

Digital diplomacy: UK's Asia Minister discusses science and business links with Vietnam as part of 'renewed focus' on relations

Today's meetings – all of which took place virtually due to the ongoing disruption to international travel caused by COVID-19 – follow on from a similar day of engagement with the region last month. This reflects a drive towards building ties with Vietnam, not only as the current Chair of ASEAN and partner on the UNSC, but as an important strategic partner.

With the renewal of the UK-Vietnam Strategic Partnership Agreement, collaboration on tackling climate change ahead of the COP26 summit and the UK's application to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner all on the agenda, these talks added new positive momentum to the UK-Vietnam relationship.

Speaking after today's virtual meetings, the Minister for Asia Nigel Adams said:

Through the conversations I have had today, it is clear that out of difficult times come opportunities, and that the UK-Vietnam relationship is set to go from strength to strength.

Whether that's in health cooperation with our scientists collaborating to help in the global fight against the disease, work on global issues like climate change, or business links with our bilateral trade tripling from less than £2bn to nearly £6bn in the last 10 years, it is clear that our partnership is growing.

In the post-COVID-19 new normal, we have an opportunity to recover together and better. While I cannot be in Vietnam this week, I am looking forward to fostering the growing relations between our two countries and the wider region as a whole, as part of our renewed focus on partners in South East Asia.

The day began with a meeting with Vice Foreign Minister To Anh Dung, where the Minister was joined by Her Majesty's Ambassador to Vietnam Gareth Ward. Then came a roundtable with Director General Long and senior members of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, to discuss Vietnam's role in the world and how best to address key global challenges and threats.

There were further roundtables on Vietnam's business environment and on shared healthcare challenges, including with members of Oxford University Clinical Research Unit, who have been supporting Vietnam's COVID response, before the day finished with a session on green recovery involving Vietnam's Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment, and Industry and Trade.

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