

Queen's birthday virtual celebration 2021 hosted in Santiago

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Louise De Sousa and I am the British Ambassador here in Chile. Welcome to the British Embassy Santiago's 2021 Queen's Birthday Party, celebrating Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 95th birthday and marking the anniversary of Her Majesty's coronation in this, the 69th year of her reign.

Wherever you are, thank you for joining this virtual celebration this afternoon. We join you from my residence in El Golf in Las Condes. I know that we have welcomed many of you here in person, and to our embassy just down the road. And we will do so again, as soon as we are able. But for now, we hope that you enjoy this small online event. Here is what you can expect.

In just over 20 weeks – 144 days exactly – the UK will host COP26, the UN Climate Change summit, in Glasgow. The moment Chile officially passes the climate leadership baton to the UK and Italy. We want to use today's event to shine a spotlight on the UK's and Chile's shared efforts to tackle climate change.

I then look forward to leading the toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the governments and people of our two great nations.

And we will take a moment to reflect on and celebrate the life of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, with whom I know many people in Chile also feel a special affinity.

Importantly, in this Embassy, led by the team from whom you just heard, we practice what we preach. I am very proud that this year we secured carbon neutral accreditation under the UN Climate Now initiative and the carbon international standard by measuring, reducing and compensating our carbon footprint. We are officially a Zero Emission embassy.

This has not been an ordinary year. Otherwise, we would all be together celebrating in my garden. But nonetheless, we have been able to carry out valuable work, supported by our many friends. As we prepare to toast Her Majesty The Queen, I wanted to offer a super-fast summary of some of those highlights.

The pandemic

First, regarding our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to thank the Chilean authorities for working so closely with us in our efforts to help over 1,370 people, from the 14,000 British nationals in Chile at the start of the pandemic, who needed our assistance to return home in March last year.

Today, British and Chilean scientists and medical experts are working together on genomic surveillance to track COVID-19 variants of concern, and

on vaccine development and distribution. Our countries are both proud supporters of the COVAX facility, the multilateral mechanism working to get vaccines to the poorest and most vulnerable in the world. My Prime Minister and Chile's President are leading the drive to agree a new international treaty on pandemic response.

Science has been at the heart of our response to both climate change and COVID-19. Our universities, researchers and businesses are finding the solutions to the most pressing problems. Whether that is establishing the international standards for copper products that reduce infection risks in hospitals and other public buildings, or on protecting the oceans.

Trade

On trade, Chile was the first country in the world to sign a new bilateral agreement to protect our trading relationship as the UK left the EU, an agreement that entered into force in January. I started my appointment in March hosting the Lord Mayor of the City of London for a digital visit to Chile, meeting Finance Minister, Rodrigo Cerda and setting a new level of ambition for our financial relationship, including on green finance and fintech.

Despite the pandemic, in 2020 the UK-Chile bilateral trading relationship was worth over £1.6 billion. Chile remains our third largest trading partner in the region. This is a team effort, and I want to thank the British-Chilean Chamber of Commerce, many of whose members join us online today. Next month, we will hold the first UK-Chile Association Committee meeting, establishing our roadmap to an even more prosperous future.

UK-Chile partnership

We have also worked in partnership with the Chilean government and civil society to support open societies and defend human rights. We were pleased that in February Chile joined the Media Freedom Coalition, first launched by the UK and Canada, to defend and protect journalists around the world.

As we mark Pride month, I am delighted that our Embassy has, for the second year, been recognised for our commitment to LGBTI+ inclusion, the only public sector organisation in Chile to receive EquitadCL accreditation, and a finalist in this year's British Government Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion awards.

Our education, arts, and cultural exchange remains equally strong. This last year has seen us engage more than 2,000 teachers of English across Chile in the first online version of the British Council's continuous professional development programme, supported by the Ministry of Education. Through the Council, we were pleased to support Chilean exhibitions at the world-renowned London Craft Week last year and the London Design Biennale this year.

Our defence partnership with Chile remains one of our most profound and historic relationships too. The pandemic has not stopped the valuable collaboration between our Armed Forces, building on a close relationship

dating back over 200 years.

Throughout this extraordinary year, we have been able to prove that Chile can rely on the UK as a steadfast partner. We share deeply held values as outward-looking democracies who believe that our economies need to drive a sustainable future for our planet and our people, and who are committed to universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. This is a historic year for Chile, and we wish the delegates elected to write Chile's new Constitution every success in agreeing a framework that wins the support of all Chileans and secures a green and prosperous future for Chile.

Our team

We are coming to the toast, and while you all make sure you have something in your glasses, I wanted to say a few words of thanks.

First to the British companies who have sponsored this event and helped make it possible: Diageo, one of the world's largest producers of beers and fine spirits; HSBC; BAE Systems, and BHP. They are also a part of the British team in Chile.

And second, thanks to my fantastic embassy team for pulling this event together and for all their hard work over the past year and for the hard work that that lies ahead.

And now to the toast. To the health and success of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and to the government and people of Chile. May our ties and our friendship continue to go from strength to strength.