

Press release: HM Trade Commissioner for Africa appointed

- More than £28 billion of goods and services traded between the UK and Africa in 2016.
- Africa is home to 4 of the world's top 6 fastest-growing economies: Libya, Ethiopia, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Africa's long-term success matters to the UK.

Today (Wednesday 20 June), International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP appoints Emma Wade-Smith OBE as HM Trade Commissioner for Africa.

Wade-Smith is a senior diplomat and trade expert of 20 years, and has served in Brussels, Chile, Mexico, Washington and more recently in Africa as DIT's regional trade director. She was awarded an OBE for diplomatic service in 2012.

More than £28 billion of goods and services were traded between the UK and African countries in 2016. The continent is also home to 4 of the top 6 fastest-growing economies in the world (Libya, Ethiopia, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire) and opportunities in infrastructure alone are estimated to be worth more than £62 billion a year.

This appointment will build on the UK's position as a leading partner for Africa's peace, security and prosperity – supporting trade, investment and job growth.

The appointment will be made this morning at a business forum discussing the Prosperity Fund, a UK government initiative to remove barriers to inclusive economic growth in order to reduce poverty in partner countries whilst creating opportunities for international businesses, including UK firms.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

Trade is at the heart of our approach to Africa and I am delighted to welcome Emma Wade-Smith to her new role.

HM Trade Commissioners play a critical role in our international economic department and will have more autonomy to do what works best in their region to improve trade with key markets of the future.

With young and growing populations, and the world's fastest-growing middle class, there is huge potential for British businesses to create modern trading partnerships across Africa. Emma will help unlock the continent's potential, supporting jobs, growth and prosperity in the UK and Africa.

DIT Permanent Secretary Antonia Romeo added:

DIT is attracting the best and brightest people to work on the UK's future trade policy as we prepare to leave the EU. Emma's appointment is the latest in a series of hires that will boost the UK's trade and investment relations across the world.

I look forward to working with Emma and her new colleagues as we build a truly global Britain.

HM Trade Commissioner for Africa Emma Wade-Smith OBE commented:

Having spent the last 2 years working on this exciting and dynamic continent, I know it is bursting not only with opportunities today, but potential for tomorrow. I will put partnerships at the heart of our business relationships, building on the work we're already doing to transform our shared entrepreneurial spirit into jobs and growth in the UK and across Africa.

Emma Wade-Smith joins Simon Penney (Middle East), Richard Burn (China), Jo Crellin (Latin America), Crispin Simon (South Asia), Judith Slater (Eastern Europe and Central Asia) and Antony Phillipson (North America) as HM Trade Commissioners, with those for Europe and Asia-Pacific to be confirmed shortly.

About Her Majesty's Trade Commissioners (HMTCs)

All of the new HMTCs will cooperate closely with HM Ambassadors and High Commissioners, the wider diplomatic network, and other UK Government colleagues based in countries in their region, in a joined-up and coordinated Government effort overseas to promote UK trade and prosperity.

In total, there will be nine HM Trade Commissioners, with 7 now appointed:

- Africa: Emma Wade-Smith OBE
- China: Richard Burn
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Judith Slater
- Latin America: Joanna Crellin
- Middle East: Simon Penney
- North America: Antony Phillipson

- South Asia: Crispin Simon

HMTCs for Europe and Asia-Pacific will be confirmed shortly.

UKEF Support for UK businesses in Africa

With a total risk appetite on the continent of over £20bn and the ability to lend in a number of local currencies, UK Export Finance can offer extensive, vital financial support for companies wishing to do business in Africa, further strengthening our partnerships across the continent.

Prosperity Fund

The Prosperity Fund supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the 2015 UK Aid Strategy by promoting growth and prosperity in developing countries. The developing countries it focuses on face considerable challenges such as rapid urbanisation, climate change and high and persistent inequality (including gender inequality) which can lower long-term growth prospects. The Prosperity Fund supports the broad-based and inclusive growth needed for poverty reduction. Prosperity Fund programmes are designed from the ground-up to generate business opportunities – specifically by growing sectors where the UK has a comparative advantage; more broadly by removing trade barriers, standardising regulations and improving the business environment.