

News story: Economic talks herald Golden Era in UK-China relations

Around £1.4 billion worth of commercial deals, an agreement to accelerate the final preparations for the London-Shanghai Stock Connect initiative and new commitments to develop work on the Mutual Recognition of Funds and a bond connect, have been announced as part of the [9th UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue \(EFD\)](#) held in Beijing this weekend. And in a boost to UK businesses operating along the Belt and Road in Asia, up to £25 billion in financial support – such as loan guarantees – has also been announced.

The wide-ranging dialogue further strengthened the Golden Era in UK-China relations, successfully boosting cooperation across the two countries' strategic partnership.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

These successful talks are an example of Global Britain at its best, demonstrating that we can work with our friends and partners across the world to support jobs, businesses and prosperity. This is testament to our strong and dynamic economy, and the world class talent and expertise we have to offer.

These talks show the UK is truly open for business and we look forward to continuing the Golden Era of UK-China relations.

The [Economic and Financial Dialogue](#) involved a series of events over a two-day period, where agreements were reached on areas of trade and investment, deepening the financial services relationship, new partnerships on industrial strategy, and further ways in which the UK can partner on infrastructure initiatives.

These included:

Financial services

Final preparations for the London-Shanghai Stock Connect initiative, which will mean investors in each country will be able to trade shares listed on the other's stock exchange, are to be accelerated. Building on this, the first steps were also taken in establishing a bond connect, with a view to opening up the bond market to mutual trading. There was also an agreement to progress Mutual Recognition of Funds work with the launch of a feasibility study, opening up China to the UK's unrivaled asset management sector. The UK and China also engaged in deeper regulatory cooperation, including on financial stability, through the first meeting of the PBOC-Bank of England Symposium.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The EFD set out further ways in which the UK, and specifically London as a global financial centre, can partner on the Belt and Road Initiative. To showcase the expertise the UK has to offer, Douglas Flint, former Chairman of HSBC Group, was announced as the Chancellor's City Envoy to the BRI, and a City Expert Board will be established to bring together infrastructure financing, professional and emerging market expertise. Together these initiatives will facilitate further cooperation with China and create commercial opportunities for UK firms. In support of this Standard Chartered Bank also announced its support for the BRI by committing to facilitate financing to the value of at least \$20 billion by 2020.

UK Export Finance affirmed up to £25 billion capacity to support new business in BRI countries in Asia, in a boost to UK businesses selling their goods and services. The UK and China also agreed to identify specific BRI projects to act as pathfinders for UK and Chinese collaboration, and to conduct research on mechanisms to support private sector financing of infrastructure development across the BRI. China recognises the UK's world leading reputation in this area and greater partnership will increase global investment in UK infrastructure firms and enable them to export this expertise globally.

Trade and investment

Showing that the UK is open for business, the EFD saw a range of commercial announcements, worth around £1.4 billion. These include an agreement between Smiths Interconnect and Huafeng to establish a new joint venture working on products for High Speed Rail and commercial aviation; the establishment of UK fintech firm World First's office and wholly foreign owned enterprise in Shanghai; and a partnership agreement between Tsinghua X-lab and Future Planet Capital to invest in innovative companies. The EFD also made substantial progress on issues which could unlock billions of pounds worth of agreements in the future. And in order to boost trade and investment and lay the foundations for a deeper future trading relationship ahead of the UK leaving the EU, the inaugural meeting of the new UK-China Trade Working Group took place. Progress was also made on implementing a reduction in tariffs on a range of food, retail and pharmaceutical goods, and the talks also built on previous EFDs in taking steps towards China lifting its ban on UK beef exports, put in place following the BSE crisis of the 90s.

Industrial Strategy

The UK and China discussed opportunities to collaborate on the UK's new [Industrial Strategy](#) and welcomed the launch of a new UK China Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy. The UK are world leaders in innovative technologies like electric vehicles, so to build on the next generation electric vehicle package set out by the Chancellor at Budget and ensure Britain remains at the front of the pack in this market, a new collaboration was launched on zero carbon transport and Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs). This includes cooperation on the £400 million Charging

Infrastructure Investment Fund announced at the recent Autumn Budget. Discussions were also held with China's most influential electric vehicles think tank, EV100, about collaborating more closely with Chinese automotive leaders to make it easier for UK and Chinese businesses to work together, boosting investment and creating more jobs.

