

# [News story: Government-backed Oxford company opens 100,000 capacity clean electric motor factory](#)

- multi-million government investment has helped create a new 100,000 capacity electric motor production facility for the Oxford-based British electric motor manufacturer YASA
- new site will support 150 high-skilled jobs for the successful University of Oxford spin-out company and help deliver the next generation of environmentally-friendly hybrid and pure electric vehicles, 80% of which are destined for export around the world, including China
- Business Secretary will open the site today and announce that a new generation of engineers and scientists will benefit from £184 million of investment in training

A new 100,000-unit electric motor production facility for YASA, thriving electric motor manufacturer and University of Oxford spinout, will be opened today (Thursday 1 February) by the Business Secretary Greg Clark.

An Oxford university spin-out founded in 2009, YASA has received extensive government support and investment for its development through auto programmes including the Advanced Propulsion Centre, Innovate UK and Regional Growth Fund. The company is now established as a world-leading electric motor manufacturer with 80% of its production destined for export across the world, including China.

In his speech today at the opening of the new site, which will support 150 high-skilled jobs, the Business Secretary will also announce as part of the [Industrial Strategy](#) a significant government investment of £184 million for 41 UK Universities to help train the next generation of world-class engineers and exceptional scientists at British universities. The announcement follows the launch of the government's [Year of Engineering campaign](#) in January, a year-long campaign to tackle the engineering skills gap and widen the pool of young people who join the profession.

The money will support Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) that fund 4-year doctoral studentships, providing UK and international students at British universities with PhD training in science, engineering and mathematics. The DTPs will support students entering training in the academic years beginning October 2018 and October 2019.

Investment in training future engineers and scientists will help deliver the ambitious vision set out in the government's Industrial Strategy which aims to make the UK the most innovative economy in the world and build a Britain fit for the future through a stronger, fairer economy with 'good work', high-quality infrastructure and businesses that can lead the world in high-tech, highly-skilled industries.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Innovation is the lifeblood of our Industrial Strategy and our economy. This spirit is embodied by YASA, a thriving business that has emerged from one of our finest academic institutions and is now helping to deliver the UK's ambition to lead the world in meeting the Grand Challenges presented by Clean Growth and Future of Mobility.

Through our Industrial Strategy, we are helping businesses and our world-leading researchers turn incredible ideas into scale-up products and services that are available to everyone.

Government investment in programmes that have supported YASA have helped propel this company forward. The factory I will be opening today is testimony to what can be achieved through our industrial approach, when academia, government and industry come together.

YASA's electric motors will help deliver on the government's ambition, through the [Automotive Sector Deal](#), to be at the forefront of the electric vehicle production, powering the next generation of innovative, environmentally-friendly vehicles, with leading auto companies like Jaguar using YASA motors to give its models like the C-X-75 the speed of a Bugatti Veyron but the emissions of a Toyota Prius.

The government's vision for its Industrial Strategy sets out 4 [Grand Challenges](#) – major global trends that the UK will face in the next decade – including Clean Growth and Future of Mobility. Each Grand Challenge represents an opportunity for the UK to establish itself as a world-leader at the forefront of the future industries that will drive these trends.

The new production facility, and the environmentally friendly engines it produces, will help the UK to meet the challenges presented by the Future of Mobility and by Clean Growth and ensure the UK is capitalising fully on the economic opportunities offered by the global shift to low-carbon economies and the increased demand for electric and hybrid auto technologies.

Chris Harris, YASA's CEO said:

YASA is a great example of what the UK can and should expect to achieve if we invest in the innovative and creative ideas emerging from our best universities, and have the determination and patience to turn those great ideas into world-beating companies.

With the right support and investment, companies like YASA can become the powerhouse of the UK's future economy, creating a wide range of high-skilled jobs and benefiting the communities of which they are a part.

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## Press release: New figures show larger proportion of strokes in the middle aged

Public Health England (PHE) today launches the [Act FAST stroke campaign](#) which urges the public to call 999 if they notice even one of the signs of a stroke in themselves, or in others:

- Face – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- Arms – can they raise both their arms and keep them there?
- Speech – is their speech slurred?
- Time – to call 999

In England, one in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime, and new statistics released by PHE show that 57,000 people had their first-time stroke in 2016. It is estimated that around 30% of people who have a stroke will go on to experience another stroke.

