

Speech: PM statement in Denmark: 9 April 2018

Thank you, Prime Minister, for your warm welcome today and I am delighted to be back in Denmark.

Your country is a natural partner for the UK, and – as we have discussed today – a likeminded friend and ally on a broad range of issues.

This afternoon we have, as you have just heard, talked about the attack in Salisbury and the international response to Russia's aggression, wider European and global security issues, our bilateral relationship, and Brexit.

First, let me say a word on the reports this weekend of a barbaric chemical weapons attack in Douma, Syria, targeting innocent civilians – many of them children.

The UK utterly condemns the use of chemical weapons in any circumstances. And we must urgently establish what happened on Saturday.

If confirmed, this is yet another example of the Assad regime's brutality and brazen disregard for its own people and for its legal obligations not to use these weapons. If they are found to be responsible, the regime and its backers – including Russia – must be held to account.

The events in Douma fit into a troubling wider pattern of acts of aggression and abuse of longstanding international norms on counter-proliferation and the use of chemical weapons.

In recent years, Russia's repeated vetoes at the UN have enabled these rules to be broken, and removed mechanisms that allow us to investigate and hold to account chemical weapons attacks in Syria. This must stop.

We will work closely with our allies – including at the UN Security Council later today – to ensure the international community strengthens its resolve to deal with those who are responsible for carrying out these barbaric attacks, and who allow global norms to be breached in such an appalling way.

We saw a similar recklessness last month with the use of chemical weapons on the streets of Salisbury.

I want to extend Britain's gratitude for your swift and decisive action in response to this horrific attack, and in support of our shared national security.

The UK's case for holding Russia responsible for the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal is clear.

Based on our world-leading experts at Porton Down positively identifying the chemical agent as a Novichok; our knowledge that Russia has previously

produced this agent and retains the capability to do so; Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations; our assessment that they view some defectors as legitimate targets for assassination, and our information indicating that they have investigated ways of delivering nerve agents, probably for assassination, and as part of this programme have produced and stockpiled small quantities of Novichoks, the government has concluded there is no plausible explanation other than that Russia was responsible.

No other country has a combination of the capability, the intent and the motive to carry out such an act.

Denmark's solidarity, along with many countries across the international community, has been invaluable in sending a strong signal to Russia that its illegal and destabilising activity will not be tolerated.

And the response from Denmark and our allies in recent weeks has shown a clear acknowledgement of the shared threat Russia poses to our security on a range of fronts. This increasingly hostile behaviour has involved a sustained campaign of cyber espionage, and disruption including against Denmark.

We will continue to stand up for the fundamental values that underpin our way of life. And we agreed today on the need to do more – alongside our allies – to counter the growing challenge from Russia to international security.

I welcome Denmark's leadership in co-hosting the next Ukraine Reform Conference in June. This is an important moment in consolidating international support for reform efforts and in helping Ukraine build its stability and resilience to Russian interference.

The UK and Denmark continue to cooperate closely on security and defence, as we work to tackle shared challenges on our continent and beyond the borders of Europe.

Nowhere is our shared commitment to Europe's collective security more evident than in the hundreds of British and Danish troops standing shoulder to shoulder in Estonia as part of a UK-led NATO battlegroup.

Our armed forces are also taking on Daesh in Iraq and Syria, working to bring long-term stability to Afghanistan, and collaborating through the Joint Expeditionary Force to respond to crises around the world.

Our economic cooperation – and shared commitment to free trade – is vital to our countries' prosperity, with our growing trading relationship worth £11 billion a year.

And on Brexit, we talked today about the progress made at the March European Council on the negotiations, and about the key questions that remain to be resolved.

We have also taken the opportunity to discuss what we want our future economic and security partnership to look like once Britain has left the EU.

As I have said before, I am ambitious for the scale and scope of this

relationship, and I want to ensure we maintain the closest possible links with our European allies.

I understand that future arrangements for Denmark's fishing industry are of particular interest to you. As an independent coastal state, we'll want to ensure fair and reciprocal access to waters.

The alliance between Britain and Denmark is rooted deeply in our shared values and a mutual desire to work together for the security and prosperity of our people.

And so I look forward to working with you to make sure our close and productive ties endure long after Britain has left the EU.

Thank you.