

Speech: PM's speech at the UK-France Summit: 18 January 2018

Président Macron, je suis très heureux de vous accueillir aujourd'hui pour votre première visite au Royaume-Uni en tant que Président.

President Macron it gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today for your first visit to the UK as President.

There can be no more fitting venue than Sandhurst for these talks. For we are gathered here at one institution to celebrate and strengthen another – the enduring alliance between the UK and France.

Ours is a uniquely close relationship between two of the world's oldest and greatest democracies.

We meet in the year that marks a century since the end of the First World War, when our troops fought side-by-side in defence of our shared belief in freedom and resistance against aggression.

And we have been clear again today that as global, outward-looking nations we remain committed to defending our people and upholding our values as liberal democracies in the face of any threat, whether at home or abroad. But our relationship has always gone far beyond defence and security.

Hundreds of thousands of British citizens live in France and a similar number of French nationals have made the UK their home.

And today we have agreed ways in which we can build on these ties for the benefit of all our citizens.

While this Summit takes place as the UK prepares to leave the EU, we are and will remain a steadfast partner to our friends and allies.

And a strong and deep relationship between the United Kingdom and France remains in both of our interests.

Defence

The President and I agree on the importance of the UK-France relationship, not just to our security but to European security.

We are the only European countries who are permanent members of the UN Security Council as well as members of the G7, G20 and NATO.

And we are Europe's two foremost military powers.

It is incumbent upon us to demonstrate leadership in meeting the great challenges of our time, and upholding the international rules-based system.

We have agreed that UK-France co-operation remains critical to European defence and that together we will continue to play a full role to improve the security of the continent.

And today we can confirm that the UK-France Combined Joint Expeditionary Force will be ready to deploy up to 10,000 troops quickly and effectively to face any threat by 2020.

The shared interests of the UK and France and indeed Europe itself extend far beyond our immediate borders. Africa's security and prosperity is vitally important to us all. In recent years the UK and France worked side-by-side to combat the global threat posed by the Ebola epidemic.

And today I can announce that in the same spirit of co-operation we will step-up our efforts in the Sahel to prevent Islamist extremism breeding instability and insecurity, fuelling the migration crisis.

The UK will deploy three UK Chinook helicopters and their crews to the Sahel, and we will continue the support we offer through our heavy lift transport aircraft, increasing the ability of French troops to manoeuvre effectively in their battle against extremists.

During our discussions today the UK and France have also agreed to work together to ensure EU African Peace Facility funding for AMISOM in Somalia, as part of a comprehensive approach on the continent.

Closer to home we will stand together in the face of Russian aggression in eastern Europe, where France has agreed to commit troops to the UK-led NATO battlegroup in Estonia in 2019.

This commitment will build on the successful joint deployment which we visited together last year.

Security

Since the last UK-France Summit we have seen appalling and cowardly terrorist attacks in both our countries, in which British and French citizens have died side-by-side.

There is no circumstance in which we could envisage the vital interests of either the United Kingdom or France being threatened without the other one being affected.

To tackle this shared threat, for the first time in history all of the heads of UK and French intelligence agencies were brought together ahead of this Summit in a single meeting, underlining our unique co-operation in this field. This afternoon they briefed the President and me on the work they do together.

It is clear that this co-operation is preventing loss of life on both sides of the Channel and around the world.

And today we have discussed ways in which we can increase and enhance our collaboration to continue to keep our citizens safe.

Migration

The UK and France share a belief in a comprehensive approach to mass migration. And as our efforts in the Sahel and across Africa demonstrate, we will work together to address the instability which fuels it.

President Macron and I have both confirmed that the UK and France remain committed to the principles of the longstanding Le Touquet agreement, under which the UK is able to carry out full border checks on French soil.

And today we have agreed additional measures which will work in the best interests of both France and the UK, increasing the effectiveness of our co-operation.

We will reinforce the security infrastructure with extra CCTV, fencing and infra-red technology at Calais and other border points.

In 2016 more than 56,000 attempts by clandestines to cross the Channel were stopped at the UK's juxtaposed border controls.

The further investment we have agreed today will make the UK's borders even more secure.

The UK and France also share a determination to tackle the people traffickers and migrant smugglers who exploit the misery of those making the perilous journey to Europe.

We are committed to working closely together to close down the networks of smugglers who seek to profit from the misery of others.

Prosperity

UK-French economic co-operation is vital to our shared prosperity.

We share £71 billion in trade, making France the UK's third largest trading partner and the UK France's fifth largest.

And our trade relationship continues to thrive following the vote to leave the EU.

Airbus, a company whose supply chain and ownership spans Europe, have today announced a multi-billion pound deal to provide Emirates Airlines with 36 A380 passenger aircraft, parts of which will be built in both the UK and France, providing a boost to both our economies.

And just down the road from here in Farnborough UK and French engineers at the company are working side-by-side on the cutting edge Zephyr high-altitude surveillance drone.

This collaboration on innovation runs through our relationship, and today we have agreed to strengthen the global competitiveness of our world-class researchers and innovators, deepening co-operation between our research agencies.

People-to-People

But the UK-France relationship is about far more than a balance sheet.

Both President Macron and I believe that everyone in society deserves the same opportunities regardless of where they come from.

And we will use our relationship to make this happen, supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop their employability and language skills.

We will create a new fund for exchanges between our schools and revitalising the Entente Cordiale programme with new financing, so that our students can study across the Channel.

Our shared history will also be reflected in the loan of the Bayeux Tapestry to the UK in 2022, the first time it will be on British soil in more than 900 years.

The loan of the Tapestry will form part of a wider cultural exchange taking place between Britain and France over the next four years.

I am honoured at the loan of such a precious piece of our shared history which yet again underscores the closeness of our relationship.

We have agreed to build a new generation of links between our people, with an ambitious programme of twinning towns and regions, bringing together mayors, leaders of City Regions and others as they address today's challenges and harness the potential of emerging technologies.

The UK and France are forever neighbours, united in friendship, and by our common belief in freedom and justice, both at home and in the world.