

# Defence Secretary's speech at the Defence Space Conference 2020

Good afternoon, it's a great pleasure to speak to you at the end of what has clearly been a fascinating and wide-ranging conference.

The variety of speakers – over 45, from the UK and overseas, and military and civilian sectors, as well as academia and private industry – shows just how important space is, right across today's society.

Such importance risks dependence and vulnerability, but it also creates opportunity and offers advantages.

That is why the Prime Minister has such a clear vision for the UK as a Great Science power, with credibility and ambition in Space at its heart. #F This conference has demonstrated how defence will play a central part in achieving that vision.

We've heard from the Chief of the Air Staff about modern society's dependence on space services.

And we have been reminded how our adversaries are increasingly seeking to weaponise space.

In recent years more countries have used Anti-Satellite weapons.

Earlier this year, alongside the US Chief of Space Operations, I called out Russia's aggression in orbit.

But space weapons are not our only concern. Ground-based lasers and jammers could also pose a significant threat to our satellites. And their supporting infrastructure on the ground also remains a serious target.

No wonder one of the constant refrains you have heard throughout this conference and, indeed, throughout this year of Covid, has been the importance of resilience.

Commander UK Strategic Command set out how we must become more resilient in space if we are to establish the 'digital backbone' and achieve Multi Domain Integration.

And we have now recognised space as an operational domain, driving the development of capabilities to increase resilience and competitiveness.

We are, of course, not the only ones and you've heard from many of our Allies in the US, France and NATO, are also alongside us, and they are going to be part of that journey as well.

But there are those steps through which I want the UK MOD to now lead on this journey:

First, our ability to mobilise.

We must recognise our vulnerabilities. Understand our reliance on space – whether for imagery, communications, or navigation. And, in the event that we lose access to our satellite services, have a contingency plan ready.

So, we're working very closely with the UK Space Agency to create a National Space Operations Capability.

It will improve the way we share data.

It will help us act unhindered to secure our national interests in space.

And, alongside our UK Space Command, it will enhance defence's ability to generate and operate its own equipment.

Second, resilience will be about modernising what we have – strengthening our existing capabilities.

That's why we are bringing SKYNET into defence ownership. It will give our personnel the tools to operate a world-leading satellite constellation and ensure they stay at the cutting-edge of space experience and expertise.

And that's why, back in July, we awarded a contract worth £500-million for SKYNET 6A. This new, more advanced satellite capability will provide continued communications support to the UK's deployed forces for many years.

Meanwhile, we're continuing the hunt for the latest space innovations.

I am delighted that our first ever International Space Pitch Day was so successful, and congratulations to the winning bids.

With innovations from space weather to space domain awareness, I wish these ten companies every success as they move forward with defence contracts.

Finally, resilience will be about transforming for the future. Going further and faster. Developing next-generation and generation-after-next, technology and the people and structures to exploit them.

That's why we've created the Defence Space Enterprise Portfolio.

Bonding brilliant industry expertise with MOD's Space Directorate and our world leading DSTL.

Transforming the latest research into game changing space innovations.

Not only deterring dangers but fast-tracking innovative kit to bring to the frontline of space.

Because resilience may be our watchword. But it goes hand in hand with opportunity.

Our evolving National Space Strategy will help us deliver those grand ambitions and defence will play its part – mobilising, modernising, and

transforming.

So exciting times lie ahead. Last year we celebrated 50 years since the UK's first venture into Space.

Since then the dynamism of you – our great British scientists, military and industrial experts – has not wavered.

And your continuing commitment will ensure that in the coming decade Global Britain takes its place as a Space Power in the new Space Age.