Stroke is the third most common cause of premature death, and a leading cause of disability in the UK. There are around 32,000 stroke-related deaths in England each year. Deaths related to stroke have declined by 49% in the past 15 years. This has been accredited to a combination of better prevention, earlier treatment and more advanced treatment. Getting an NHS Health Check, for those aged 40 to 74 years, can identify early if you are at risk of a stroke.

While the majority (59%) of strokes occur in the older generation, PHE's figures also found that over a third (38%) of first time strokes happen in middle-aged adults (between the ages of 40 to 69). More first-time strokes are now occurring at an earlier age compared to a decade ago. The average age for males having a stroke fell from 71 to 68 years and for females, 75 to 73 years between 2007 and 2016.

Awareness is crucial, so the campaign reaches out to people of all ages to highlight the risk of stroke and reiterates the signs and how vital it is that people call 999 and get to hospital as soon as possible. Around 1.9 million nerve cells in the brain are lost every minute that a stroke is left untreated, which can result in slurred speech and paralysis. If left untreated, a stroke can result in permanent disability or death.

The Stroke Association's latest [State of the Nation report](#) reveals that in the UK almost two thirds (65%) of stroke survivors leave hospital with a disability. Around three quarters of stroke survivors have arm or leg weakness, around 60% have visual problems and around a half have difficulty swallowing and loss of bladder control. Communication is also affected in around a third of stroke survivors.

Professor Julia Verne, Public Health England Director, said:

Stroke is still one of the leading causes of death in England. While it's often associated with older people, the latest research shows that people are having strokes at a younger age. Everyone needs to be aware of the signs.

Calling 999 as soon as you see even one of the symptoms develop – in the face, arms and speech – is essential. Speedy treatment will help prevent deaths and disability.

Tony Rudd, National Clinical Director for Stroke with NHS England and stroke physician at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, comments:

Thanks to improved NHS care, stroke survival is now at record high levels. Urgent treatment for strokes is essential, so friends and family can play a key part in making sure their loved ones receive care as quickly as possible.

Every minute counts and knowing when to call 999 – if you see any one of the signs of stroke – will make a significant difference to someone's recovery and rehabilitation.

Steve Brine MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care, said:

Strokes still claim thousands of lives each year, so the message of this Act FAST campaign remains as relevant as ever. The faster you act, the greater the chance of a good recovery. That's why I'm urging everybody, and we must remember stroke can hit at any age, to familiarise themselves with the signs of a stroke and be ready to act fast.

Martin Flaherty OBE, Managing Director of the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives said:

We fully support Public Health England's Act FAST stroke campaign. This is an important message and we urge people to call 999 immediately if they notice the signs or symptoms of a stroke in themselves or in others. Even if it is not a stroke, it is likely to be something that needs medical advice and attention, so calling the ambulance service is the right thing to do.

Juliet Bouverie, CEO of the Stroke Association, said:

As the UK's leading stroke charity, we have said time and again that stroke devastates lives in an instant. Almost two thirds of stroke survivors leave hospital with a disability, but it doesn't have to be this way. The faster you seek and receive emergency specialist treatment for stroke, the better your chances of making a good recovery. Knowing the signs of stroke and being able to Act FAST could save a life – your life.

The FAST (face, arms, speech, time) acronym has featured in the advertising for a number of years and is a simple test to help people identify the most common signs of a stroke.

1. The Act FAST campaign videos and pictures can be found on [Dropbox](#).
2. Interview opportunities with PHE, healthcare professionals and case studies are available upon request
3. The [Act FAST campaign](#) will run nationally from 1 February. The campaign includes advertising on TV, press, radio, bus interior posters and digital, supporting PR and a social media drive. Some activity will specifically target black and minority ethnic audiences because African, African-Caribbean and South Asian communities have a higher incidence of stroke. Twitter: [@ActFAST999](#), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ActFAST999](http://www.facebook.com/ActFAST999)
4. A stroke is a brain attack that happens when the blood supply to the brain is cut off, caused by a clot or bleeding in the brain. A mini stroke is also known as a transient ischaemic attack (TIA). It is caused by a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain.
5. The [Stroke Association](#) is a charity that believes in life after stroke and together we can conquer stroke. It works directly with stroke survivors and their families and carers, with health and social care professionals and with scientists and researchers. They campaign to improve stroke care and support people to make the best recovery they can. They fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke. The Stroke Helpline (0303 303 3100) provides information and support on stroke.
6. The [One You campaign](#) is a nationwide programme that supports adults in making simple changes that can have a huge influence on their health. Changes that could help prevent diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease and reduce risk of suffering a stroke or living with dementia, disability and frailty in later life
7. People aged over-30 are being encouraged to take Public Health England's online '[Heart Age Test](#)' to find out their 'heart age' which will show their potential risk of having a heart attack or stroke and gives them the opportunity to take action. To calculate someone's heart age, they will need to share some lifestyle information, including weight, height