Energy

The accompanying Energy Dialogue with China's National Energy Administration saw the signing of an Action Plan to further cooperation between the UK and China on clean energy. Agreements were made between UK and Chinese businesses and research organisations to further develop renewable energy cooperation. The UK's offshore Renewable Catapult will be linking up with TusPark Newcastle and TusWind to further offshore wind technology development between the UK and China, and UK-based engineering consultancy Mott Macdonald and the China Energy Engineering Corporation to work together in third countries on renewable energy projects.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones said:

Britain is an innovative hub, home to skills and services that are in high demand around the world. We are world leaders in electric vehicle technology and working with China will enable us to export this expertise globally.

Deepening our trade and investment links will help create an UK economy fit for the future by generating new jobs and modern skills across the country.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Barclay said:

The relationship between the UK and China has brought real benefits, not just for our financial districts in the City, the Bund and Financial Street, but for our businesses and people across both nations.

I'm incredibly proud of what our two countries have achieved together so far, and I'm excited to build on our growing partnership to build economies of the future.

Minister for Investment, Mark Garnier said:

The Belt and Road Initiative is an ambitious initiative that will increase opportunities for global trade and it's only right we support British businesses in making the most of this.

We're putting export finance at the heart of trade promotion by making up to £25 billion available for projects in these markets.

The capacity will ensure that no viable company fails for a lack of funding and means they can take advantage of growing economies and secure deals that will boost the UK's exports and safeguard jobs at home.

Speech: Jubilee of the School of Democratic Leadership in Montenegro

Foreign Minister Darmanović, Ambassadorial colleagues,

I'm really pleased to be here today to mark the fifteenth jubilee of the School of Democratic Leadership.

When contemplating the themes of today's alumni forum, I thought of the 17th century English poet and priest John Donne, who said: No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main."

He might well have been thinking of the relationship Europe has both with the Western Balkans, and with the UK.

After two World Wars, Europe has evolved structures which promote integration and dialogue to address our shared development. These themes are particularly important as Europe contemplates the future of the EU. As Montenegro looks to the future of its EU accession process. And, as the UK considers Brexit.

British Ministers have consistently made clear that the UK is leaving the EU, not leaving Europe.

As Prime Minister May said, in Florence on 22 September, "Brexit does not mean we are no longer a proud member of the family of European nations." We are not turning our back on Europe; and we continue to believe that the success of the EU is profoundly in the national interest of the UK, and we believe of the wider world.

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The UK has played and will continue to play an active role in the Western Balkans, in promoting European prosperity, stability and security.

And that is why the UK is a strong supporter of Montenegrin reforms. And why we are delighted to host the Western Balkans Summit in London in July 2018.

The Berlin Process is an important tool to advance our shared aims of embedding stability in the Western Balkans.

It is quite fashionable today to complain about either being in a crisis or

being on the verge of crisis. However, nobody who has ever spent more than a few days in the Western Balkans can say that the joint European and Western Balkan reform efforts have not borne fruit.

As you know, Chancellor Merkel launched the Berlin Process in 2014, with the aim of boosting European engagement and regional cooperation in the still fragile Western Balkans region.

The Berlin Process is based around three pillars: firstly regional cooperation and resolving outstanding bilateral questions, secondly strengthening good governance and thirdly increasing prosperity via sustainable economic growth.

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The UK is still in the planning phase for the Summit. We want the Summit to continue the achievements of the Berlin Process, and of previous Summit hosts, and to promote partnership and responsibility.

We want to build momentum on the interconnectivity agenda – including the delivery of large-scale transport and energy projects and achieve progress on regional and inter-regional integration. We very much welcome the important work that the Commission and the international financial institutions are doing in these regards.

We are keen to ensure a strong focus on digital and entrepreneurship in order to boost the region's growth potential, job creation and economic cooperation.

Youth will be a key focus. We are delighted that the Regional Youth Cooperation Office has been inaugurated and look forward to it becoming fully operational. We want to profile young peoples' achievements across the region and support vocational educational and expand youth and professional exchanges.

And, we hope the Summit will build ever stronger partnerships with the region to deliver against common security challenges including on serious and organised crime, anti-corruption, cyber security, terrorism and violent extremism.

