

Speech: PM speech at Wuhan University: 31 January 2018

Thank you very much everybody. And I'm very pleased to be able to be here today at Wuhan University on this, my first official financial visit to China. And as we build our golden era of UK-China relations, what we do between us as two peoples is so very important as a fundamental of that golden era. In fact, the first visit I made to a country outside the European Union when I became the British Prime Minister was to China. What I saw then was a very confident, a very forward-looking country, taking an increasing role on the world stage.

What I have seen today from the young students that I have met is an example of that confidence, that forward looking, that desire to take their country forward. And I can say from the students and young people I've met today that China is in good hands for the future.

Of course, later in my visit here in China, I will be meeting with President Xi and Premier Li, and discussing some of the mutual interests and challenges that we both share. One of them I will be looking at today here in Wuhan, which is how we develop a cleaner environment for the future. But as I said, what underpins our relations, and as we build our global strategic partnership, is the people-to-people links. And this Spirit of Youth festival is a very important example of that. And I would particularly like to thank Jiang Shuying for everything that she has been doing as the Spirit of Youth Ambassador, to encourage those links between young people in the United Kingdom and China.

And today I've met Chinese students who've studied in the UK, UK students who are studying here in China. We have more than 150,000 Chinese students in UK universities, and we have, as part of the visit I'm making here to China, a UK-China agreement on sharing knowledge of early years education. We look at university; sharing of university knowledge and expertise, but actually it's also good to share in the early years of education as well. We are seeing more Mandarin being taught in UK schools, and of course thousands of UK students here in Chinese universities.

And today I'm pleased to announce that we are extending the Shanghai maths teacher exchange which has been, I believe, a very good example of our people-to-people links and one of mutual benefit to both our countries.

So, by learning with each other and from each other we can continue to develop the bonds of friendship that we value, and the bonds of friendship on which our golden era and UK-China relations are built, bringing our people closer together not just now, but for years to come in the future. And I hope – I say to the young people here, you will be the future leaders of your country, and I hope that in future years you will continue to strengthen the ties between the United Kingdom and China.