

Joint Statement on UK-Thailand Joint Economic and Trade Committee

Today (Tuesday 21 June) the UK and Thailand held the first Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO). The JETCO offers a significant new opportunity to improve bilateral trade, including by addressing trade barriers affecting business activity in both countries. The first meeting was hosted by the UK.

The UK Minister of State for Trade Policy, Penny Mordaunt, and Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, Jurin Laksanawisit, held positive and productive talks in London to explore ways of increasing bilateral trade and committing to an ambitious trading relationship. They signed off a programme of work, including Government-to-Government and Government-to-Business activity, to advance opportunities to increase trade over the next 12-18 months.

Demonstrating the importance of the UK-Thailand trade relationship, and building on the productive work to date, the Ministers agreed to develop an Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) in the future. This will launch a more ambitious programme of work to increase trade in multiple sectors including by undertaking trade policy cooperation, tackling trade barriers, and promoting business and trade activity. The ETP could be a first step in laying the foundations for a potential FTA in the future.

The Ministers established a trade cooperation working group, to build on the work of the recently completed Joint Trade Review, by identifying and resolving barriers to trade and promoting policy and trade cooperation projects.

Minister Jurin and Minister Mordaunt welcomed the progress made in negotiations and the convening of MC12 in Geneva, and committed to discussing the outcomes of the Conference in their next meeting including the efforts to reform and modernise the WTO.

Private sector outcomes

The Ministers welcomed the partnership between the Thai-UK Business Leadership Council and the newly established Thai-UK Business Council as well as the business roundtable organised by the UK-ASEAN Business Council. They agreed to build an engagement programme with business to explore the UK and Thailand trade landscapes, investment packages and domestic rules and regulations.

Digital

The Ministers were pleased to note a Letter of Intent on Digital Cooperation was signed between the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the Thai Ministry of Digital Economy and Society. This will strengthen the digital and technological ties and facilitate opportunities for dialogue

between the UK and Thailand on digital cooperation, between the UK and Thailand, enabling our economies to harness the benefits of digital technologies and an open and competitive digital economy.

Agriculture

With a view to advancing agricultural trade relations, the Ministers welcomed an agreement to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Thai Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to establish a Government-to-Government Agriculture Dialogue. This will be an annual technical dialogue to tackle market access, promote policy exchange, and develop further areas for collaboration.

Food and Drink

The Ministers noted the strong potential of the food and drink sector to contribute to bilateral trade between the two countries. Given the appetite on both sides to enhance trade in this sector, the Ministers viewed that further trade and economic cooperation should be fostered, with relevant discussions and activities to be jointly explored.

Healthcare

Both Ministers concur that Thailand and the UK should explore opportunities for dialogue to exchange information and gain better understanding on rules and regulations relating to the approval and importation of healthcare and other related products. Possible business matching in areas of mutual interests was also suggested.

Financial Services

Both sides expressed strong support for conducting Government-to-Business engagement to support trade in financial services.

The Thai side noted its intention for its Central Bank to deepen its multilateral engagement in the area of financial innovation and standards, including through enhancing cooperation with global regulators and supervisory authorities helping to shape approaches to innovation and global standards.

The UK is committed to continuing its longstanding partnership with the Thai financial regulators on fintech and sustainable finance. We have agreed a programme of work for this year and beyond which draws on UK experiences to support the continued development of the financial services sector in Thailand. The UK and Thailand also continue to explore wider opportunities for increasing bilateral trade and investment in financial services.

Trade promotion and investment activities

The Ministers welcomed the depth and breadth of the UK and Thailand's trade relationship, and committed to continuing trade and investment promotion activity in various sectors including Education, Infrastructure and Energy.

Bilateral economic relationship

In 2021, the value of trade between Thailand and the UK was £4.8 billion for goods and services. Thailand was the UK's 40th largest trading partner in 2021 accounting for 0.4% of total UK trade. Thailand was also the 38th largest importer to the UK accounting for 0.4% of total UK imports and the 46th largest export market, accounting for 0.3% of UK exports. The UK was Thailand's 22nd largest trading partner in 2021 accounting for 1.0% of total Thai trade. The UK was the 25th largest importer to Thailand accounting for 0.8% of Thai imports and the 19th largest export market, accounting for 1.3% of Thai exports.

The new UK-Thailand JETCO adds extra emphasis to the UK's deepening relationships across the wider Asia Pacific region. As a new ASEAN Dialogue Partner, the UK is committed to further enhancing engagement with the region, through both multilateral and bilateral forums, including those with Thailand.

The JETCO will be followed by the fourth UK-Thailand Strategic Dialogue on 30 June, further highlighting the strength of the economic relationship.