

British Chargé speech at the Queen's Birthday Party in Kinshasa

Good evening

I will try to keep my remarks short. This is a party and I want you to have fun.

I would first like to thank our friends for their assistance in making this evening so special. I'd also like to thank my own wonderful team.

For the UK, this is an important year. It is 70 years since her Majesty the Queen came to the throne – it is her platinum jubilee year. I hope you were able to see some of the pictures of the UK celebrating as it was a marvellous spectacle. It's also a reminder that London is a wonderful holiday destination!

Tonight I want to talk about three aspects of our monarch. Her role in leading our country from war to peace. The nature of her leadership. And, finally, the commitment of her, and her family, to climate and nature.

The Queen's reign is founded in the UK's experiences of the First and Second World War. Her earliest experiences were of seeing our country, and our people, fighting in defence of our land and our future. We fought alongside our allies to protect our values and way of life.

As the Queen has got older, she has remained our link to that history of defending our homeland. However, she has not remained locked in that past, but she has determinedly helped move her country forward to peace.

Her Majesty has overseen a period in which our enemies have become our closest friends. She herself has shaken the hands of those who killed her cousin during the troubles in Northern Ireland. In doing so, she didn't listen to the haters or to those who had no interest in taking the risks needed to secure new friendships. As a result, she helped build a new future and the prosperity the UK enjoys today.

The Queen has also moved with her people from a period of colonialism, during which the UK did many nations wrong, to a period in which we celebrate the vibrant diversity of our nation as our strength. A period during which we reach out to friends around the world with respect and sisterhood.

The history the Queen represents means that the UK knows how hard the fight for peace is. We know how precious peace is. It is for that reason that the UK is so angered by the destruction of Ukraine. And, even more importantly standing in Kinshasa, it is the reason we are horrified by recent events in the East of DRC. People across the Great Lakes region deserve leadership that is committed to constructive dialogue and that delivers long-term peace and prosperity. The UK has called on all sides – in public and in private – to de-escalate and immediately take the decisions needed to end the fighting

around Bunagana. As the people of this region struggle to find the path from the brutality of the last 30 years of war, the UK stands with all those who truly seek peace.

The second aspect I wanted to touch on was the nature of the Queen's leadership. The Queen has always been clear that she put the interests of her people before her own. Indeed she has made her interests indivisible from those of the country – this is the reason British people say “Queen and country” in one breath. On the first day of her reign, 70 years ago, her majesty said:

“I have in sincerity pledged myself to your service...Throughout all my life and with all my heart I shall strive to be worthy of your trust”

She made it clear that she, as a leader, was accountable to the people not the people to her. She then continued to highlight the principles that continue to sit at the heart of British values, when she said:

“Parliamentary institutions, with their free speech and respect for the rights of minorities, and the inspiration of a broad tolerance in thought and expression – all this we conceive to be a precious part of our way of life and outlook.”

As we look ahead to elections in this country, we hope that DRC also enjoys leadership of the kind the Queen embodies – in which people can be confident they are fully empowered to choose their leaders and that, as a result, this country's democracy goes from strength to strength. The UK will remain a supporter and friend in that effort.

Finally, I wanted to talk of the Queen's commitment to climate and nature. In this she has been supported by her late Husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as by her son, the Prince of Wales, and Grandson, the Duke of Cambridge. A notable case of powerful men following, and supporting, an even more powerful woman!

Before COP26, Her Majesty was reported to have said it was “really irritating when people talk, but they don't do.” For a British person, and certainly for the Queen, to be “irritated” is the ultimate expression of anger. And given the threat climate change presents, she really has a point. We should all be “irritated” at a failure to act – and we must all work with renewed determination to see further progress at the pre-COP27 meeting here in DRC later this year, as well as at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

When she spoke at COP26 in Glasgow, the Queen said

None of us underestimates the challenges ahead: but history has shown that when nations come together in common cause, there is always room for hope.” She continued “It has sometimes been observed that what leaders do for their people today is government and politics. But what they do for the people of tomorrow – that is statesmanship.”

Here in the DRC, not only the UK, but many partners stand ready to support this amazing country in protecting its precious natural environment. This is

an issue not just of national but global importance. We have appreciated the statesmanship this country has already shown on climate, and we stand ready to deepen our partnership in the years ahead.

In concluding, I would like to thank you all for coming to the British Residence in this special year for our Queen. We appreciate your friendship, and the hard work we do together, in the interests of both our peoples.

May I ask you to join me in raising a glass to her Majesty in celebration of her Jubilee. "The Queen"