

Queen's birthday celebration 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya: Jane Marriott's speech

Our Guest of Honour, Cabinet Secretary for Health, Hon Mutahi Kagwe, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen, All Protocols Observed.

Hamjambo

I am delighted to welcome you all to this celebration of The Queen's Birthday. This year, it is a double celebration, as we are not only marking Her Majesty's 96th birthday, but also celebrating her Platinum Jubilee, marking a phenomenal 70 years on the throne.

The Queen has been on the throne for longer than any other monarch in British history, becoming a much loved and respected figure across the globe. She has been on the throne longer than 90% those of you here tonight have been born.

Her extraordinary reign has seen her travel more widely than any other monarch, undertaking over 260 official visits overseas, including nearly 100 state visits. She has been the UK's foremost diplomat, affirming old relationships and building new connections.

Her Majesty's connection to Kenya has always been a very special one.

You all know the story of how a young Elizabeth, in 1952, went up a tree as a Princess and descended as the Queen. She went on to visit this country in 1972, 1983, and 1991 – demonstrating the continued importance of the Commonwealth, and the special relationship our two countries share.

She has been part of that rich history which binds the UK and Kenya. As I said to His Excellency, President Kenyatta, when I presented my credentials nearly three years ago, that it is a relationship which includes moments of great joy and great pain. It is through this history that our peoples, our businesses and our Governments have forged close and enduring bonds.

Amid the crises in the world, we have continued to work together to deliver global solutions in critical areas such as education, health, climate, trade and investment.

Kenya remains of absolutely vital importance to the UK, with President Kenyatta making three visits to the UK in the last two years, where he and Prime Minister Johnson have shared the global stage on development, education and climate issues (AIS, GES, COP26).

In January 2020, His Excellency and PM Boris Johnson agreed a Strategic Partnership with five pillars: mutual prosperity; security and stability; sustainable development; climate change; and people to people. To illustrate this, I would like to take a moment to highlight a few examples in

celebrating our partnership.

But don't worry, I've picked out just a few highlights and anecdotes. You would still be here at midnight if I listed all the areas of co-operation.

- Trade between the two countries is worth around KES 165 billion a year, and the UK is Kenya's 5th largest trading partner (i.e. importer of Kenyan goods). Our relationship is balanced: the UK imports as much from Kenya as it exports.
- Over forty percent of UK tea imports come from Kenya. My Prime Minister is fond of saying that every other cup of tea we drink in the UK is from Kenya;
- The UK imports about 30,000 tonnes of vegetables and 19% of flowers from Kenya annually. On vegetables alone, that's the equivalent to nearly 2,400 big red London buses.
- 150 British enterprises are currently in Kenya, benefitting over 250,000 Kenyans directly employed by British organisations.
- We have a strong network of over 1,755 alumni of UK scholarships and fellowships in academia, defence and security in Kenya. More than 500 of these are Chevening Scholars and – quick advert – applications will open shortly for the next round of Chevening Scholarships. Watch my Twitter feed.
- In 2021, despite COVID-19 restrictions, around 50,000 UK residents visited Kenya, making the UK the fourth biggest source market for visitors. I hope we can hit the 200,000 mark by 2023.
- I will let our wonderful guest speaker, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Health, speak about our amazing health partnership, so I don't duplicate what he will say.

We will continue to work with Kenya to help facilitate private sector investment into Kenyan infrastructure. We will continue to increase UK investment in value-add activities here and supporting the 'Made in Kenya' brand. We will increase the volume of trade through the UK-Kenya Trade Deal. We will provide UK funding for Kenya's trade infrastructure to allow exports to happen cheaper and more efficiently.

We will continue to support array of policy reforms and regulations including championing the importance of the rule of law, fostering transparency,

protecting human rights and tackling corruption.

Before I come on to the final thanks, I wanted to share a memory of mine from meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. It was 2014, I was the UK Ambassador to Yemen, and four of us Ambassadors had an exclusive audience with Her Majesty.

We drove into Buckingham Palace and were escorted up the stairs of a grand hall to the more private chambers. A protocol officer taught us the correct way to enter the room – three steps in, then a bow or courtesy.

As we were escorted to see Her Majesty, I could see some of her corgi dogs happily playing on the plush red carpets in the hallway.

I entered the room, immediately forgot how to count to three, bowed and took my allotted place. I was fortunate enough to have 15 minutes one-to-one with Her Majesty.

I explained that I was her Ambassador to Yemen and that we were planning how to celebrate 60 years since her visit to Aden. “Yemen.” Said Her Majesty, thoughtfully. She then started speaking about her 1954 visit as if it had happened the day before – the ancient volcanic crater in Aden and the welcome and hospitality shown by the Sheikhs. I was awed and honoured to hear such memories directly from my Head of State.

That is enough reminiscing from me. Before I close, please allow me to thank our sponsors for their contribution to this event and to name check them:

Our wonderful Gold contributors are:

I would also like to thank everyone who has been involved in organising and supporting this evening. Big shouts outs please for:

Those providing the music here tonight:

- Kenya Defence Military Band
- BM Entertainment
- British High Commission Community Choir

The AAR Ambulance and all the security teams for keeping us safe

And Nairobi Photo Booth for helping create some great memories.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to each one of you here tonight for making the special connections in weaving the rich fabric that binds our two countries together.

Asante sana.