

Emily Thornberry speech to Labour Party Conference

Emily

Thornberry MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary, speaking at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton today, said:

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Chair, Conference – It’s a pleasure to be back here in Brighton and Hove.

A city which we can say – once again – has no Tory MPs. And it’s a pleasure to be taking part in a debate where our delegates have such a strong voice,

And we should all thank Kate Osamor and Nia Griffith who have allowed me to speak on their behalf today so our delegates could have more time. And let me say as well – it’s an honour to be on this stage with our leader, my friend, this country’s next Prime Minister – Jeremy Corbyn.

You know, some people might remember a certain viral video from election night of a bit of high-fiving gone wrong. But that’s not how I’ll remember that evening. I’ll just remember seeing a friend of mine who had defied all the pundits, all the doubters

and all the expectations. Someone who had proved during the election, who has proved throughout his leadership, who has proved all his life, that nothing is stronger, nothing on earth than a person of principle.

And it is that strength and those principles, those unshakeable values that are going to take Jeremy into Downing Street and put Labour back into power. After all, it was on this very stage two years ago that Jeremy declared his mission:

“To put Labour values – the people’s values – back – into – politics.”

And he has achieved that. But thanks to Jeremy’s inspirational leadership, thanks to the brilliant efforts of everyone in this room, we can now set our sights even higher.

It is time to put Labour values, the people’s values back into Government.

Because if June’s election taught us one thing, it’s that if we stand behind Jeremy’s principled leadership, if we stand united as a Party, and

if we stand on a radical manifesto, there is absolutely no seat that we can't win. And no Tory that we can't bin.

So next time, we've got to take the fight into their backyard. Let's go round the coast to Hastings. And end the ambitions of Amber Rudd. Let's go to Chingford. And send Iain Duncan Smith to the Job Centre. Then let's go to Uxbridge. And make sure Boris Johnson never, ever gets into No.10.

But Conference, please let's just take a second to sympathise with poor old Boris. Oh come on, just a second. He's not been happy lately. Apparently he's sick of being blamed for the way Brexit is going and all the broken promises of the Leave campaign.

I'm sorry, Conference? I'm sorry? Who does he think made all those promises? Who does he think was in charge of the Leave Campaign?

I know Boris doesn't like paternity tests, but we might need one for Brexit. We need to get him in a studio with Jeremy Kyle.

"Yes, I'm sorry, Mr Johnson...

"We've got the results back...

"It looks like this one is yours...

"It must have been that wild night out you had with Michael Gove.

"I've calculated your maintenance payments...

"That'll be 350 million a week."

But Conference, what a contrast. Here on this stage, you've got Labour's Brexit team – myself, Keir and Barry working every day in harness with Jeremy, John and Diane. All pulling in the same direction. All focused on the same three priorities. The three priorities we've had since Day One after the Referendum – Jobs, Jobs and Jobs.

While next week in Manchester, we're going to see six Tory rats, fighting in a sack, not worried about protecting the jobs of the British people. Just every one of them looking out for their own.

Last Friday, Theresa May said we need to be "creative and imaginative" to get a good outcome from Brexit. Well I've got a creative idea for her step aside, end your shambles of a Government, and let the grown-ups on this stage take charge.

And talking of grown-ups I'm proud to be here representing our

great Shadow Foreign Office team: Liz McInnes; Fabian Hamilton; Khalid Mahmood;

Helen Goodman and Ray Collins. And I'm proud as well to be speaking on behalf of my friends, Kate Osamor and Nia Griffith. Kate, our Shadow Secretary of State For International Development, facing a world in now constant humanitarian crisis,

not least as a result of climate change.

As Kate would say, in that world, we've got a decision to make. Either tackle head on the root causes of these crises or spend more and more every year dealing with the consequences. And, under a Labour government. That is a decision we will not duck.

And Nia, our Shadow Defence Secretary, who has shown that Britain under Labour

will be a strong leader within NATO, committed to spend 2 per cent of our national income on defence. And committed to ensure that those who put their lives on the line for this country the real-terms pay rises and the decent living conditions that their service and their sacrifice deserves.

In dark, dangerous times for our world Britain must be equally strong and equally committed to defence, development and diplomacy. That is what we offer on this stage. And that is what Labour in government will guarantee.

But Conference, make no mistake. These are indeed dark and dangerous times for the world. And too many times, the problems we face come down to people abusing their power and ignoring the rules and values that should govern our world.

From Venezuela to The Philippines we see the rule of law ignored and originally democratic governments turning into increasingly autocratic regimes. From Myanmar to Yemen we see human rights ignored and flagrant attacks against ordinary civilians qll too often using British-made weapons.

From Kashmir to Israel and Palestine we see efforts at diplomacy ignored and actions taken on both sides which will make peace harder to achieve.

From Syria to Sudan, we see the Geneva Conventions ignored and despots committing war crimes with total freedom and impunity.

All across Europe we see the basic rules of humanity and the basic lessons of history ignored as cowardly terrorists stalk our city streets and vicious extremist parties rise in the polls.

And of course, in North Korea we see the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ignored with all the terrifying consequences the world is now facing today.

