

Press release: Foreign Secretary champions UK-Nigeria trade and partnership

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has called for an intensification of trade between Britain and Nigeria on the second of a two day visit to the West African country, underlining the close friendship between both countries. He also dedicated a new Commonwealth war memorial, recognising the sacrifice of thousands of Nigerian troops in the First and Second World Wars, and highlighted British military support for Nigerian efforts to protect international shipping in the Gulf of Guinea, now one of the most dangerous areas in the world for piracy.

UK bilateral trade with Nigeria is forecast to be £7 billion annually by 2030 but the Foreign Secretary has used a visit to Lagos, the country's commercial capital, to encourage more British investment in Nigeria. Mr Johnson visited Nigeria's Guinness brewery, majority owned by Diageo, which imports all of its barley from the UK and exports Guinness Extra across the world.

While in Lagos, Mr Johnson also met British service personnel, including Royal Marines, from the resident British Military Advisory and Training Team who in the last 12 months have trained more than 300 Nigerian Naval personnel, including members of the Nigerian Special Boat Service.

There were more than 120 pirate attacks reported in the Gulf of Guinea last year, costing around US\$800 million, and so far this year 43 hostages of various nationalities have been taken. More than £6 billion of West African trade with the UK and around 15% of oil imported to the UK moves through the Gulf of Guinea annually.

Earlier today in Abuja, Mr Johnson formally dedicated a new Commonwealth war memorial at the National Military Cemetery. Mr Johnson also held high level talks with Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and urged the Nigerian Government to fulfil its responsibilities in the fight against Boko Haram.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Nigeria is a country of huge promise and big ambitions. British businesses such as Diageo and Unilever are thriving here and I want to see even more British companies succeeding in Nigeria, and more Nigerian companies in Britain.

The potential of Nigeria's markets, people and natural resources is enormous and helping to secure a prosperous future for our two countries is a key part of our Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting next year.

He added:

Our military links are close and longstanding. I am honoured to have dedicated the new Commonwealth war memorial to the memory of the thousands of Nigerians who fought side-by-side with Britain in the First and Second World Wars.

And today, British military training is helping Nigeria to take on Boko Haram and to fight back against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. This close military cooperation is the cornerstone of our joint efforts to defeat terror and to create the conditions for peace, stability and prosperity

The Foreign Secretary was travelling on a joint visit to Nigeria with International Development Secretary Priti Patel.