

Speech: Penny Mordaunt Launches Companies to Inspire Africa 2019

Well good morning everyone, and can I first start by echoing the sympathies that David gave about those caught up in the very sad events in Nairobi, my thoughts, the thoughts of my departmental colleagues and my parliamentary colleagues, I know [Andrew Selous](#) is here to today, are very much with everyone who has been caught up in those tragic events.

After the events of last night in the House of Commons, which were rather depressing, I felt it was very important that I did something this morning that was uplifting, constructive with inspirational people and of which we could be very proud, and represented absolutely Global Britain. So, thank you David and the [London Stock Exchange Group](#) for inviting me to launch the Companies to Inspire Africa 2019 report.

I would like to start by congratulating all the companies featured. From 32 countries, with 7 major sectors represented, you have been nominated as Africa's most inspiring small and medium-sized enterprises. It is you and your successes that will demonstrate globally the opportunities that are increasingly present in Africa.

I am particularly pleased that nearly a quarter of the companies in this year's report are led by women, almost double that of the report published in 2017.

And we know that globally companies with greater levels of gender equality also do better in terms of income, growth and competitiveness. And today I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the inspirational female business leaders named in the report. Companies like [Lioness of Africa](#), which aims to support 1 million African women entrepreneurs to achieve success. As female leaders you are role models that can make change happen. I applaud and admire you all.

All of us in this room know Africa is a continent alive with opportunity. Five of the world's fastest-growing economies are African and by 2050, a quarter of the world's consumers will live there. This opportunity is why we saw Ghana hosting an Investment Summit last year, attended by over 50 British companies. It is why the London Stock Exchange has partnered with African Securities Exchanges like Casablanca and Nairobi. And it is why the Prime Minister recently visited the continent spending her time with business and political leaders, entrepreneurs and young people as well as throwing a few shapes – there's still time David, there's still time.

They told her that they wanted a modern partnership with the UK that delivers mutual benefit. By combining African-led ambition with British expertise we can do just that – unlocking high-quality investment that delivers more opportunities, exports and jobs for both Africa and the UK.

Global Britain is committed to this new partnership with Africa. The Prime Minister announced a radical expansion of the UK government's presence, bringing in trade experts and investment specialists to deliver on our shared interests and find solutions to the world's biggest challenges.

And later this year the UK will host the UK-Africa Investment Summit, which will bring together key government and business people from the UK and Africa to strengthen our links and make the most of the fantastic opportunities that are there. We want companies like you to play your part in the Summit to make it a game-changer for investment in Africa.

We want to leverage the UK's reach and unique value of the City of London to make the UK Africa's finance partner of choice.

The London Stock Exchange Group has shown strong partnership and leadership in this area, helping to build Global Britain. Through its [Africa Advisory Group](#), the London Stock Exchange has brought together key business leaders, policymakers and investors from across Africa to take the steps needed to develop Africa's capital markets. We look forward to working closely with the Group this year.

Developing Africa's capital markets is essential for unlocking finance for infrastructure and investment that will support job creation and economic growth in the long term. But these capital markets need to be supported by a well-regulated financial sector.

When I was at the London Stock Exchange during the [Commonwealth Summit](#) last April I announced a new DFID partnership with the Bank of England and the central banks of Ghana, South Africa and Sierra Leone to share regulatory expertise and enhance financial stability, helping promote economic growth through increased investor confidence. We will continue to scale up our work with the Bank of England throughout the course of this year.

UK aid is mobilising the private investment needed to deliver the [Global Goals](<https://www.globalgoals.org/>) and that is why [CDC](#), the UK's Development Finance Institution, has committed up to £3.5 billion of new African investments, and why up to £300 million has been committed from the Private Infrastructure Development Group. These partnerships will lay the foundations for new trading and business opportunities.

And when I was last here I announced the UK's ambition to help African countries raise debt in their local currencies. In November we celebrated the first ever Ghanaian Cedi-denominated bond to list to London, made possible through the DFID-backed [Private Infrastructure Development Group](#).

Investments by the DFID-backed [Financial Sector Deepening Africa](#) has supported 38 local currency bond issues by private companies and financial institutions in 16 African countries, in a range of sectors such as agriculture, energy, housing, microfinance and infrastructure. Local currency finance listings such as these are contributing to increased financial stability by ensuring that growth is fuelled by lower-risk finance over the long-term.

And we are committed to supporting innovative African companies to make it easier for finance to flow into and across the continent. It is estimated that US\$66 billion in remittances flow into Africa annually, with approximately 10% originating in the UK. The transfer of money by foreign workers to their families in their home countries is a lifeline to many in Africa. But many are losing their hard-earned money to too high remittance fees.

That is why we are announcing £2 million investment for [MFS Africa](#), an innovative mobile money company that makes it easier and cheaper to send remittances to and across Africa. This is a clear example of the UK honouring its commitments to the G20 and Global Goals targets of reducing those costs.

Our investments and partnerships are already bringing benefits for both Africa and the UK. The CDC-backed company, [Blue Skies](#), features in the report and is a leading producer of fresh cut fruits and juices and is the largest private sector company in Ghana. It sells its produce across Africa, and also trades with UK supermarkets. You can find Blue Skies products in Sainsburys, Waitrose and on Amazon Fresh – a clear demonstration that investing in African companies is good for Africa and it is good for Britain too.

The UK values such partnerships. We bring the technical knowledge of our professionals, and we bring the values of a compassionate global nation. Our values sit at the heart of our aid spending.

In October I announced a new campaign to find out the appetite of British people who might want their savings or their pension to be used to support the Global Goals and to potentially deliver better returns for them. Over the coming months we will be speaking to financial institutions, savers, pension holders and the wider British public to help shape new investment products to deliver the Global Goals.

This report demonstrates that great partnerships can lead to great things. Working together, the UK and Africa can generate private sector investment, which in turn is creating business and investment opportunities for both Africa and the UK.

2019 is the year of significant opportunities to take those partnerships further – and I very much look forward to seeing the results. Thank you all very much.