In addition, the UK is conscious of the importance of supporting reconciliation efforts in the region. It is a painful truth that stability will always remain limited and elusive until we face not only what has been done to us, but what has been done to others in our name.

In all these areas, the UK is looking forward to helping, sharing its expertise, and stimulating further delivery and cooperation.

Our support for the Western Balkan's EU accession process remains unchanged – it is fundamental for driving forward reform, embedding stability and addressing security challenges. Our departure from the EU does not affect that, even if future decisions, after we have left, will be for others.

[News story: Legal Director Nick Olley wins Legal 500 Award](#)

Nick has provided strong leadership to DfT Legal Advisers since he was appointed as its legal chief in 2013.

His role spans a huge variety of high-profile public sector initiatives such as the HS2 project, the airports capacity programme and the ongoing development of rail franchising policy. Nick also works on several futuristic developments, such as the Space Industry Bill and the legislative framework for autonomous vehicles.

The [Legal 500 UK Awards](#) identify the best in-house counsel, law firms and sets. They are selected through in-depth research carried out across the whole of the UK legal sector, including 90,000 client interviews.

[Speech: Annual Human Rights Day reception 2017: Lord Ahmad's speech](#)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, welcome to you all to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It's an honour indeed to welcome such strong advocates on this important issue to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

In particular, I would like to thank Mervyn Thomas from [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#) and also welcome both Tina and Alissa to the panel, and I look forward to working with all of you, indeed everyone in this room, on this important issue.

I am also delighted to acknowledge that we are joined this morning by my colleague and friend, Minister of State [Lord Bates](#), who is the Minister of State at the Department for International Development. Michael and I have been working on this agenda and others, hand in glove, and I think it underlines the importance that we in the government, are attaching to cross-Whitehall working.

I am also delighted to welcome the Chairman of the APPG Baroness Fiona Hodgson to the room, and there are others in this room who know that faith is part and centre of the challenges we face, and it is important to ensure the voice of the oppressed, the voice of those who don't have a voice, is heard.

Importance of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)

And therefore, we all ask the question, why does freedom of religion or belief matter? It matters simply because the short answer is that religion itself matters to a huge number of people. To us in this room and beyond.

According to the Pew Research Centre, religious faith guides the daily life of more than 80% of the world's population. I was once asked very recently, about the importance and priorities that I lay in my own life, and I mentioned 2 things beginning with F – family and faith. Because I think these are the things which transcend all professions, all walks of life, and they are important in what defines us.

As a man of faith myself, religion certainly does matter to me. So does the freedom to practice my faith without fear of discrimination or persecution. I am proud to be Minister of a country, born and bred in a country where I can do just that.

When I travel around the world, I say this, that Britain is the best place to be a Muslim. It is the best place to be a Christian, a Jew, a Sikh, a Hindu, a Buddhist or whatever faith you choose to follow, or indeed if you have no faith. Because that is what defines our country. The strength of our diversity, the strength of our communities. The strength of our faith communities, and those of no faith.

The freedoms enjoyed here in the United Kingdom by people of all faiths and none, I believe passionately, should be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

This matters not only because of the importance of religion in and of itself. It also matters, ladies and gentlemen, because promoting tolerance, actually not just tolerance, but understanding and respect for all, helps to create a platform for a stable and prosperous society.

By ensuring that everyone can contribute, society as a whole is better off. There is also clear evidence to suggest that the tolerant and inclusive societies are better equipped to resist extremism. Those of you who know me know that I feel very passionately about this issue of tackling radicalisation and extremism. Because if we can tackle extremism at its origin, we will be able to deal with the challenges of terrorism that we face, not just in our own country, but around the world.

For all these reasons, freedom of religion or belief is vitally important. It is essential.

Nevertheless, as we all know, religious persecution, which has caused conflict and intolerable human suffering for centuries, has tragically still not been consigned to the history books. In many parts of the world, and for many people of faith, it remains an everyday reality.

States not meeting obligations

70 years on since the adoption of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), as we look around the globe, far too many states are still failing to protect all their citizens' rights to worship freely. They are failing to prevent religious discrimination, failing to ensure people of all faiths and none are protected by the law.

In some cases, states are acting in even more harmful ways than they did before. They are not only failing to protect the rights of religious minorities, they are actively contributing to the suppression and violation of those rights. This is a reality for many across the world today, the Assyrian Christians of Iraq; the Rohingya Muslims of Burma; the Baha'is in Iran; the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia to name but a few.

