

# Speech: Jordan: Growth and Opportunity, the London Initiative – 28 February 2019

Your Excellency Prime Minister, distinguished Ministers, esteemed Private Sector CEOs and partners, civil society leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be opening Jordan: Growth and Opportunity, the London Initiative.

We all agree; Jordan's prosperity is critical to the international community.

In a region marred by conflict, Jordan has long been a beacon of stability and peace. A steadfast ally in the fight against Daesh and global terrorism.

A generous host to a huge influx of refugees sheltering from the war in Syria. And a powerful voice of reason on the global stage.

Jordan has also weathered many storms.

The recent dramatic increase in population straining its infrastructure and services.

Its economy buffeted by global financial crises, deprived of the key markets in Iraq and Syria, and hit by rising energy costs.

And more recently, a painful sequence of deep fiscal adjustments.

Jordan is resilient, and Jordan is determined.

Today we come together with a new focus: to unlock growth, jobs and investment for Jordan – critical to building resilience for the country and the region.

Jordan is uniquely positioned to take advantage of emerging global trends and become a regional economic dynamo.

It is a safe, stable haven, and a gateway to Asia and beyond.

I am delighted to welcome so many private sector partners here today as a signal of your interest in Jordan's promise.

UK companies like Jaguar Land Rover have spotted the huge potential of Jordan, as the Chief Executive will tell us later.

And Jordan's burgeoning tech start-up scene is generating international buzz.

75% of the Arabic content on the internet is generated in Jordan, that's extraordinary.

And at Davos, I met the CEO of Expedia.

He was warm with praise for Jordan – and its youthful, educated workforce – having successively set up a software hub in Amman.

Because countries, like companies, are powered by their people.

68% of Jordan's population are below the age of 30 and full of aspiration.

This is an enormous opportunity.

A young, educated population with the potential to drive Jordan's success.

And I am delighted to welcome a group of young Jordanians who are participating in today's conference.

They have fed in their aspirations and solutions to today through consultations in Jordan organised by the Crown Prince Foundation.

These are the engineers who will be part of high-end infrastructure.

These are the innovators who will power tech start-ups,

These are the young women and men ready to step into the booming professional services sector.

They are the young people that are the future of Jordan.

Today, His Majesty King Abdullah II and His Excellency the Prime Minister will set out ambitious – and detailed – plans for delivering economic growth.

They target nothing short of economic transformation.

Moving to a new model that is driven by the private sector rather than public-sector growth.

One that is led by and for Jordan's dynamic young population.

And unlocking jobs for women is essential for Jordan's economic development.

70% of unemployed women in Jordan have university degrees.

And the Government of Jordan has ambitious plans, to bring more women into the workforce.

With reform to public and private sectors and the re-opening of its borders, the next five years offer an unprecedented opportunity for Jordan's economic transformation.

It is an opportunity to create a trading partner for the UK, at the heart of the Middle East.

But Jordan needs support from the international community to achieve its goals.

Jordan and the UK have both been clear, that this is not a typical development summit.

Today we hope to build a coalition – of global leaders, businesses and investors – to support Jordan and its plan for growth.

That is the London Initiative.

We want to send a very clear message to all the key international players, from international finance institutions to bilateral donors and the UN, we are fully behind the Government of Jordan's courageous reform commitments.

All the international partners here today have been steadfast in their support to Jordan as it has sheltered refugees.

They are fully in support of Jordan's future resilience and prosperity.

The UK has confidence in Jordan's vision and is mobilising its best experts behind it.

As we fast approach the date for our exit from the EU, we will do so with confidence and optimism.

We are a trading nation, whose success depends on global markets.

That is why the UK will strengthen its role as the champion of emerging economies, to ensure there continues to be strong markets where British companies can do business, and where Britain is seen as the partner of choice.

We lead by example – with our commitment to spend 0.7% of national income on aid, and 2% GDP on defence.

Our support for Jordan demonstrates that Britain will not take a back-seat in the world after we leave the EU.

We will continue to stand up for what we believe in, and support our friends, allies and our future trading partners around the world.

And the surest investment any country can make is in the education of its young people.

English is the global language of business. And evidence shows that English language skills significantly enhance job prospects and wage levels for Jordanians.

The Prime Minister has long been a leader in education. In fact, I first met him in a school.

He says the English language is the passport to the global economy.

So, I'm pleased to be able to make a comprehensive English language education offer to Jordan.

This will include £25m over five years to support the Jordanian government's efforts to equip 200,000 young people in Jordan with English language and business skills for the 21st Century.

This will enable Jordanians to take a leading role as their private sector world opens up.

In addition, The British Council will form a new partnership with Jordan's Crown Prince Foundation and our own Prince's Trust.

A three-year pilot will give thousands of young people the technical, entrepreneurial and people skills they need in business.

And other UK government departments will also use their expertise.

For example, our Department for Education and Ofsted, the schools' inspectorate, will help drive up education standards, develop a strategy for better use of technology in schools, and help Jordan evaluate school inspections.

And I will be signing an agreement with the Government of Jordan later today to drive forward education reform and create new opportunities for future generations.

And of course, it is important that vulnerable children, including Syrian refugees, can access education.

When I visited Jordan last year, I saw how the UK is helping to ensure a brighter future for Syrian refugees and their host communities.

This includes helping the Government of Jordan to deliver its commitment to give every child in Jordan an education.

And, importantly, I saw projects that give everyone in Jordan a chance to fulfil their potential.

This included visiting Om Ammar inclusive school to see how UK aid is supporting Mercy Corps to provide education for children with disabilities in Government of Jordan public schools.

The UK will extend an extra £3.35 million to help UNICEF address the urgent needs of children not enrolled in any kind of education and double our support for Mercy Corps' inclusive education programme.

This will ensure that no talent is wasted, and everyone has a part to play in Jordan's growth story.

Since the Syria crisis began, the UK has contributed over £2.46 billion to help those affected. We will continue to provide that support.

Today I can announce a further £50 million UK aid package that will help over 22,000 Syrian refugees with cash transfers, giving them the flexibility to decide how their family's needs should be met.

These transfers themselves are simple, efficient and a good use of aid – avoiding the storage and transport costs associated with other forms of aid.

And they give refugees choice and dignity.

There is no doubt that Jordan has shouldered a huge amount of the fallout from the Syria conflict and their support for refugees needs to continue.

But with international backing, Jordan can also prosper on its own terms.

That is why the UK is making Jordan a trailblazer for a new model of aid.

First, this means being led by Jordan's own priorities.

We are using the UK aid budget for Jordan to back Jordan's vision for reform which will help the economy grow, as well as maintain vital humanitarian and education support.

Because I want to put our development budget, our expertise, our links to the City of London at the centre of our approach to building global economies.

To use the convening power of governments in a new way, which incentivises reform and powers the private sector, creating opportunities for British, Jordanian and international business.

Making business, not aid, the motor for growth and jobs.

Today we're meeting in King's Cross, previously a deprived neighbourhood of London and now a thriving hub for business, tech and the creative arts, transformed by the partnership of private and public sectors.

This is what we are doing in Jordan. Aid, targeted at making markets work; and that is the future.

And the UK is not alone. We have brought all of you together today.

Britain is leading the international community to promote peace and prosperity in an unstable part of the world.

By doing so, we are creating exceptional, game-changing opportunities for both Jordan, and the UK, and helping to turn huge potential into global success.

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