

Speech: Employer Recognition Scheme Awards

I'm delighted to be here and it's a great honour to have Prince Harry joining us fresh from a triumphant Invictus Games and from raising awareness of mental health issues in the Armed Forces earlier today.

We are, Your Royal Highness, incredibly fortunate to have someone with such immense energy and enthusiasm working on our Armed Forces' behalf.

It's also a privilege to meet in this iconic museum, currently celebrating its centenary. If you get the chance, wander the halls.

There you'll find our national story documented in deeds of outstanding courage from Gallipoli and the Battle of Britain, to our exploits in the Atlantic during the Cold War.

Among the modern day exhibits you'll find extraordinarily mementos of sheer courage such as Johnson Beharry's Victoria Cross, the first Victoria Cross awarded in the 21st century, to a soldier who twice survived hits by rocket propelled grenades who despite his own injuries and showing complete disregard for his own safety then saved his comrades from the fire.

Today, as Your Royal Highness knows, our forces are serving on operations in more than 25 countries.

They're helping fragile democracies from Afghanistan to Iraq, supporting peacekeeping in Somalia and South Sudan, and leading in NATO with troops in Estonia and Poland. Our planes protecting the Black Sea Skies, and our ships of the Royal Navy leading NATO's maritime task groups.

No praise can be high enough for them. Nor for those who go out of their way to support them.

So today whether you hail from the public or private sector whether you're in a business employing fewer than 10 people or more than 500 people, I'd like to thank you all.

First, for supporting our Reserves. For giving those civic minded citizens more than flexibility to train or to go on deployment but for giving them also encouragement and recognition. It is your support has enabled us to increase our Reserve numbers by 1,280 up almost 4 per cent since last year with our total trained and untrained strength now standing at 36,580.

Second, I want to thank you for what you're doing for our veterans. Laing O'Rourke and Build Force are attracting service leavers into the building trade. North West Ambulance Service, one of four blue light organisations to scoop gold, is helping veterans retrain as ambulance drivers.

Transport for London and Airbus are offering placements to wounded, injured

and sick soldiers. And Combat pest control a small business that doesn't just free homes from household menaces but provides assistance to children from Afghanistan to Africa is a workforce entirely composed of veterans.

Thirdly, thank you for the help you're giving to our wider Armed Forces families.

Sodexo is actively welcoming military spouses into its workforce, allowing spouses to transfer to different sites when their partners are deployed or posted elsewhere. X-forces are helping veterans and their partners into work. And Manpower are giving free employability sessions to spouses living on Salisbury Plain.

Yet those efforts, for our reserves, our veterans, our families don't account for why the people in this hall now hold gold.

The reason you're listed among our elite 80 employers is because you're also superb advocates leading by example showing that employing Reservists and veterans simply makes business sense.

We have here amongst us Corporal Ian Taylor. A systems integration and test engineer for General Dynamics. His Royal Highness will know him well.

He's just back from the Invictus Games in Toronto, where he not only competed in swimming, powerlifting and rowing, he not only set a personal best, but won silver in the breast stroke.

Who wouldn't want to employ someone with such grit and guts, determination and drive in their company too?

Your collective efforts have encouraged more and more companies to commit to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Today we have more than 1900 companies that have signed up – and we are on track to hit 2000 soon.

Back in 1920 at the official opening of Imperial War Museum its founder Sir Alfred Mond declared the museum would not be a "monument of military glory, but a record of toil and sacrifice" wherein all would find "an example or illustration of the sacrifice he or she made".

So today, alongside sacrifice we record the service of great employers. As years to come, as the threats against us intensify, we will increasingly look to our wider Armed Forces family to help us manage all those demands and pressures.

But with your example, inspiring the businesses of the future to follow in your footsteps, I am very confident that our Armed Forces family will continue to thrive.

News story: Defence Secretary and Prince Harry Award Gold to Supportive Employers

The award is the Ministry of Defence's prestigious badge of honour for organisations who have demonstrated outstanding support for the Armed Forces community. Hosted by Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, the award presentation took place on Monday 9 October at the Imperial War Museum.

