

Speech: PM to athletics stars: 'your success will inspire further generations of athletes'

I am delighted to welcome you to Downing Street and to have this opportunity – on behalf of the whole country – to thank you for everything you did to make London 2017 the biggest and best World Athletics and Para Athletics Championships in history.

This was the first time that the World Athletics and Para Athletics have been held in the same city in the same summer.

And just as with the Olympics and Paralympics five years ago, you showed the world that when it comes to hosting a global sporting event there is no-where better than the United Kingdom.

The statistics speak for themselves. More people attended the World Para Athletics Championships this summer than in all previous Championships combined.

This included almost 100,000 children – with Transport for London taking the largest number of schoolchildren to a single destination in their history.

While the World Athletics Championship set a new Guinness Record for its ticket sales – with over 700,000 sold, far exceeding the previous record of just over 417,000 for the 2009 Championships in Berlin.

Across the two championships, London welcomed more than 3,000 athletes from over 200 nations competing in 250 events.

And this was all made possible by the fantastic organising team – and by an army of 4,500 volunteers.

So first of all, I want to thank Cherry Alexander and all her team at London 2017, the GLA, UK Athletics, UK sport and all the volunteers for everything they did to make these Championships such an incredible success. Second, I want to pay tribute to all our athletes in the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team.

Once again this summer we have seen the results of your incredible hard work and dedication, as you push the limits of what's possible against the toughest competition in the world.

With 39 medals in the Para Athletics, you didn't just surpass your pre-Championship target, you amassed the best tally for GB and Northern Ireland in the modern era.

And this included 30 new records, the highest number of any nation at the Championships.

In the World Athletics Championships, the nation came together to honour the most successful British athlete of all time – Sir Mo Farah.

But his retirement from the track was far from the only story of these Championships. For we also saw the emergence of an exciting new generation of British talent.

And in that 4 by 100 metres relay final...when the eyes of the world were on Usain Bolt's final race – and that American team with all its big names – it was our British team who re-wrote the script and stormed to the Gold medal.

So as we celebrate the biggest and best Championships ever – let us also look to the future with confidence.

And as we do so, let me assure you that the government will be right behind you every step of the way.

We know how crucial the lottery and other sources of funding are to your success, and I have also increased government funding to UK Sport for the Tokyo cycle. That means UK Sport have been able to invest over £27 million pounds for athletics and almost £12 million pounds for Para-Athletics for the Tokyo cycle.

And with that funding – and with all your hard work, the hours of training, those cold, dark mornings and long winters, and all the dedication that you give, I know that we can stand here today not just treasuring great memories of this summer and the summers that have gone before, but with real excitement about the future ahead.

A future in which your success will inspire further generations of athletes from Great Britain and Northern Ireland to write their own place in the history books.

A future in which your success will inspire all of us to get out there and live healthier and more active lives.

And a future in which Great Britain and Northern Ireland will truly establish our place as a global sporting superpower.

So thank you for everything that you have done.

Thank you for making our whole country so proud once again.

And let us go forward, inspired by the memory and the legacy of London 2017 – the greatest World Athletics and Para Athletics Championships of all time.