

News story: UK commits to a safer Commonwealth in cyber space

The UK Prime Minister will today announce up to £15 million to help Commonwealth countries strengthen their cyber security capabilities and help to tackle criminal groups and hostile state actors who pose a global threat to security, including in the UK.

Theresa May will announce the package on the eve of the formal Heads of Government Meeting where leaders are expected to agree the 'Commonwealth Cyber Declaration', the world's largest and most geographically diverse inter-governmental commitment on cyber security cooperation.

Cyber attacks do not respect international borders. Supporting other countries to build their cyber resilience helps them prevent criminals and hostile state actors from operating online and targeting other countries. The declaration sets out for the first time a common vision for ensuring the internet remains free and open across the Commonwealth.

It will commit members to raising national levels of cyber security and increased cooperation to counter those who seek to undermine our values, security, even the integrity of elections.

The new funding will support Commonwealth partners as they prevent and respond to cyber security risks affecting governments, businesses and citizens.

£5.5 million of this will enable low and middle income Commonwealth members to carry out national cyber security capacity reviews before the next CHOGM in 2020. It will underpin projects across the Commonwealth to provide technical assistance, training and advice to address a wide range of cyber security and cyber crime threats.

Cyber threats are among the greatest security challenges of our time which affect us all – small states and their economies are left particularly vulnerable without the support and capacity building to protect themselves. The agreement will help foster international stability in cyberspace and build more resilient digital economies. Ultimately, it will contribute to stronger economic growth and sustainable development across the Commonwealth's 2.4 billion people.

It comes as the Prime Minister is set on Wednesday to join Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull, New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern and Canadian PM Justin Trudeau for an intelligence partners meeting.

It also comes as Digital Secretary Matt Hancock and Singaporean Foreign Minister Dr Balakrishnan have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on cyber security capacity building, in both the Commonwealth and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

This will promote cooperation in cyber security and commit the countries to working together to deliver a programme for two years, including on emergency response and training, which builds on the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2017.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The future is at the heart of the Commonwealth events being held this week and with that, we must look towards the emerging challenges that we and our Commonwealth partners face. Cyber security affects us all, as online crime does not respect international borders.

I have called on Commonwealth leaders to take action and to work collectively to tackle this threat. Our package of funding will enable members to review their cyber security capability, and deliver the stability and resilience that we all need to stay safe online and grow our digital economies.

The Commonwealth plays a pivotal role in shaping the future for many of its members. We have put security on the agenda for the first time so we can work together and build a safer future both for Britain, and for the 2.4 billion people around the world who live in the Commonwealth.