and smoking habits. They will then be able to see how their real age compares to their heart age and find out how many years they can expect to live without developing cardiovascular disease

8. Adults aged 40 to 74 are eligible for a free NHS Health Check which is designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. As we get older, we have a higher risk of developing one of these conditions. An NHS Health Check helps find ways to lower this risk. Those in the age group can expect to receive a letter from your GP or local authority inviting you for a free NHS Health Check every 5 years.
9. Additional symptoms of stroke and mini stroke can include sudden:
  - loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
  - weakness or numbness on one side of the body
  - memory loss or confusion
  - dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other symptoms

## **Celebrity campaign supporters**

Celebrity supporters of this campaign include Shelley King, Gloria Hunniford, Marcus Birdman and Alastair Stewart. Quotes from the celebrities are included below and interviews are available upon request.

Shelley King, actress who plays Yazmeen Nazir on Coronation Street and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

Both my mother and grandmother have been affected by a stroke so it's something incredibly close to my heart and I want to do anything I can to encourage people to be aware of the signs of a stroke and to act quickly if you notice them, either in yourself or in other people around you. Back in the 90s when my mother had a stroke, there was very little awareness – many people wouldn't have spotted the signs or known what to do, delaying action that could have saved lives. But today, with campaigns like Act FAST, we can be empowered to do more. A stroke can strike at any time – it might be someone just walking down the street who needs your help – so it's crucial that all of us take notice of the FAST acronym and know to call 999 immediately if we see any single one of the signs.

Gloria Hunniford, television and radio presenter and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

I know first-hand the importance of recognising signs of stroke and acting fast, having had to do so for my husband, Stephen. I was about to head out of our home to work, when Stephen stumbled into the house from the garden saying his left arm felt like cotton

wool. My dad had suffered a series of strokes, so recognising the warning bells, I knew I had to act fast. Not many of us realise how quickly the clock is ticking for someone who is suffering stroke – thankfully Stephen got to the hospital in time to receive clot-busting treatment within the crucial 3-hour time window. Whether it's just one symptom or more, and no matter how subtle, it's absolutely essential to call 999 at the first signs of a stroke. I dread to think what could have happened if Stephen was too late – his outlook could have been much worse. Fortunately, he fully recovered.

Alastair Stewart OBE, journalist and newscaster and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

My father had a stroke and it was devastating for my family. He was my hero and to see him struggling with disabilities afterwards was heart-breaking. I'd encourage everyone to familiarise themselves with the Act FAST acronym so they can act quickly when they see a stroke happening and hopefully avoid someone experiencing the same difficulties as my father.

Markus Birdman, stand-up comedian and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

I considered myself to be fit and healthy, so when I was 40 and had a stroke it was a shock. I woke up one morning and found it really hard to see; I had absolutely no idea what was going on. You never think it's going to happen to you, especially not when you're young, but strokes can happen at any age so it's important that people know the signs to look out of so they can act quickly. The faster you act, the less damage that is done and the better the person's chance of a good recovery."

[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Twitter: [@PHE\\_uk](#), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](http://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland).

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# Speech: Lord Ahmad speech: Why it matters to be intolerant of intolerance

## **Introduction**

Your Eminence, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

May I start by saying it is an honour and a privilege to be here this afternoon and an honour to address you in this historic institution, one that boasts such distinguished alumni. For today's students it must be an extraordinary feeling literally to follow in the footsteps of Catholic saints. But if I may, a moment of personal reflection. It is very special for me – as a man of faith, I am a Muslim, to stand here before you, in the heart of Rome, a stone's throw from the Vatican, and speak to you of my faith.

