

PM opening words at North Atlantic Council: 4 December 2019

I'm delighted to welcome everybody here to the UK to celebrate the 70th anniversary of NATO.

I feel as if our alliance is coming home because Britain was a founding member and it was here that NATO opened its first headquarters – of course in Belgrave Square in London shortly before moving to Paris, as colleagues will recall.

Seventy years on, we are rock solid in our commitment to NATO and to the giant shield of solidarity that now protects 29 countries and nearly a billion people.

The fact that we live in peace today demonstrates the power of the simple proposition at the heart of this alliance: that for as long as we stand together, no-one could hope to defeat us – and therefore no-one will start a war.

This essential principle is enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty: that if any one of us is attacked, all of us will go to their defence.

If NATO has a motto, it is as Jens says, one for all, and all for one.

This doctrine of coming to one another's aid, incarnated by NATO, provides the single most important explanation for why the British people and hundreds of millions of our friends live in peace and freedom today.

Everything our peoples hold dear – from liberty and democracy to their jobs, homes, schools and hospitals – would not be secure and could not flourish without the peace that NATO is designed to guarantee.

But history shows that peace cannot be taken for granted and even as we celebrate this anniversary, we must ensure that our deeds match our words and the atrocity in London last Friday shows why we must work together to combat terrorism and the vital importance of NATO's missions to counter this threat.

For the UK's part, we spend over 2% of GDP on defence.

We are proudly making the biggest contribution of any European ally to NATO's Readiness Initiative by offering an armoured brigade, two fighter squadrons and six warships, including the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers.

As friends and allies, we must never shy away from discussing new realities, particularly NATO's response to emerging threats like hybrid warfare and disruptive technologies including space and cyber.

At this Council, we have the opportunity to strengthen the unity of purpose

that has made NATO the greatest and most successful alliance in history and to take the new steps that are profoundly necessary to ensure another 70 years of peace and security.