HRH Prince Harry thanked this year's winners and heard about successful initiatives providing veterans with a fair chance of starting a second career in diverse industries following military service. Other support measures in the workplace include flexibility for Reservists and mentoring and job opportunities for military spouses.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

This year's Gold award winners should be extremely proud of the work they are doing to live up to the Armed Forces Covenant pledge and to promote the pledge to others.

I'm delighted to recognise employers who make it crystal clear that regardless of size, location, or sector, employing people with military skills is good for business. I hope others follow their example, thereby delivering a better deal for veterans and armed forces families.

Welcoming their Gold Award, Mike Brown MVO, Commissioner Transport for London said:

The technical expertise and skills that ex-service personnel have developed during their military service, such as problem-solving and working under pressure, are ideal for a number of roles within the transport industry and we are proud to count them amongst our employees.

The employers recognised with the ERS Gold distinction in 2017 for going above and beyond their pledges under the Armed Forces Covenant:

Airbus	Inverclyde Council	Shropshire Council
Balfour Beatty	Kuehne + Nagel	Skanska UK Plc
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	Laing O'Rourke	Sodexo UK & Ireland

Combat Pest Control	Liverpool City Council	South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
DHL	Mabway Ltd	Transport for London
DXC Technology	ManpowerGroup UK	West Midlands Fire Service
ER Systems Global	Metropolitan Police Service	Wiltshire Council
FDM	Morson Group	Wolferstans Solicitors
Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce	Network Rail	X-Forces
General Dynamics UK	NHS Golden Jubilee Foundation	
Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	North West Ambulance Service	
Hull City Council	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	

The Employer Recognition Scheme encompasses three award tiers: Bronze, Silver and Gold. Gold Award winning employers have to first make pledges under the Armed Forces Covenant, then demonstrate and advocate their support for the Armed Forces. So far, 79 employers have been recognised with a Gold award.

[Press release: PM meeting with business advisory council: 9 October 2017](#)

The Prime Minister this afternoon chaired the latest meeting of the [government's business advisory council](#) at Downing Street.

At the meeting, the Prime Minister set out the importance of the range of government's engagements with businesses to date, and that these have informed our proposal of an implementation period and commitment to continue to attract the right talent to the UK workforce.

The Prime Minister [reiterated the position set out in her Florence speech](#) – that the government's goal is for a smooth, orderly exit in which there is only one set of changes for businesses and people.

The importance of seeking an ambitious future trading partnership with the EU was also discussed, as well as forging new trade relationships around the world. The discussions on trade covered the publication of two White Papers today, outlining our approaches to trade and customs legislation after we leave the EU.

In addition, the council considered wider issues of importance to the UK economy including business and infrastructure investment, building consumer confidence, boosting productivity, further strengthening the UK's skilled workforce and the huge potential for UK businesses to export.

The Prime Minister emphasised the benefits of meeting with employers at all levels over the past year and said she will continue to have regular engagement with a wide variety of voices right across business.

News story: Education Secretary opens new high speed rail college

Education Secretary Justine Greening today (9 October) helped launch the new National College for High Speed Rail (NCHSR) in Doncaster.

The college is the largest of five new national colleges created by the government to ensure young people can learn world-class technical skills, including, engineering, design, planning, manufacturing and construction.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

It has been great to attend the official launch of the NCHSR. It is part of how we are steadily transforming technical education in this country, training up a new generation of skilled young people and the existing workforce so that British business has the skills it needs and people have the opportunities they want – a win-win for everyone.

We can only do this in partnership with employers – the NCHSR is just one great example of this. The impressive new building and training facilities are at the forefront of our ambitions to create a world class system of technical education.

Doncaster is also one of the 12 Opportunity Areas that will benefit from a share of £72 million to raise attainment and aspirations. NCHSR is part of this work, making sure Doncaster's local talent gets the opportunity to fulfil its potential and ensuring a prosperous future for the UK.

Statement to Parliament: PM statement on leaving the EU: 9 Oct 2017

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on our plans for leaving the European Union.

