

Speech: Minister Baldwin speech on UK-Africa relations

Thank you, and thank you all for being here today, to consider the future of British and African partnerships.

I look around the room and I see that some of you can probably remember how you felt when you were eighteen years old. Some of us struggle – but some of you could still remember that feeling.

And I think that what is absolutely the most exciting thing about Africa is the way in which the median age is 15, the average age about 18 – and it's that excitement and optimism and energy that I find so fascinating and exciting in terms of the work that I do with African countries.

So far in this role I've had the pleasure of visiting seven African countries and I've been really struck in each place that I have visited with the passion, the energy, and the extraordinarily entrepreneurial spirit of everyone that I've come across in Africa.

It really is a continent absolutely crammed with possibility.

And for the UK, Africa matters.

This is why – in my role as Minister for Africa in both the Department for International Development and the Foreign Office – I am truly championing a whole-of-Government approach to stepping up our partnership with African countries.

This means bringing together the UK's development and humanitarian expertise, our world-class diplomacy, our political analysis, our trade experts, our health specialists, our education experts and our military and security excellence.

We are really extending our reach across Africa. So far this year the UK has opened new posts in Lesotho and eSwatini, Mauritania and Chad, and there will be more to come. The vision is that at the end of this process we will have more offices across Africa than any other European country.

That comprehensive and integrated package that we have offers real advantage to the young people of Africa on the issues that they think are most important for their future.

We are listening to them and will be driven by what they most want and need from us. Across the continent we will work together to further the aspirations and ambitions of the countries I am privileged to work with every day.

I don't really need to emphasise to this audience the scale of the opportunity, but by 2050 the population of Africa is expected to reach 2.5

billion people. That is a both a great opportunity and a great challenge.

Nigeria alone needs to create about 6,000 new jobs every single day until 2030 just to keep up with the growth in its population.

Because without jobs and opportunities, the optimistic and eager 18 year olds I meet today could become the frustrated, hopeless and angry young people of tomorrow.

So the UK must step up its support now, to work with African countries to build opportunities for the growing numbers of young people entering the job market every year.

Creating jobs for millions of young people is vital to ensuring the stability and economic prosperity of the continent.

Reliable jobs represent a 'win' for our African partners' economic futures and a 'win' for the UK by supporting all-important trade relationships.

Trade can support the creation of millions of jobs and stimulate the trillions of pounds of investment needed to help countries ultimately move on from a dependence on aid.

This is why – working with the International Trade Centre – we launched the SheTrades Commonwealth programme, an ambitious venture to boost the role of women in international trade, in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria.

And it is why we will be funding a programme to help countries implement the World Trade Organisation's landmark Trade Facilitation Agreement – which is expected to boost global trade by up to \$1 trillion.

This power of trade is also why the Department for International Development has funded the TradeMark East Africa programme, which has significantly reduced the time it takes to clear and transport cargo through Mombasa port and beyond, encouraging trade in and out of Kenya.

You might also know that the Government just announced the first ever Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Africa. Another sign of our long-term commitment to trade.

But there is also a lack of public and private investment in many African countries. We want to leverage British expertise to help change that. For example using our financial industries and the City of London to foster deeper capital markets and strengthen links between the Bank of England and other central banks.

At the Commonwealth Summit the Development Secretary announced a package of new initiatives to deepen the partnership between the Department for International Development, the City of London and African nations.

It included the launch of a learning partnership between the Bank of England and central banks in Sierra Leone, Ghana and South Africa, as well as support for developing countries to access global capital markets in their own

currencies.

The UK's Development Finance Institution CDC is forging paths for other investors by concentrating its efforts in the poorest and most fragile countries in Africa and South Asia. Between 2014 and 2016 companies backed by CDC created over 3 million new direct and indirect jobs, and paid taxes to national governments worth over \$9 billion.

There needs to be a huge increase in private sector funding if the UN Global Goals are to be met by 2030. Which is why we're providing new capital to CDC to help trigger even more job creation and growth in the poorest countries and to mobilise the private sector to rise to the challenge of investing in new markets.

And it's why we're emphasising the value to Global Britain of the UK being a meeting point for the world's global investment opportunities and the world's global investors.

There are several other ways I want to highlight this morning in terms of our work with our friends in Africa.

We know that another important way to support African partners to make the most of the demographic dividend by supporting women and men to choose when they have children.

We know that 37 million women across Africa want to have access to family planning options.

And we know about the wider societal benefits of empowering women to take control of their life and health choices.

For over 20 years, DFID has been a world-leader in supporting women and men to access family planning. Our support planned through until 2022 is helping to save the lives of over 6000 women by preventing maternal deaths. And it reaches almost 20 million women with voluntary contraceptive choices.

But now we are going further – building on that expertise to move the conversation on from being 'just' a health discussion. Family planning should feature on the finance agenda, on the infrastructure agenda and on investment agendas. This is why the UK is delivering a step change in our support for access to voluntary family planning, doing more to empower women to take control of their lives and their health choices.

And we're also empowering girls and women to take control of their future through our commitment to girls' education.

At the recent G7 Summit, the Prime Minister announced that over the next eight years DFID's Girls Education Challenge will help more than 1.5 million girls transition from primary school through to high school, reducing their chances of early motherhood and increasing their ability to get good jobs.

For every extra year a girl stays in school, her future wages rise by 12 per cent.

This is why we have given such strong support to the campaign to secure 12 years of quality education for everyone, including all girls.

This work on education and family planning goes hand in hand to make sure we are giving today's girls the opportunities and skills they need to play a vital role in their countries' progress.

The UK is also building partnerships which tackle shared threats and support Africa's desire to lead in resolving its own problems.

Whether that's British military teams training African troop contributors to the important AMISOM mission in Somalia, or the national crime agency working with its African counterparts to shut down illegal smuggling routes.

Britain has been – and will remain – a steadfast partner for Africa's peace, security and stability.

We will continue to do this because it is absolutely in our national interest to do so – terrorism, illegal immigration and modern slavery do not respect borders.

When communities are safe and when the rules-based international order is respected – that's when economies can prosper, and everyone can become better off. That is why we also work closely with African partners on the UN Security Council, the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons, which is meeting today, and – of course – the Commonwealth.

And there does seem to be an increasing interest from African countries which already represent 19 of the 53 countries in the Commonwealth – we were delighted this year to welcome back The Gambia for example.

I am really optimistic about Africa and about harnessing that huge energy and potential – a young and vibrant population which can really make a difference to the global economy.

The young people I have spoken to in Sierra Leone or Zimbabwe, Angola or Cote d'Ivoire, have given me a clear message. They do not want us to give them ready-made solutions. They have plenty of ideas of their own. But they do see ways in which the UK can help. I am determined that the UK listens to them.

It is now time for a bigger, deeper, more mature partnership.

As the Prime Minister said at the G20 summit – we want long-term partnerships which support Africa's own aspirations and help it take control of its own future growth and find solutions to its own problems.

Global Britain is open, inclusive and outward facing, committed to playing a leading role on the world stage. Leaving the European Union does not mean stepping away from our global responsibilities – quite the opposite.

And this is why we are stepping up our partnerships across Africa, our commitment to the long-term success of African nations and our support to the future hopes of millions of young people.