

Freedom and fairness more important than ever, Trade Secretary tells WTO

Freedom and fairness should be front and centre of the global trade agenda to ensure communities at home and around the world benefit from the power of free trade, the International Trade Secretary says today.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan issued the clarion call as she prepares to lead a UK delegation attending the 12th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC12).

While there, she will urge united global action to show solidarity with Ukraine, demonstrate Russia's illegal assault will not undermine or weaken the rules-based international system, and push for reforms that will reduce our economic dependency on aggressors.

UK will use the high-level WTO meeting to secure meaningful progress on long-standing global issues, including food security, over-fishing and tariff-free electronic trade, and drive forward international efforts to cope with the fallout from Russia's actions and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ahead of the summit, International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Putin's brutal war unleashed devastation and disruption on a world already burdened with Covid-19 and facing the omnipresent threat of climate change.

The UK will continue to show leadership at this critical and fragile time, when we must defend the values that bind us together. Freedom and fairness are now more important than ever if we wish to use global trade to grow our economies, deliver better living standards for communities at home and abroad, and to address some of the world's most significant challenges.

While in Geneva, the Trade Secretary is expected to meet with her counterparts from Ukraine, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the EU and Japan among others.

She will use the Conference – the first in-person high level meeting for five years – to push for global trade rules that truly address the modern economy and the conclusion of WTO negotiations on harmful fisheries subsidies.

She will be joined by Trade Minister Ranil Jayawardena and Her Majesty's Ambassador to the WTO, Simon Manley, at the conference – the first for the UK since it became an independent trading nation.

Minister Jayawardena will take part in an event on Sunday to highlight the UK's continued support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia alongside

international allies.

International Trade Minister Ranil Jayawardena will say:

Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion is a threat to democracy and the rules-based order – the foundation of our free, fair and open trading system. The UK will always uphold those values and with our allies, we will protect Ukraine's democratic right to exist.

We believe that free, fair and open trade can prevent yet more lives being destroyed through the looming hunger crisis, exacerbated by Putin's acts and develop a more sustainable, efficient and resilient food system for the future.

Together we must redouble our efforts, put our divisions aside and harness the power of free, open and fair trade to tackle our modern-day challenges.