Today the fifth round of negotiations begins in Brussels and this government is getting on with the job of delivering the democratic will of the British people.

As I set out [in my speech in Florence](#) we want to take a creative and pragmatic approach to securing a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union which spans both a new economic relationship and a new security relationship.

So let me set out what each of these relationships could look like – before turning to how we get there.

Economic partnership

Mr Speaker, I have been clear that when we leave the European Union we will no longer be members of its single market or its customs union.

The British people voted for control of their borders, their laws and their money. And that is what this government is going to deliver.

At the same time we want to find a creative solution to a new economic relationship that can support prosperity for all our peoples.

We do not want to settle for adopting a model enjoyed by other countries.

So we have rejected the idea of something based on European Economic Area membership. For this would mean having to adopt – automatically and in their entirety – new EU rules over which, in future, we will have little influence and no vote.

Neither are we seeking a Canadian-style free trade agreement. For compared with what exists today, this would represent such a restriction on our mutual market access that it would benefit none of our economies.

Instead I am proposing a unique and ambitious economic partnership. It will reflect our unprecedented position of starting with the same rules and regulations. We will maintain our unequivocal commitment to free trade and high standards. And we will need a framework to manage where we continue to align and where we choose to differ.

There will be areas of policy and regulation which are outside the scope of our trade and economic relations where this should be straightforward.

There will be areas which do affect our economic relations where we and our

European friends may have different goals; or where we share the same goals but want to achieve them through different means.

And there will be areas where we want to achieve the same goals in the same ways, because it makes sense for our economies.

And because rights and obligations must be held in balance, the decisions we both take will have consequences for the UK's access to the EU market – and EU access to our market.

But this dynamic, creative and unique economic partnership will enable the UK and the EU to work side by side in bringing shared prosperity to our peoples.

Security relationship

Let me turn to the new security relationship.

As I said when I visited our troops serving on the NATO mission in Estonia last month, the United Kingdom is unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe's security.

And we will continue to offer aid and assistance to EU member states that are the victims of armed aggression, terrorism and natural or manmade disasters.

So we are proposing a bold new strategic agreement that provides a comprehensive framework for future security, law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation: a treaty between the UK and the EU.

We are also proposing a far reaching partnership on how together we protect Europe from the threats we face in the world today.

So this partnership will be unprecedented in its breadth and depth, taking in cooperation on diplomacy, defence and security, and development.

Implementation

Let me turn to how we build a bridge from where we are now to the new relationship that we want to see.

When we leave the European Union on 29th March 2019 neither the UK, nor the EU and its Members States, will be in a position to implement smoothly many of the detailed arrangements that will underpin this new relationship we seek.

Businesses will need time to adjust and governments will need to put new systems in place. And businesses want certainty about the position in the interim.

That is why I suggested in my speech at Lancaster House there should be a period of implementation – and why I proposed such a period in my speech in Florence last month.

During this strictly time-limited period, we will have left the EU and its

institutions, but we are proposing that for this period access to one another's markets should continue on current terms and Britain also should continue to take part in existing security measures.

The framework for this period, which can be agreed under Article 50, would be the existing structure of EU rules and regulations.

Now I know some people may have some concerns about this. But there are two reasons why it makes sense.

First, we want our departure from the EU to be as smooth as possible – it wouldn't make sense to make people and businesses plan for two sets of changes in the relationship between the UK and the EU.

Second, we should concentrate our negotiating time and capital on what really matters – the future long-term relationship we will have with the EU after this temporary period ends.

During the implementation period, people will continue to be able to come and live and work in the UK; but there will be a registration system – an essential preparation for the new immigration system required to re-take control of our borders.

And our intention is that new arrivals would be subject to new rules for EU citizens on long term settlement.

We will also push forward on our future independent trade policy, talking to trading partners across the globe and preparing to introduce those deals once this period is over.

How long the period is should be determined simply by how long it will take to prepare and implement the new systems we need.

As of today, these considerations point to an implementation period of around two years.