Taken altogether what we are seeing today is the biggest challenge to the world order since the 1930s and the collapse of the League of Nations. And if you believe as I do in what Jeremy has called...“A world based on rules and laws” then this is the time, more than ever, when we need our leaders to stand up for that world order. To stand up for human rights and international treaties. And to insist on working through the United Nations for peace.

But instead, Conference we now have a President of the United States who believes that none of these rules and laws apply to him.

- Imposing a travel ban on Muslims;
- Equivocating over illegal settlements;
- Reneging on the Paris climate treaty;
- Imperilling the nuclear deal with Iran;
- And threatening to “totally destroy” North Korea. A country of 20 million men and women. And 5 million children.

This is not what we need from the leader of the free world.

To be honest, Conference it’s more like what we would expect from a rogue dictator. And what makes it even worse is to see this Tory government and this Tory Prime Minister pathetically going along with it all walking hand-in-hand with Trump at the White House, supine, sycophantic and spineless.

And why? All in the vain hope that Trump will ride to the rescue after Brexit with some fantasy free trade deal. Because, for this Tory government that’s what their foreign policy has come down to no values or ethics, no rules or principles just a simple case of what works best for the bottom line. How else do they explain why – last week – Theresa May was in New York, finally announcing the suspension of cooperation with the military in Myanmar because of their actions in Rakhine.

While on the very same day, Michael Fallon was in Jeddah, signing a deal to increase our cooperation with the military in Saudi Arabia wantonly ignoring their actions in Yemen. It is rank hypocrisy. But it also illustrates a basic fact that the world we want to see – a world governed by ethics and values, a world based on rules and laws will never truly exist as long as governments and world leaders get to decide for themselves when it suits them to play by the rules and when the rules can be safely ignored.

The world we want will never exist when governments like Theresa May’s think it’s perfectly OK to loudly condemn those they regard as enemies but then fall utterly silent when it is their friends in Bahrain rounding up,

torturing and executing civilian protestors or their friends in Saudi Arabia dropping cluster bombs on innocent children in Yemen.

In fact, if they were just silent that would be an improvement. Instead, we have to listen to Michael Fallon saying that the thousands of children killed and injured by air strikes in Yemen are just a consequence of Saudi Arabia "defending itself"...

..."Defending itself".

But Conference, it does not have to be this way. Labour can and will do things differently when we are back in power.

And there is one concrete step we can commit to today.

For too long successive governments in this country have taken decisions on granting arms export licences behind closed doors and shrouded in secrecy.

Just two months ago we had the ludicrous situation where the campaigners trying to stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen had their Judicial Review rejected on the basis of government evidence presented in closed court a secret court so they were not even allowed to hear the evidence let alone challenge it.

The fact is that arms export decisions made by Tory Ministers are entirely subjective assessments taken without proper Parliamentary scrutiny without listening to independent, expert advice, but listening far too much to lobbyists for the arms trade and repressive foreign regimes. A process that leads to nonsensical double-standards, where the Government can decide too late that selling arms to Myanmar is wrong but immediately increase its sales to Saudi. It is an arms control regime that was already outdated. but which the Tories have systematically abused, undermined and left fatally discredited.

And as the four shadow ministers responsible, Barry, Nia, Kate and I have agreed that it must change. So just as the new Labour Governments elected in 1997 and 2001 Immediately reformed the way decisions were made on monetary policy and competition policy, the next Labour Government will immediately reform the way decisions are made on the export of arms.

A wholesale reform of the legal and regulatory framework fully implementing the International Arms Trade Treaty with clear rules, tests and criteria for decision-making, based on independent, expert advice and the objective assessment of evidence. A new system, that will prevent the misuse or abuse of licences and adhere to the principles of transparency, true

Parliamentary accountability and freedom from undue influence.

Because Conference, it is not enough for us just to be better than the Tories, we must set an entirely new standard for Britain and a shining example to the world.

And if that sounds like setting our ambitions high, well you're damn right it is and we should not apologise for that.

You know, I heard Chuka say yesterday:

"Overpromising and under-delivering..."

"...Is one of the reasons..."

"...there was such fury with the Blair government."

And when it comes to foreign policy, I totally agree with that statement. But the way we avoid that mistake next time round isn't to water down the promises we make, it's to keep the promises we make and make sure we deliver them.

We will be a Government that will never put the interest of the rich and powerful above human Rights, The Rule of Law, and the lives of innocent children in Yemen...

A Government that will never put our principles up for auction.

And if we are going to be the kind of government we could be, we do not just need what Robin Cook called for, twenty years ago, when he set out his Mission Statement for the Foreign Office.

We do not just need an "ethical dimension" to our foreign policy, we need to go much further than that.

We need what Martin Luther King called for 50 years ago, when he set out his case against the Vietnam War.

– We need "a revolution of values".

– "A genuine revolution of values".

– "A radical revolution of values".

Because if our mission back when Jeremy was elected, was to put Labour values back into politics and our mission today is to put those values back into Government, then our mission for the years to come must be equally ambitious and equally radical. It must be to put Labour values at the heart of the world order, to be a beacon in every corner of the globe for the values

we
believe in here at home.

We have the leader in Jeremy to do it. We have the team on this stage to do it. We have the members in this hall, and all across the country, who will hold us to it.

So let us make that our mission. And this time – this time – let us make it our record.