

Speech: UK government supports training of Zambia peacekeeping defence forces

It is a great honour to be here today. I lived and worked for two years with the British, US and Afghan military in the war-zone of Helmand, southern Afghanistan, during which time our coalition forces were losing lives on an almost daily basis. And my eldest son is a British army officer who could be deployed on operations at any time. Therefore I know from personal experience about the good that our armed forces can achieve in trying to stabilise places in the world that are shattered by conflict. And I know about the sacrifices that brave military personnel are often called upon to make.

I repeat that it is an honour to be here today.

I echo the US Ambassador's congratulations to President Lungu, to the Government, to the Zambian Defence forces, and to the Zambian people, for supporting peace and security mission in Africa, with boots on the ground.

I am glad that British Army trainers could assist again with the Zambian Defence Force's pre-deployment training, in 2017 as we did in 2016. The training of ZAMBATT 3 over the last 2 months has been a joint effort between Zambian, US and UK trainers: the Zambian Army under Colonel Changala, US African Contingency Operations Training & Assistance under the direction of Curtis Crum, and British Army under W01 Regimental Sergeant Major Ash Curson.

The training package involved individual specialist courses ranging from advance medical training to creating and training the female engagement teams rightly highlighted by the US Ambassador. This training then progressed from training individuals to Companies of around 120 personnel, and to the whole Battle Group 750-strong.

I wish to thank the Zambian and US teams for their patience in trying to understand the wide variety of British accents within the UK team. While Britain can't compare with Zambia for the number of local languages spoken, we display our diversity through regional accents and dialects which can be difficult to comprehend when first heard, even for fellow countrymen like myself.

The British team have described to me the training as "testing". I gather that Mr Crum and Colonel Changala, who designed, coordinated and, ran this package, are not the kind of trainers who would allow anyone to have an easy or comfortable time.

Credit must go to Colonel Changala, and his Zambian trainers, who worked tirelessly to ensure their fellow country men and women are now well placed to achieve a positive effect in the Central African Republic.

Mention should be made of the Zambian Air Force contingent, under the command of Col Alipher Phiri, who have been put through their paces – from base protection to helicopter casualty evacuation exercise. I wish you well with your probable mission to South Sudan.

I wish to pay tribute, as well, to Lt Col John Banda, CO of ZAMBATT 3, for the sterling effort he and his headquarters team have put into shaping ZAMBATT 3 into an effective force of which Zambia can proud.

ZAMBATT 3 can expect a challenging tour, with your subunits spread over great distances in a confusing and contested environment, where the belligerent forces are neither easily defined nor contained.

ZAMBATT 3, you represent a glimmer of hope to the people of the Central African Republic. Treat them with respect. Since you are guests in their land, the onus will be on you to understand their story, their pain and anger, after the trauma they have experienced. When you finish your work in their country, let them remember the people of Zambia with affection and pride.

Lt Col John Banda, I wish you and the men and women of ZAMBATT 3 the best of luck. From what my British Army colleagues have told me, I don't believe that ZAMBATT 3 will be found wanting.

[News story: Westminster incident](#)

For latest updates on the incident that took place in Westminster on 22 March you can [read more on the Metropolitan Police website](#).

Twitter updates

You can follow [@Terrorism Police UK](#) and [@MetPoliceUK](#) for Twitter updates on the incident.

Useful advice on staying safe

Useful advice for:

- [businesses to help inform preparation and response plans to terrorist incidents](#)
- [the private sector to enhance their security at times of raised threat levels](#).

Find out more about the [Action Counters Terrorism campaign](#).

If you see anything that causes you concern or raises your suspicions do not hesitate to call the Police on 0800 789 321 or in an emergency 999.

Speech: Together, we can build further our partnerships for prosperity

Your Excellency, Governor Abubakar Sani Bello, and distinguished guests

I am delighted to be back here in Minna. This is my second visit during my time in Nigeria. I think it's important for foreign representatives to get out of the capital of the countries in which they serve, even more so in a country as large and diverse as Nigeria. The UK is firmly committed to its relationship with Nigeria at the state level as well as the federal.

The theme of our event today is Prosperity – seizing the opportunities across Nigeria, and tackling the barriers and the challenges that are currently holding back the scope for growth, trade and investment. We are also able to discuss initial findings from a report we have commissioned from PWC about the business environment and opportunities at state-level –looking in detail at Anambra, Edo, Ogun, and Niger.

We all know Nigeria's potential. It is the largest economy in Africa. It is set to be the 3rd most populous nation in the world by 2050. It is Africa's largest oil producer. It has fertile land; abundant natural resources; a large internal market; and a young, energetic population, with a deserved reputation for creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

The UK-Nigeria trading relationship has traditionally been very strong. A number of UK companies are among the longest running international businesses in Nigeria. We are consistently in the top 5 of Nigeria's trade partners. However, we used to be number 1, and the British High Commission in Abuja, and our Deputy High Commission in Lagos, is committed to pushing us back up the list, particularly as the UK embarks upon a new role in the world as we leave the EU.

The growth required to rebuild this relationship cannot only come from the major multinationals – it will be built on SMEs discovering Nigeria's opportunities, building new partnerships and bringing in expertise to super-charge existing capacity.