I cherish the freedom to practise my faith right here, just as all people of all faiths and none are free to do here in Rome and as they are free to do in my country the UK, without fear of discrimination or persecution.

Freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to change religion, is a fundamental human right and one that I believe passionately should be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

The reason I believe it matters – why the British Government believes it matters and why our Prime Minister Mrs May believes it matters – is not just for its own sake, or even because we know that more than three quarters of the world are guided by their faith.

It matters because where such freedoms are absent or indeed restricted, intolerance and mistrust flourishes, it splits communities down religious fault lines. Once communities are divided in this way, it does not take too much for tensions to spill over into violence.

The connection between religious tolerance and stable societies is another reason why we think promoting freedom of religion or belief is so important. There is clear evidence to suggest that tolerant and inclusive societies are better equipped to resist extremism. And most importantly, by ensuring that everyone can contribute, it makes society as a whole better.

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Just off the west coast of Scotland, not far from Glasgow, there is an island called Bute. It is just 15 miles long, 4 miles wide, and home to fewer than 7,000 people. Two years ago, the local council moved 24 Syrian refugee families to the island.

Initially some locals were wary of these strangers. They knew nothing about them, except what they had heard on the news about the conflict in Syria, and



yes some of them feared they could be traumatised or dangerous to the community. Yet this tiny community overcame their fears and opened their arms to embrace the newcomers.

They learned Arabic and offered the new arrivals the use of their community hall, fitting prayer times around the art club and bingo. In return, they acquired a Syrian barber's shop on the high street and they even got a taste for Syrian pastries. Today many of the new arrivals speak English, yes, with a Scottish accent...

## **The UK – Strength in diversity**

The story of Bute could be the story of the UK in miniature. Over the centuries the UK has welcomed people from all over the world – I'm one of them, or my parents were: they moved to India, torn from Pakistan by dispute in the 50s and then to the UK where they first settled in Scotland too, just like those Syrian families.

The landscape of my country the UK is no longer graced exclusively by spires and steeples, that we celebrate, but also by minarets and menorah, domes and temples.

As you look over the tapestry that is modern Britain today, we have more than 1,700 mosques, 400 synagogues and 300 Gurdwaras, often standing side by side with churches and cathedrals.

I am proud of our religious diversity, but it would be wrong to suggest that it is always easy to integrate religious minorities into a society where there is already a dominant religion. When we promote religious tolerance in other countries we know from experience how challenging it can be.

Whether it is in a big multicultural city like London or a tiny community like that island community in Bute, it can require a shift in mind-set on the part of the majority – or in the case of the UK the Christian – population.

When a temple is built on your street or a halal butcher opens in the market it forces you to accept that your religion is one of many, and not the only one. At times this can be difficult, and the battle of ideas is by no means won, even in the UK.

Therefore it is important for governments and faith leaders to keep making the argument that we have nothing to fear from accepting other faiths into our society; that mutual respect is a sign of strength, not weakness; and that when faiths take the difficult step of defending each other's rights, they are spreading the universal message of tolerance, respect, understanding and peace – the universal message of all religions.

When people overcome their fears of other faiths, the whole of society benefits. And I am convinced that the mutual respect among our many different communities contributes directly to our strength as a nation. Of course we are not alone in this – many other countries strongly defend freedom of religion. In the Middle East, Lebanon stands as a model of peaceful

coexistence of faiths.

In Abu Dhabi, a third Christian cathedral – for the Greek Orthodox faith – has just opened; and a mosque beside the Catholic cathedral – which had carried the name of the Crown Prince – has just been re-named at the Crown Prince's request the Mary, Mother of Jesus Mosque.

Outside the Middle East, I also saw religious diversity flourishing in Ghana, with religious communities working together, when I visited last year.

## **Violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief Worldwide**

Yet tragically, as we look around the world, millions of people face appalling persecution every day – why – because of their beliefs.

Even right here in Europe, where we have some of the strongest equal rights protections in the world, tragically anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are on the rise and it is essential that they are dealt with robustly.

Further afield, we have all been horrified by the barbarity of Daesh, including towards Christians, Yazidis and Mandeans in Iraq and Syria, and the despicable crimes of Boko Haram's atrocities against Nigerian Christians.

These acts by terrorist organisations are appalling – but it is not just non-state actors who are to blame.

For too long far too many States have failed to prevent religious discrimination, or even to ensure the rights of citizens of all faiths – and none – are protected by the law.

