

[News story: Foreign Secretary expands UK Commonwealth diplomatic network](#)

Today the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson announced the opening of nine new diplomatic posts across the Commonwealth.

The new posts, Lesotho, Swaziland, The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, will extend Britain's global influence.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

As a Commonwealth family of nations, it is in our shared interest to boost prosperity, tackle security issues and clear up the environment.

These new diplomatic posts are in regions which provide huge potential and opportunity post-Brexit for British businesses and will help us to deepen our relationships across the Commonwealth.

After we leave the EU, Global Britain will remain outward facing, open for business and a champion of the rules-based international order.

Britain has one of the largest diplomatic footprints in the world. The UK's overseas network is instrumental in promoting our national interest, particularly post-Brexit. The expanded network puts Britain in peak position to enhance military cooperation, boost trade and provide services to the rapidly expanding middle classes of the developing world.

The UK will also have a greater presence in Europe and in all regions of the world. An increased global footprint will also ensure that Britain and its allies are able to counter the malign influences of countries who seek to undermine the UK. The UK will also use its world-class soft power to continue to win hearts and minds for the global good.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@BorisJohnson](#) and [Facebook](#)
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Speech: PM's words at opening of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on 19 April 2018

Your Majesty,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Secretary-General, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

□□

I am extremely proud to be welcoming you all to London – the first full Heads of Government meeting here in almost forty years.

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to □Prime Minister Muscat and his team: □thank you for your incredible hard work. You represent a Commonwealth truth, that the size of a country does not limit its ambition and impact.

I hope that over the coming days and □months we can □build on the work you have begun as we forge a future for our common good.

Over many decades this organisation has brought together nations young and old, large and small, to celebrate our common bonds and to work to our mutual benefit.

There have been difficulties, successes, controversies. But I believe wholeheartedly in the good that the Commonwealth can do.

And this week as young people from our many nations gather and contribute their views, our responsibility as leaders is to ensure their voices are heard, and to build a Commonwealth that we can be proud to hand on to the next generation.

For in the Commonwealth we have an incredible opportunity.

An opportunity to show just what can be achieved through co-ordinated action

and co-operation, to seize the possibilities open to us as member countries, and together, to take on some of the 21st century's biggest questions.

How we support our most vulnerable member states as we tackle climate change and improve the health of our oceans, creating a more sustainable Commonwealth?

How we develop through trade, pushing back against protectionism, for a more prosperous Commonwealth?

How we respond to threats to the rules based international order and from cyber-attacks, creating a more secure Commonwealth?

And how, in all this, we advance those common values which our organisation has always stood for – democracy, human rights, tolerance, and the rule of law – so that we establish a fairer Commonwealth?

These are problems nations cannot solve alone. But by working together, we can make a real difference.

Over the past three days, we have seen the power of the Commonwealth in action at the Forums for business leaders, young people, women, and civil society.

These discussions have demonstrated the vibrancy and creativity of our organisation – focusing on issues such as improving trade, youth unemployment, education and health – all of which have the potential to transform people's lives.

And I am looking forward to taking these issues further with the heads of government over the next two days.

Finally, on behalf of all of you assembled here in Buckingham Palace, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty, Head of the Commonwealth.

This week you have opened your homes to us – here in London and in Windsor. Over many years you have been the Commonwealth's most steadfast and fervent champion.

You have been true to the deepest values of the Commonwealth – that the voice of the smallest member country is worth precisely as much as that of the largest; that the wealthiest and the most vulnerable stand shoulder to shoulder.

You have seen us through some of our most serious challenges.

And we commit to sustaining this Commonwealth, which you have so carefully nurtured.

For your service, for your dedication, for your constancy – we thank you.

[News story: Sellafield invests £2.6m to create Cumbria business hub](#)

Sellafield Ltd is investing £2.6m to convert a derelict transport exchange in Whitehaven into a £4.1m hothouse for tech, digital, media, and creative start-ups.

The scheme, called the Buzz Station, is being funded by Sellafield Ltd's owner the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

[Sellafield Ltd Buzz Station scheme](#)

It is part of a wider £300m regeneration of the town led by BEC and partners including Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners and Copeland Borough Council.

The building will be developed with strategic input from Sellafield Ltd and could be open next year.

Alongside units for fledgling firms, the plan includes:

- conference and meeting space for 75 people
- an artisan food and drink outlet, open to the public
- health and wellbeing facilities

The project is part of Sellafield Ltd's Transformation Programme, which seeks to leverage public and private sector investment to help grow and diversify the West Cumbrian economy.

Jamie Reed, Head of Development and Community Relations for Sellafield Ltd, said:

West Cumbria has always been a crucible of innovation, energy, and ideas.

We pioneered the civil nuclear industry and we're leading the world in decommissioning and waste management.

Now we're positioning ourselves for the next wave of growth in the tech and digital industries.

That means unleashing the energy and ambition of local people to innovate, invent, and inspire.

The Buzz Station will provide the ideal environment for collaboration and creativity, allowing the next generation of tech entrepreneurs to lead our economic renewal.

