

Press release: Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific highlights UK-Brunei relationship, EU exit and the UK's future relationship with ASEAN

The British Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field MP, delivered a powerful speech at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on his second day in Brunei. The Minister highlighted the depth of the UK and Brunei's longstanding and close relationship, he gave his vision for the EU Exit and opportunities for trade and investment and the UK's relationship with ASEAN. Hajah Siti Norishan binti Haji Abdul Ghafor, Permanent Secretary (Political) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade introduced Minister Field to the audience. After his speech, Mr Field had the opportunity to engage in a lively discussion with policy makers and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Minister Field is currently on a two-week, six-country tour of South East Asia highlighting the UK's commitment to this increasingly important region. He described an 'All of Asia' policy, through which the UK engages actively with all countries in the region, regardless of size – working together to promote regional security, to build prosperity, and to strengthen the values which underpin the people to people links. Since Mr Field's appointment as Minister for Asia and the Pacific, he has travelled all across the region, visiting some twenty countries. By the end of his current tour, Mr Field will have visited all ten ASEAN Member States in just over a year, demonstrating emphatically that the UK's All of Asia policy is broad, ambitious and focussed on the future.

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Minister Field elaborated on the UK's exit from the European Union, and the new partnership which is being negotiated. Once outside the EU, he said that the UK will be able to developing closer, more tailored relationships with countries around the world.

Minister Field emphasised the importance of the UK's existing close relationship with ASEAN, and the UK's intention to develop that relationship further as it leaves the EU. He said that there was real scope to do more with ASEAN, including right here in Brunei, on issues such as Islamic banking and finance; the exciting new world of FinTech; or supporting capital market development.

Minister Field noted how many key interlocutors across Asia were speaking enthusiastically of new opportunities for bilateral co-operation with the UK, including on free trade agreements. The UK is a long-standing champion of

free trade as a proven means of lifting millions of people out of poverty, particularly in Asia. Mr Field said that the UK would continue to challenge protectionism which it saw as a real danger to global growth. Minister Field praised the “Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership” that Brunei and 10 other nations signed earlier this year. After it leaves the EU, the UK will be free to consider joining such free trade agreements.

Mr Field said that the UK’s bilateral relationship with Brunei was in excellent shape, and he was excited to learn about new opportunities to develop it further.

Further information

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