For example, in Egypt, Coptic Christians still do not enjoy equal citizenship rights. They continue to face social pressure that restricts their freedom to worship, build churches, and play a full role in national life.

When legal protections are lacking, popular prejudices go unchecked, people suffer harassment, and that harassment can turn to persecution, exclusion, or even violence.

In some cases States are going further than that and are themselves actively trampling on their citizens' rights.

As we look around the world today, this is the reality for Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Rakhine state, Baha'is in Iran; and Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia.

In China, where there are as many Christians as there are people in the UK, churches must be approved by the state or risk demolition. In Saudi Arabia, non-Muslim religions are banned and the death penalty is imposed for apostasy, while in Pakistan, blasphemy laws are used to intimidate atheists, Christians and other minorities, and the state turns a blind eye to attacks on Christian minorities or the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

All are being failed by the government, the State, very people whose responsibility it is to protect them.

## **Rise of Christian Persecution**

I want to draw particular attention today to the issue of Christian persecution, which appears to be on the rise. The latest report by Aid to the Church in Need found that the plight of Christians had worsened in nearly all the countries that it had reviewed, including North Korea and Nigeria.

These findings are supported by Open Doors, whose 2018 Watch List indicates that 1 in 12 Christians have experienced persecution. Last year around the world, more than 3,000 Christians were killed, and 15,000 Christian buildings were attacked.

This is appalling, not just are these appalling statistics, but appalling full stop. Behind every statistic is a human tragedy. I welcome the work of the Catholic Church and civil society groups in trying to protect Christians around the world, and I commend the courage of the Papal Nuncio in Damascus who chose to remain in his post, despite challenging circumstances he remained in his post, during the conflict, at great personal risk, with great personal courage.

## **UK Action**

Tackling discrimination and promoting tolerance around the world is a priority for the UK Government.

Our Prime Minister Theresa May has spoken of the need to “stand up for the rights of people of all religions to practise their beliefs in peace and safety”.

Our action takes a number of different forms. We lobby governments directly about specific cases, yes we urge them to protect the rights of their citizens and where appropriate we press them to change legislation that discriminates against minority groups, or to introduce safeguards to protect the misuse of certain laws.

We also work with international partners through the UN and other bodies to promote religious freedom; to build consensus on the importance of the issue; and, just as importantly, to ensure that religious persecution in itself does not go unpunished.

We have been at the forefront of a campaign to bring Daesh to accountability and justice, committing one million pounds to help establish a UN-led investigative team to support the collection of evidence.

And we spend millions of pounds every year on grassroots projects around the world to counter hate speech, to promote tolerance and understanding of minorities and ultimately build mutual respect between communities.

## **Importance of Mutual Understanding**

Building this mutual respect is essential. As His Holiness Pope Francis rightly says, people of different faiths – and none – must – I quote – “fully

understand our respective convictions” if we are to succeed in breaking down the barriers between us.

In the words of one of my personal heroes, Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi: “If we are to respect others’ religions as we would have them respect our own, a friendly study of the world’s religions is a sacred duty.”

That is why we fully endorse the commitments made by both the Vatican and the Church of England to strengthen inter-religious dialogue.

We in the UK Government are strengthening our own links with faith groups, it is essential: for example I have introduced, since my appointment last summer, regular faith roundtables to discuss the pressing foreign policy issues of our time and deepen our understanding of religious perspectives on them.

Education is also vital if we are to eliminate intolerance and break down the barriers between communities for good. As Nelson Mandela said, no child is born hating his neighbour. Intolerance is something that is learned.

We must educate our children to understand other religions, in the hope that the next generation will be wiser than those that have come before it.

And schools can play this role, including faith schools. I myself am a product of a Church of England School, my mother insisted on it. She believed it was essential for learning about and respecting other beliefs – so I know this from experience. And I have made the same choice as a parent myself, my eldest daughter attends a Catholic school and my son a Catholic Jesuit school. It doesn’t dilute our faith, but rather makes us more rounded. The crucial thing is that schools teach inclusivity and mutual respect: that is the key to a tolerant and peaceful future.

While all these government-led efforts are important, tackling intolerance is not just about Government action: there are things that individuals can do in their communities too.

