

Press release: Foreign Secretary remarks during press conference in Beijing, 30 July 2018

Thank you Minister Wang for your hospitality. This is actually my first trip outside Europe as Foreign Secretary. And the reason I chose to come to China is because it is an incredibly important relationship for the UK. We have nearly £70 billion of trade every year, 150,000 Chinese students studying in the UK.

Our exports to China went up 32% last year alone. But as Foreign Minister Wang said, it is not just about the bilateral relations. It's also about the way we work with China as a permanent member of the Security Council; in other parts of the UN; in international hotspots like Syria; in organisations like the World Trade Organization. And we had very comprehensive discussions about areas where we are in strong agreement such as the importance of free trade and building prosperity across the world, in upholding the rules-based international order, but also areas where we have different views such as human rights. In all cases our discussions were frank and open – we talked about absolutely everything and they were very constructive.

Two things I think of particular interests to the people back home was the offer made by Foreign Minister Wang to open discussions about a possible free trade deal done between Britain and China post-Brexit, and we said that's something we welcome and we said that we will explore. We also brought up some important consular cases including the case that's worrying a lot of the people in the UK of the Simpson children, and Foreign Minister Wang said that he would look into that case whilst also of course respecting the independence of the Chinese legal system.

In summary I would say China and Britain have very different systems, but we do have a lot in common. We in the UK think the rise of China, China's economy and Chinese power, can and must be a positive force in the world. And we want to work very hard to strengthen and deepen our relationship to make sure that's the case.