

Press release: PM meeting with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia: 7 March 2018

The Prime Minister jointly hosted the inaugural meeting of the UK-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, at Downing Street earlier today.

The meeting agreed a landmark ambition for around £65bn of mutual trade and investment opportunities over the coming years, including direct investment in the UK and new Saudi public procurement with UK companies. This is a significant boost for UK prosperity and a clear demonstration of the strong international confidence in our economy as we prepare to leave the European Union.

These new investment and procurement opportunities will be spread across a range of sectors including education, training and skills, financial and investment services, culture and entertainment, healthcare services and life sciences, technology and renewable energy and the defence industry.

The Prime Minister said the UK was a firm supporter of Saudi Arabia's 'Vision 2030', an ambitious blueprint for internal reform that aims to create a thriving economy and a vibrant society – conditions that we agree are essential to the Kingdom's long-term stability and success. She noted that as a world leader across a range of sectors, the UK was uniquely placed to partner Saudi Arabia in delivering these vital reforms.

The Prime Minister welcomed recent reforms in Saudi Arabia, including on women attending sporting events and the cinema, and being legally able to drive from June. The Prime Minister and Crown Prince agreed that we should continue working together to explore ways the UK can support Saudi Arabia to progress and intensify these reforms, particularly on women's rights, and on universal human rights, where the Prime Minister noted our particular concerns in the case of Raif Badawi.

The Prime Minister and the Crown Prince agreed a new education partnership which will see UK experts help the Saudi education system implement their ambitious domestic reform programme, increasing levels of female participation and boosting inclusivity. This will include UK experts undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the Saudi education system, and sharing best practice and recommendations for modernisation. We will embed gender equality, equal access and equal treatment in all aspects of our programme of support.

Following the meeting of the Strategic Partnership Council, the Prime Minister and the Crown Prince received a briefing from UK national security officials on foreign policy issues, including Yemen.

The Prime Minister raised our deep concerns at the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Prime Minister and Crown Prince agreed on the importance of full and unfettered humanitarian and commercial access, including through the ports, and that a political solution was ultimately the only way to end the conflict and humanitarian suffering in Yemen.

They also discussed Iran, agreeing on the importance of working together to counter Iran's destabilising regional activity, and Iraq, including the importance of supporting reconstruction efforts.