but we are ready to take control of our future...

...as a sovereign nation, as Global Britain.

Just as Hong Kong challenged the naysayers all those years ago...

...our country has the chance to do precisely the same.

The ties that bind us together

Chief Secretary, by geographic fate, the UK and Hong Kong stand as lighthouses in our regions...

...bordered by sea, gateways to commerce, with a shared history of entrepreneurship.

But geo-politics is not the only thing that binds us...

... because we both share certain special qualities.

We are filled with a sense of determination, of adventure, and in our economic affairs – an unwavering commitment to cross-border trade.

These are qualities that will allow the UK and Hong Kong to survive the turbulence of the 21st century...

...and grasp the opportunities it undoubtedly presents. And, as the UK faces a time of unprecedented change in her history, we are looking to our international partners...

...and especially to those with which we have deep historic ties.

The enduring relationship between the UK and Hong Kong has its foundation in a shared history...

...but it has grown into so much more than that.

Just look at the 300,000 British citizens resident in Hong Kong...

...to the tens of thousands of Hong Kong students who study in the UK every year...

...to the British Council's Festival of Ideas next January – which will showcase the best of UK creativity and innovations.

So, we have a strong base of shared values...

...and a legacy of exchange – be it of ideas, culture or people.

But as a Treasury Minister, it is the continued strength of our economies...

...and the two-way flow of trade and investment upon which I want to focus on this evening.

## **Tapping into new markets together**

Our two great economies are deeply intertwined...

...Hong Kong remains the UK's second largest export market for goods in the APAC region...

...investment from Hong Kong into the UK has increased by 35% since 2010...

...and Hong Kong is home to over a third of all British investment in Asia.

And as we leave the European Union, we will look to further enhance our partnership with Hong Kong. Because despite appearances, no financial centre is an island...

...both the UK and Hong Kong are leading global hubs...

...in facilitating trade and prosperity throughout Europe, Asia and beyond.

And we are stronger when working together.

Through the annual London-Hong Kong Financial Forum, we have committed to explore and capitalise on the issues facing our financial industries.



It is only by harnessing the forces set to reshape financial markets – rather than avoiding them – that we can continue the UK and HK's mutually beneficial relationship.

Globalisation, climate change, infrastructure, technology...

...should be taken and acknowledged for what they are...

...as opportunities to seize.

Take for example the untapped potential of green finance...

...and the role it could play in funding 21st century corporates...

...and facilitating infrastructure projects worldwide.

In Asia – this could range from the Greater Bay Area to the trans-continental Belt and Road Initiative...

...and here at home, I am proud to see green finance being put to use as we build the UK's Northern Powerhouse.

Green finance has the potential to be a rapidly expanding force of financing.

To meet the infrastructure needs of developing Asian economies would require \$1.5 trillion in investment per year until 2030.

We should all rise to the challenge as to how green finance can be targeted to plug that gap.

This vision will only be attained if leading financial centres – like London and Hong Kong – work in tandem to scale-up the sector...

...and foster the right environment for a competitive green marketplace to emerge.

Green finance of course is but one area of innovation that the UK and Hong Kong can capitalise on.

At this dinner last year, the UK-Hong Kong FinTech Bridge was witnessed by the Chief Executive and the Chancellor of the Exchequer...

...to enhance connectivity...

...pool our mutual expertise...

...and permit our firms to access the capital, talent, accelerators and start-ups in both jurisdictions.

The bridge that extends between us will apply cutting-edge technology to turbo-charge our financial industries.

I am a great believer that FinTech has enormous power to transform international finance...

...and create a more efficient, productive and bespoke industry for corporates and consumers.

So I am thrilled that the UK and Hong Kong remain at the frontier of this sector.

In the months and years ahead, green finance and FinTech are but two aspects of an ambitious bilateral agenda.

I welcome the Chief Executive's support of our Strategic Dialogue on Trade Partnership...

...which gives us a way to identify and address any remaining barriers to trade between the UK and Hong Kong.

And we are preparing for the 8th London-Hong Kong Financial Forum...

...working to ensure corporates and investors can access new opportunities...

...and delivering the innovation and thought leadership necessary to meet challenges bigger than any one financial centre.

Because the joint investment opportunities are vast – just take the rise of China.

It is expected that up to \$600 billion in foreign funds will enter the Chinese stock market in the next 5 – 10 years...

...channelled through Stock Connects that are operational in Hong Kong...

...and soon to launch in London.

Already around 60% of all Chinese capital flows through Hong Kong...

...often hiring UK professional services firms as intermediaries and advisers.

The opportunities to fully explore the potential of investment in China ...

...is something we should both consider a priority in the years ahead.

I know I speak on behalf of the Chancellor and the Government when I say that we are committed to exploring the synergies between Hong Kong and Global Britain...

...collaborating to bring us both greater prosperity and competitiveness.

## **Conclusion**

So, to conclude this evening, I want to share this quote with you:

“Britain must always think and act internationally. But rather than rely on our influence within the confines of a narrow Europe I would have us fulfil our destiny as a nation with global interests and a special understanding of the world derived from our history.”

That was Margaret Thatcher speaking in Asia before the handover of Hong Kong in 1997.

And her words have never been more relevant.

As we prepare to face the world as Global Britain, eager to embrace the opportunities this country voted to explore...

...we are looking beyond Europe; we are looking East.

There has never been a better time to unlock the full potential of our relationship with Hong Kong, a natural ally in the East.

I look forward to strengthening the bonds between us...

...for the years to come.

Thank you all very much.

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## [News story: BPS 2018 payments exchange rate set](#)

The euro exchange rate for calculating BPS 2018 payments has been set. The rate, an average of the European Central Bank exchange rates set in September, will be €1 = £0.89281.

BPS payments for England are set in euros and then converted into sterling. The previous years' exchange rates for BPS were:

BPS 2017: €1 = £0.89470

BPS 2016: €1 = £0.85228

RPA will make full payments on BPS 2018 claims from the beginning of December.

RPA makes all payments directly into bank accounts by BACS transfer.