We believe in the potential that Nigeria possesses, and we believe it can be harnessed to create jobs and prosperity. But business is not charity.

Investors looking to put their time, energy, and money into new ventures overseas have hundreds of places they could choose. To attract investors will require developing a strong, credible and positive offering, and an enabling approach from the government and government agencies.

Some of this lies with the Federal Government – and we commend their efforts in this regard. The Economic Growth and Recovery Plan sets out an ambitious range of targets for ensuring that Nigeria builds back better from recession. And the 60-day plans for Enabling the Business Environment have already led to some useful reductions in bureaucracy and streamlining of what used to be some cumbersome business processes. More is required – and the UK is engaging on several fronts to support these efforts.

But state level governments also have an important role to play. DFID projects, such as GEMS, offer examples of how States can re-orientate their offer to investors. No two states are the same, but some common themes include: land reform and protection of ownership; active and accessible investment promotion councils; transparency over tax and regulations; as well as the commitment to building productive supply chains and supportive infrastructure.

Initial findings from research we have supported emphasise the opportunity of Niger State, with its significant land-mass, hydro-electric dams, as well as huge potential in agriculture and mineral resources. Niger's shea butter production is famous, of course. But more investment is required to refine production and packaging for an international market.

There have also been positive steps in improving the business environment – with some significant moves up World Bank's Subnational Doing Business Rankings between 2010 and 2014, thanks to building additional capacity, streamlining processes, and improving registration systems. Your Excellency, with your business background, I am sure you will be keen to further improve these rankings.

As with many other states in Nigeria – over-reliance on statutory allocations from the federal level can lead to vulnerabilities. While this is a challenge – it should also be an additional encouragement to take the bold steps necessary to attract private sector investment, development, and growth to diversify activity and enhance revenue generation. That is not to say it will be easy – but I am confident that the detailed analysis, when available, will offer several avenues for further discussion and debate. It will certainly form part of our interactions with UK businesses, and can function as a “calling card” for Niger State in engaging potential investors in a serious conversation about the opportunities available here.

There is also a role for local businesses – which is why we are so pleased to see many of you here with us today. You don't need me to tell you how much work it takes to make a business successful – or of the risks involved in trying to grow in a difficult economic moment. What works in the short term may not work in the long term. Nigeria's great potential will only be achieved through sustainable means. There may be what we call “quick wins” through changing regulations, or through harnessing new, adaptive

technologies. Other issues may take longer to tackle in order to build broader prosperity across the states and the country as a whole.

The UK is committed to supporting this – it is why we are here today. We continue to work closely with the federal government on projects that can impact the whole of the country. This includes DFID support to infrastructure planning and management; policy development expertise; and pilot programmes that offer models for success.

We will share the reporting that comes out of our current cooperation with PWC – and we hope that this will be the start of productive discussions, proposals, and action. We look forward to being able to continue this process to attract more UK companies to Nigeria, and indeed here to Niger, to build further our partnerships for prosperity.

[Press release: MPs' outside interests: Committee announces short review](#)

The Committee met today and discussed the subject of MPs' outside interests.

We will make a further submission on 'reasonable limits' for outside interests to the Commons Committee on Standards' on-going [inquiry](#) into the Code of Conduct for MPs. We will be holding a short review to inform our submission. Given the public interest in these issues, we welcome contributions from all interested parties. The Terms of Reference will be available on our [website](#) next week.

It is for the [Advisory Committee on Business Appointments](#), the [Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards](#), and the [House of Commons Committee on Standards](#) to rule on individual cases.

[Press release: John Cridland CBE and the Government Actuary's Department release reports into the future State Pension age](#)

Two reports have been published today that will help inform the government's review of the State Pension age which is due in May 2017.

The John Cridland report looked at the key issues that drive State Pension age changes including, but not limited to:

- life expectancy
- the challenges faced by those who rely most on the State Pension
- the long-term financial sustainability of the system

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) was asked to consider 2 alternative scenarios for the State Pension age, reflecting an adult in receipt of the State Pension for either 32% or 33.3% of their projected adult life in retirement. To do this it used figures drawn from life expectancy projections from the Office for National Statistics.

In his report, which will be considered before any decision is made on changes to the State Pension age timetable after 2028, Mr Cridland makes a number of recommendations including:

- State Pension age should rise to 68 between 2037 and 2039
- State Pension age should not increase more than 1 year in any 10 year period, assuming that there are no exceptional changes to the data used
- that all employers should have elder care policies in place which set out a basic care offer
- that people should be able to access a mid-life career MOT and review which should be facilitated by employers and by the government using online support and through the National Careers Service

Meanwhile, the Government Actuary's Department report concludes that:

- under a 32% scenario the State Pension age could rise to 69 between 2040 and 2042
- under a 33.3% scenario the State Pension age could reach 69 between 2053 and 2055

No new changes to [State Pension age](#) will come into effect before 2028 and the government is committed to maintaining a State Pension that is fair for all generations and helps to provide for the cost of living in retirement. Part of this commitment to fairness includes providing 10 years' notice of any changes to the State Pensions age.

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