And as I said in Florence – because I don't believe that either the EU or the British people will want us to stay longer in the existing structures than necessary, we could also agree to bring forward aspects of that future framework, such as new dispute resolution mechanisms, more quickly if this can be done smoothly.

At the heart of these arrangements, there should be a clear double lock: guaranteeing a period of implementation giving businesses and people the certainty they will be able to prepare for the change; and guaranteeing this implementation period will be time-limited, giving everyone the certainty this will not go on forever.

Negotiations

Mr Speaker, the purpose of the Florence speech was to move the negotiations forward and that is exactly what has happened.

As Michel Barnier said after the last round, there is a “new dynamic” in the negotiations. And I want to pay tribute to my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union for all he has done to drive through real and tangible progress on a number of vital areas.

On citizens’ rights, as I have said many times this government greatly values the contributions of all EU citizens who have made their lives in our country. We want them to stay.

In Florence, I gave further commitments that the rights of EU citizens in the UK – and UK citizens in the EU – will not diverge over time, committing to incorporate our agreement on citizens’ rights fully into UK law and making sure the UK courts can refer directly to it.

Since Florence there has been more progress including reaching agreement on reciprocal healthcare and pensions, and encouraging further alignment on a range of important social security rights.

So I hope our negotiating teams can now reach full agreement quickly.

On Northern Ireland, we have now begun drafting joint principles on preserving the Common Travel Area and associated rights. And we have both stated explicitly we will not accept any physical infrastructure at the border.

We owe it to the people of Northern Ireland – and indeed to everyone on the island of Ireland – to get this right.

Then there is the question of the EU budget.

As I have said, this can only be resolved as part of the settlement of all the issues that we are working through.

Still I do not want our partners to fear that they will need to pay more or receive less over the remainder of the current budget plan as a result of our decision to leave. The UK will honour commitments we have made during the period of our membership.

And as we move forwards, we will also want to continue working together in ways that promote the long-term economic development of our continent.

This includes continuing to take part in those specific policies and programmes which are greatly to our joint advantage, such as those that promote science, education and culture – and those that promote our mutual security.

And as I set out in my speech at Lancaster House, in doing so, we would want to make a contribution to cover our fair share of the costs involved.

Mr Speaker, I continued discussions on many of these issues when I met with European leaders in Tallinn at the end of last month.

And in the bi-lateral discussions I have had with Chancellor Merkel, Prime

Minister Szydło, President Tusk and the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, they welcomed the tone set in Florence and the impact this was having on moving the negotiations forwards.

Legislation

Mr Speaker, preparing for life outside the EU is also about the legislative steps we take.

Our EU Withdrawal Bill will shortly enter Committee Stage, carrying over EU rules and regulations into our domestic law from the moment we leave the EU.

And today we are publishing two White Papers on trade and customs. These pave the way for legislation to allow the UK to operate as an independent trading nation and to create an innovative customs system that will help us achieve the greatest possible tariff and barrier-free trade as we leave the EU.

And while I believe it is profoundly in all our interests for the negotiations to succeed, it is also our responsibility as a government to prepare for every eventuality. So that is exactly what we are doing.

These White Papers also support that work, including setting out steps to minimise disruption for businesses and travellers.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, a new, deep and special partnership between a sovereign United Kingdom and a strong and successful European Union is our ambition and our offer to our European friends.

Achieving that partnership will require leadership and flexibility, not just from us but from our friends, the 27 nations of the EU.

And as we look forward to the next stage, the ball is in their court. But I am optimistic it will receive a positive response.

Because what we are seeking is not just the best possible deal for us – but I believe that will also be the best possible deal for our European friends too.

So while, of course, progress will not always be smooth; by approaching these negotiations in a constructive way – in a spirit of friendship and co-operation and with our sights firmly set on the future – I believe we can prove the doomsayers wrong.

And I believe we can seize the opportunities of this defining moment in the history of our nation.

Mr Speaker, a lot of the day to day coverage is about process. But this, on the other hand, is vitally important.

I am determined to deliver what the British people voted for and to get it right.

That is my duty as Prime Minister.

It is our duty as a Government.

And it is what we will do.

And I commend this Statement to the House.