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

The responsibility was set out in the Universal Declaration and enshrined into law under the [International Convention on Civil and Political Rights](#). All states party to that Convention must protect people in their jurisdiction from discrimination, protect their right to worship freely, change their religion – often a crime in many parts of the world, or have no religion, and to have the right, if you have no faith, to be equally protected as citizens of a country.

On behalf of the British government I call on all states party to that International Convention to uphold these binding principles.

Government action

Our government, led by our Prime Minister Mrs May, has made this a key priority. Our Prime Minister herself has spoken of the need to “stand up for people of all religions to practice their beliefs in peace and safety”.

That is why I have asked our global diplomatic network to prioritise this critical area of work. This effort takes a number of forms: from direct diplomacy to project work; from multilateral consensus building to collaboration with faith leaders. And I am delighted that we are joined by His Grace Bishop Angaelos and I know and appreciate and thank you for the work you do as well.

Bilateral action

Our commitment to this issue also means that we directly engage and lobby at the highest levels of government on behalf of persecuted minorities. Let me just give you some current examples.

In Burma, UK ministers have raised our deepest [concerns about the persecution of Rohingya Muslims](#) with both the civilian government and the military authorities. As the United Nations have said, they have called this a classic

case of ethnic cleansing of a community.

We have pressed them to enable refugees to return in safety and to investigate allegations of human rights abuses. We are not alone in this. We are working together with other international partners. This bilateral lobbying is complemented by our work at the UN as well. And indeed, I am working very closely with Special Representative Pramila Patten on this very issue.

And last week, [I attended a Special Session of the Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva, which focused specifically on the plight of the Rohingya Muslims. We have also expressed to the Burmese authorities our concern over the intimidation faced by Christians in Chin, Kachin and Kayin States. I was pleased to host a roundtable with faith and civil society leaders in October looking at how we can work together to protect freedom of religion or belief in Burma.

Reflecting, when I look at religion, and religion is often to blame, I say do not blame the faith, do not blame the religion. There are those who claim to follow a particular faith, yet they don't follow it. They hijack it, misrepresent it and use it in a way that is to justify their own heinous crimes. That must end.

And, this is not just in Burma, but in other parts of the world. Most recently, we have had discussions with Pakistan's Human Rights Ministry. Our Minister for Asia Mark Field recently raised the discrimination suffered by Christian communities, and the Ahmadiyya communities. And I also made sure that this was the focus of the UK's response on Pakistan's Universal Period Review at the [Human Rights Council in November](#), where we asked for an electoral register free of religious bias.

Yet tragically, recent events in that very country demonstrate how much more work is still to be done. In Eritrea, we called on the government to release all prisoners detained for their religious beliefs, including the Orthodox Patriarch, Abune Antonios. And as we look out to the Middle East, the persecution of religious minorities by Daesh, including the Yazidis, was there for all to see, and has been particularly horrifying.

But, ladies and gentlemen, the UK has played a leading role in the international campaign to defeat Daesh on the battlefield. And only this weekend, we saw the Iraqi Prime Minister acknowledge that Daesh had been defeated in Iraq as well.

We must now continue to work to hold them to account and to fight for justice for those who have suffered, not just in Iraq and Syria, but also those around the world who have been victims of terrorist attacks in an indiscriminate fashion. And that is why the UK has committed £1 million to help set up a UN special investigation team. Starting in Iraq, this team will collect, preserve and store evidence of crimes committed by Daesh, so that we can bring them to justice. The team will be led by a Special Adviser with a mandate to promote this goal around the world.

Defeating Daesh and holding them to account is just the start of our campaign to defend freedom of religion or belief in the Middle East. The next step is to work with our Iraqi allies to ensure that they remain committed to protecting the rights of religious minorities across the country.

Multilateral work

More broadly, we will also work with our international partners to ensure that the obligation to defend freedom of religion or belief is woven ever deeper into the fabric of international relations. An important element of this remains our work to maintain consensus on freedom of religion or belief in key resolutions – principally at the United Nations – but also in the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe.

Projects

Another diplomatic tool at our disposal is our project work through the Magna Carta Fund. One of those projects supports the work of Hardwired Inc in promoting religious tolerance in both Morocco and Lebanon, and we will hear about that from Tina Ramirez shortly, and I pay tribute to their work in this respect.

