

# Press release: Foreign Secretary shows UK support for the Western Balkans at Summit in Italy

The Foreign Secretary will join forces with the UK's allies to continue to help the Western Balkans reform, stabilise and prosper, as he attends a European summit in Trieste, Italy.

Boris Johnson will represent the Prime Minister at the 2017 Western Balkans Summit, where he will urge the region and its friends to step up efforts towards developing the Balkans into a "beacon of democracy and economic growth".

This year, the UK will invest over £20m to help improve the rule of law, supporting authorities to crack down on illegal drugs and human trafficking. It will also help the implementation of much needed reforms designed to improve the region's business environment and tackle corruption.

Today's Summit will launch a new Regional Economic Area Action Plan to boost job creation, generate new investments in transport and energy infrastructure as well as digital projects to improve connectivity in the region.

During the Summit, the Foreign Secretary will also confirm that the UK will host the 2018 Western Balkans Summit.

Ahead of the talks, the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

"We want to see the Western Balkans as a stable, secure and prosperous region, succeeding in Europe. The UK is unfailingly committed to working together with our friends and allies to make the Western Balkans a beacon of democracy and economic growth.

"I'm proud that the UK will host the Western Balkans Summit in 2018. This is a firm demonstration of our support for much-needed reform to improve the region's security, boost the economy, and to combat challenges such as illegal drugs and human trafficking, which pose a threat to all of us whether in the Western Balkans or the UK."

This is the fourth Summit in a series that forms the Berlin Process which was initiated by German Chancellor Merkel to boost regional and intra-regional cooperation with the Western Balkans.

This Summit will bring together the Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and Economy Ministers from the six Western Balkans countries. EU institutions along with Germany, Austria, France, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy will also attend.

## Further information