

# Foreign Secretary reinforces support for Western Balkans stability at talks in London.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has today (Monday 13 December) hosted the Foreign Ministers of the six Western Balkans countries, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The UK previously hosted the Western Balkans Summit in 2018 where leaders of the six countries made commitments in a series of Joint Declarations on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations, War Crimes, and Missing Persons in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and Anti-Corruption.

The talks come as tensions in the region have reached a peak. The international High Representative has warned that Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently facing the greatest existential threat in its post-war period, and that there is a real prospect of further division and conflict. Along with international partners, the UK is working to tackle any threats to stability after 26 years of hard-won progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The current situation in the Western Balkans was also discussed at the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting which took place over the weekend in Liverpool.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The UK is committed to the Western Balkans and to the defence and promotion of freedom and democracy in the region.

As I bring together the Foreign Ministers of the six countries in the region to London, as well as representatives from the European Union and the United States, tensions are high and the international community must act to protect hard-won peace.

Boosting economic ties with the region is a vital way to create jobs and wealth, ensure stability and support freedom.

The Foreign Secretary met each of the six Foreign Ministers. Representatives from the US and the EU were also in attendance.

The UK has maintained a long-standing focus on reconciliation work and transitional justice in the Western Balkans, including: \* being one of the key donors to the construction and setting up of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina \* providing political, financial and logistical support to the UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, and \* funding the work of the International Commission for Missing Persons

The UK supports the Western Balkans' aspirations for Euro-Atlantic

integration. Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations remain central to achieving this aim and to maintaining stability in the region.

The talks will also seek to reaffirm the UK's commitment to the Berlin Process and encourage the role of civil society to foster peace and stability in the region.

The UK has urged political leaders in the region to reject hate speech, to condemn any glorification of the perpetrators of genocide and war crimes, and to respect the verdicts of international and domestic courts.

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### **Background:**

In 2018 at the Berlin Process Western Balkans Summit in London, the UK negotiated the signing of three Joint Declarations focusing on War Crimes, Missing Persons, and Good Neighbourly Relations. All the Berlin Process Leaders signed. These were reconfirmed on 5 July 2021 at the latest Berlin Process Summit and involved learning the lessons of history, promoting reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and resolving outstanding issues affecting the region. The Western Balkans leaders also signed up to individual anti-corruption pledges.

The countries also met the Prime Minister in Downing Street in 2018 after a meeting with European Bank of Reconciliation and Development.

The UK recently appointed Sir Stuart Peach as its [Special Envoy to the Western Balkans](#).