Work with faith actors

The other important strand of our human rights work, is one that I have given particular priority to, is collaboration. Yes, we talk about international action, but we must take communities with us. That's why many of you know that I have put particular emphasis on collaboration with faith leaders and religious representatives. This cooperation is hugely beneficial to our work, which is why I have established a regular roundtable with a changing cast of faith leaders and civil society representatives to address the issues in front of us.

This is an opportunity to discuss important foreign policy topics from a different perspective, and provides a platform for dialogue on how government can work better with faith groups to find solutions to international challenges. The second of these roundtable takes place tomorrow, when we will look at the role of women in tackling religiously motivated violent extremism.

On that point, I have been astounded at times about the lack of women being represented. When we are looking at issues of peace, resolving conflict, and yes, dealing with violent extremism, all too often I enter a room and I say this as a man, myself, that when I look around the table, to try and resolve these issues, trying to meet the challenges, and look for practical solutions, there are only men in the room.

That is not acceptable and therefore we must need to tackle that head on. Therefore, I have been recently also promoting the importance of women being part and parcel of tackling the issues and challenges that we face around

countering violent extremism.

Conclusion

In a moment I will hand over to Mervyn Thomas, but before I do so, I look around this room and see many friends, many people I work with, have previously worked with, and continue to work with today, and I look forward to working with you all in our tomorrows.

But in doing so, may I thank you on behalf of our Prime Minister, on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, and all across government for your commitment, your determination, your perseverance, often I know, in challenging situations. But your perseverance, ladies and gentlemen, is showing dividends and together in a collaborative fashion, we can achieve so much more.

As Minister of State at the Foreign Office, responsible for Human Rights, I assure you I am absolutely determined to ensure that the UK is doing all it can to promote, protect, sustain and strengthen freedom of religion or belief around the world. I know that we have the political will, the people and the influence necessary to make progress. And with your support, your collaboration, the strength of your organisations and your networks, I am confident we will deliver and we will succeed.

Thank you.

[Press release: Ipswich Tidal Flood Barrier Gate a step closer](#)

Huge hydraulic arms that will operate Ipswich's new tidal flood gate have been installed, taking the vital £70 million project 1 step closer to completion.

VIPs, including the Environment Agency chief executive Sir James Bevan, attended an open day to see the latest work on the flood defence scheme, which will significantly reduce the risk of flooding for 2,000 homes and businesses in the town.

The 200 tonne tidal gate was manufactured in the Netherlands and arrived in Suffolk in October, a significant milestone in the 4 year project. The gate is 22 metres wide and will stand 9 metres tall when in its "closed position". It is finished with 5 tonnes of special paint that will help protect it, as it spends most of its life under water.

It was lowered into place by a specially constructed 1,000 tonne crane and the operating mechanism and control building are now being installed.

The project is being undertaken by Environment Agency contractor VBA – a joint venture between VolkerStevin, Boskalis Westminster and Atkins – and is due to be completed next year.

Sir James Bevan, chief executive at the Environment Agency, said:

It's been fantastic to visit the Ipswich tidal barrier gate and see this incredible feat of engineering. The £70 million barrier will not only help reduce the threat of flooding for 2,000 homes and businesses but also be a boost for the area's economy. Working with partners has been key to the scheme's success and I look forward to seeing the finished scheme.

Floods Minister, Thérèse Coffey, said:

Suffolk is no stranger to flooding and the devastating impacts it can have. That is why I am really pleased that we have made progress with this scheme which is a key part of the regeneration of our county town.

This new £70 million barrier is brilliant news for Ipswich and is just 1 example of our investment across Suffolk to better protect communities across the county from flooding.

The Ipswich Flood Defence Management Strategy (IFDMS) will increase the standard of protection and takes into account current climate change predictions.

The final element of the scheme involves building a tidal barrier across the New Cut River in Ipswich with associated works to tie it into the new east and west bank walls and gates.

The flood defence scheme, which will reduce the risk of flooding to 1,608 homes and 422 businesses and support key infrastructure, has been partnership funded by: the Environment Agency, Ipswich Borough Council, Department for Communities and Local Government, the Haven Gateway Partnership, and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

The barrier gate is expected to be operational in the spring of 2018.