Religion itself can be part of the solution. As his Holiness Pope Francis said during his visit to Burma last year: “Religious differences need not be a source of division and distrust, but rather a force for unity, forgiveness, tolerance and wise nation-building.”

This positive force can help to ensure that people of all faiths and none truly feel part of the wider community, their country and their nation.

On Christmas Day last year, non-Christian restaurant owners across the UK opened their doors to feed the lonely and the homeless. Young people from the Muslim community in my own home town of Wimbledon, some of you may know it for other reasons, spent this New Year’s Day picking up litter. Earlier this month in North London the local Jewish community raised thousands of pounds for the family of a murdered Asian shopkeeper.

Small acts of compassion like these demonstrate that we are all part of the same community. They dispel misconceptions and prejudice, and build lasting

bonds and friendships.

## **Conclusion**

In his New Year message, His Holiness the Pope reminded us that 2018 is the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That matters to all of us, it matters to me as Minister for Human Rights.

Every act of intolerance, every attack by neighbour on neighbour, community on community and country on country is an attack on those rights and on society as a whole.

Humanity cannot afford for this to continue. Too many people – man, woman, boy, girl, black, white – have suffered for too long.

So I call on everyone gathered here today, let us all come together – diplomats and religious leaders; journalists and students; strangers and friends – and let us collectively make a pledge.

A pledge to be intolerant of intolerance; to speak out against discrimination in all its forms; to fight impunity; and to hold States true to their international commitments.

And let us collectively pledge today, not just tolerance, that is a basic instinct, but also to respect the beliefs of others; to tackle and debate those within our own communities who display intolerance and above all to see strength in our diversity, so that one day, people of all faiths and none may live side by side in peace. It is a hope, it is my prayer.

## **Further information**

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## **[News story: Foreign Secretary meeting with Irish Foreign Minister](#)**

The Foreign Secretary and the Irish Foreign Minister discussed the importance of maintaining our regular engagement through, and beyond, the UK's exit from the EU, recognising that the unique UK-Ireland relationship is epitomised by our historic ties, family bonds and people-to-people links.

On foreign policy cooperation, the Foreign Ministers agreed that close cooperation between the UK and Ireland on mutual international objectives, including on the Middle East Peace Process, was vital.

The two Ministers also expressed their mutual desire to reach a deal on the UK's exit from the EU that works for everyone, as well as a shared commitment

to avoiding a hard border.

## Further information

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# Speech: The 'firm friendship' between the UK and Spain

Your Excellency Ambassador Basterreche, Mr President San Basilio; distinguished and honourable friends; please allow me to thank the Spanish Chamber of Commerce for their kind invitation to attend this annual gala.

It's an honour and privilege to be here and to address you all.

I was invited to give a speech on a topic of my choosing; which was fantastically exciting. But my office insisted that, given I am a Minister for International Trade and, given I would be speaking to such an esteemed audience, I should perhaps narrow my focus a little.

So my speech on the Great Fire of London which started just a stone's throw from here and ravaged the original version of this beautiful building, the Skinners Hall, will have to wait for another day...

Nevertheless, the commercial relationship between the UK and Spain is something I am more than happy to discuss. And today is an opportune moment to do so.

Today we can look back on a year when the historic visit of King Felipe and Queen Letizia demonstrated the strength of our longstanding bilateral relationship.

Indeed, the UK and Spain share diplomatic ties going back 500 years, and commercial ties which go back even further. Even Shakespeare made reference to the joys of Spanish sherry and Canary wine. It is certainly a proud history on which to build.

Even more tantalising than sherry or wine is the vitality of our trading relationship today, and the opportunities we can see for tomorrow.

That is why as well as being able to celebrate the past, tonight is an opportunity to look to the future, and the chance we have not just to sustain, but strengthen our bonds of friendship.

Spain is the UK's seventh largest trading partner, with UK exports to Spain in 2016 amounting to an impressive £14.6 billion. Furthermore, figures show that UK exports of goods to Spain increased by more than 15% in the year to November 2017, compared to the same period a year ago.

The statistics on our investment in one another's economies are even more impressive.

Spanish investment in the UK was £30.3 billion in 2016, with Spanish firms investing in our transport infrastructure, in clean energy, telecoms, automotive manufacturing and financial services. Spanish banks have the largest presence of all foreign banks in the UK, larger than Germany or the USA; indeed Santander alone employs around 20,000 people in Britain.