This is Sellafield transformation in action – creating partnerships, unlocking investment, and helping to build a diverse and sustainable private sector.

Andrew van der Lem, of the NDA, said:

This is fantastic news for Cumbria.

Our investment will not only transform a derelict building but will provide a focal point for local economic growth in key areas like technology, digital, and creative.

The building will work with organisations like the Beacon Museum to provide education opportunities for schoolchildren, college students, and adult learners.

It will be linked to existing regional and national economic growth programmes via the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Rob Miller, Head of Property and Development at BEC, said:

This innovative and exciting development will complement the North Shore regeneration scheme.

It is the start of a major delivery phase for BEC. We are looking forward to opening the doors to ambitious businesses and the public.

Michael Pemberton, BEC Chief Executive, said:

This is a bold social investment by Sellafield Ltd and underpins commitment to economic diversity in our region.

We are delighted to welcome them on board as a strategic partner in the scheme. The overall North Shore plans will be the catalyst for major change in Whitehaven and the Buzz Station will be a valuable asset for the town.

[Speech: Syria: International Impartial](#)

and Independent Mechanism

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman, and we associate ourselves with the statement made earlier by the European Union. This first report of the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism is extremely welcome. It's an important initiative from Lichtenstein and Qatar and we join other colleagues in congratulating Catherine Marchi-Uhel, on her professionalism in setting it up.

The establishment of the IIIM was an important step forward in ensuring accountability for the horrific atrocities that have been committed in Syria. These include torture in Asad's prisons, the unlawful targeting of civilians and civilian objects, including medical facilities, and as everyone knows, the use of chemical weapons. It's up to all of us to support the IIM in building and bringing cases against perpetrators before any competent tribunal.

The UK strongly supports the IIIM. We co-sponsored the UNGA resolution in December 2016 that set it up and we have contributed over a quarter million dollars to its start-up costs. We will make a further contribution later this year and I take this opportunity to encourage all Member States financially to support this important mechanism.

The barbaric chemical weapons attack in Douma on the Syrian people 11 days ago cost up to 75 lives including those of young children. But it was only the latest atrocity in this seven year conflict. We must ensure that those responsible for this crime are held to account. And I would like to take this opportunity to take a few moments now to set out the UK's response along with French and American allies to the attack on Douma. Mr Chairman, the military action we took last week was a strictly limited operation. We have published our legal position on our action. As it sets out, the action was taken to alleviate the extreme humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people by degrading the Asad regime's chemical weapons capability and by deterring their further use. We determined that there was no practicable alternative to the use of force if lives were to be saved and that the strikes were necessary and proportionate, the minimum necessary.

Mr President, it cannot be illegal to use force to prevent the killing of such numbers of people. We hope our actions will also uphold the international norms prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. I would like to stress this is not about intervening in a civil war or about regime change. And it was not about a one-off use of chemical weapons by the Asad regime. Four cases, including one of Sarin, were documented by JIM before it was shut down in 2017. We cannot allow the use of chemical weapons, which as everyone knows are prohibited under international law, to become normal, either within Syria or elsewhere.

In 2014 Russia vetoed a resolution calling for the situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC so that there could be accountability for all the atrocities that we have seen in Syria. To date, Russia has vetoed 12 Security

Council resolutions aimed at alleviating the plight of the Syrian people. This makes the work of the IIIM even more important.

We commend the work that it has already undertaken to establish cooperation with Syrian civil society, international organizations including the UN Commission of Inquiry and Member States. We encourage the IIIM to investigate CW attacks, particularly in the absence of any international attribution mechanism for CW.

We must demonstrate that those who have committed the most serious crimes of international concern can have no place to hide. There must be no impunity for the horrendous acts taking place on a daily basis in Syria. There must be justice for the victims. It may take a long time. Sadly, I fear it will take a long time but there must be justice. I'd like to close if I may Mr President by just endorsing what the French ambassador had to say about next steps on the political side and assuring the General Assembly that the United Kingdom will devote every effort to that end.

Thank you.

Press release: PM meeting with New Zealand Prime Minister: 18 April 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with the New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern at Downing Street earlier today.

They agreed the bond between the UK and New Zealand was unique and enduring, based on friendship and shared values, and underpinned by strong security, prosperity and people-to-people links.

The Prime Minister said New Zealand was an indispensable partner for the UK, noting the relationship has always been important, but is arguably even more vital today, given our shared commitment to free trade and protecting the rules-based international system.

The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Ardern for New Zealand's support over the attack against the Assad regime, and following the chemical nerve agent attack in Salisbury. They agreed it was essential to reassert the international norm against chemical weapons use.

They agreed that part of reinvigorating the Commonwealth was about fostering more intra-Commonwealth support, and to explore the

possibility of working together on development assistance in the Pacific region.

They also discussed the bilateral trade and investment relationship, agreeing that UK-New Zealand trade working group discussions were progressing well and confirming our shared ambition to form a new bilateral UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement once we have left the EU. They welcomed the approach agreed at the March European Council to provide continuity during the implementation period for international agreements, which could be swiftly transitioned into new bilateral agreements once the implementation period ends.