Meanwhile, UK investment in Spain was £56 billion in 2016, 24% higher than in 2015. Globally renowned British brands are flourishing with the likes of Rolls Royce, GSK, Diageo, BUPA and BP, helping to generate many jobs in Spain.

And yet, there is potential to do much more.

When Prime Minister Rajoy visited the UK in December he wrote of his ambitions for our relationship, stating:

The aim will be to build a strategic alliance to respond to the common challenges and goals of the 21st century. Britain can count on Spain's loyal and sincere friendship. We want the best for the UK because it is simply another way of wishing the same for Spain.

I believe that fulfilling that potential should be the ambition of all of us here this evening.

This will not be without challenges. I appreciate that many of you will likely have concerns about the UK's exit from the European Union and our future relationship with our European partners.

But I can stress to you this evening, as I have done on many occasions, the UK's vote to leave the EU was not a decision to turn our back on our friends in Europe, it was a vote to build a more global Britain alongside, and in partnership with, a strong Europe.

The referendum was not driven by isolationism, nor is it an excuse for Britain to abdicate from its international responsibilities.

We are not rejecting our European friends and allies or disowning any of the good that the European Union has done. Rather, we are looking to strengthen our ties with those nations, which will drive economic growth in the 21st Century.

There can be no doubt that the UK and Spain are united in our ambition for a brighter, more prosperous world for both our peoples. Through our common outlook and shared values, we share a firm friendship that will only grow as we redefine our relationship with the European Union in the coming years.

We will approach our future discussions with the EU with determination and creativity. We are working to secure the best and most ambitious agreement

that will benefit us, but also, importantly, that will benefit our European partners.

As the Prime Minister has said, to hope for anything but success for our neighbours would be truly perverse. It would be an inconceivable act of self-harm.

And of course, we cannot overlook the continued importance of the UK to the European Union.

Overnight, on 29th March 2019, the United Kingdom will immediately become the EU's second-largest and most important external trading partner; a vast, £600 billion export market, rivalled only by the United States in the depth and breadth of our commercial connections to the continent.

The EU is rightly seeking free trade agreements with the likes of the Mercosur nations, Australia and New Zealand (which we, like Spain, overwhelmingly support). But it would be absurd for the EU not to seek a comprehensive free trade agreement with almost its largest trading partner, only 30 kilometres from the coast of France – the United Kingdom.

As we look to develop this new partnership, we start from the unique position of regulatory alignment, trust in one another's institutions and a shared spirit of cooperation. We should, therefore, be optimistic, and ambitious, about what we can achieve.

That is why the UK government is listening to business. We are keen to understand commercial concerns and make sure we address them where we can, giving them the certainty they need to invest and grow.

For example just this week the Secretaries of State in HM Treasury, BEIS and DExEU issued a joint letter to businesses setting out our ambitions for an implementation period, to help businesses adapt and prepare for the UK's exit from the EU.

Equally, I am sure my Spanish counterparts and governments throughout the EU27 are keen to understand business concerns and how the EU's future trading relationship with the UK will affect commercial interests.

I would urge all businesses to use this opportunity to advocate an open, frictionless trading relationship; building on our firm partnership to prioritise investment, growth and job creation.

We are setting out to build this new relationship at a time when we are facing the voices of economic nationalism and anti-globalisation. Growing protectionism in the world is of great concern to us all.

Free trade has transformed the world for the better; opening up new markets, providing access to millions of potential new customers, and allowing businesses to benefit from the exchange of ideas, expertise, talent and technology, across borders.

It is critical that the UK and Spain continue to collaborate as global



advocates of free trade, for example in our shared support for the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement.

I sincerely hope that we continue to work together, to champion the cause of free trade, both while the UK remains a member of the EU and after our departure.

I would like to close this evening, firstly, with a commitment.

A commitment that this government will forge ahead, creating the conditions for your businesses to grow and succeed, confident that your investment is underpinned by sound institutions, the rule of law, proportionate regulation and open markets.

And secondly, with an ask. An ask that you continue to innovate; to invest; to identify and capitalise on opportunities, and to create jobs and prosperity for all of our citizens.

I look forward to working with you all, to build on the solid foundation of our unique and historic relationship and to realise our mutual aspirations for a more prosperous future in both of our great nations.

Muchos gracias.