

Speech: Queen's Birthday celebration in Ashgabat

Madam Chairwoman, Lady Nicholson, ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to what is, for us, always a very special event!

Queen's Birthday celebration in Ashgabat

Some of you will have noticed that we have a number of visitors here tonight. I am delighted to welcome not only our friends and colleagues in Ashgabat, but also the British delegation to the Turkmenistan-United Kingdom Trade and Industry Council, and especially Baroness Nicholson as Head of Delegation and the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Turkmenistan, and Ronald Nash, Co-Chairman of TUKTIC. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors – BP, Buried Hill, De La Rue, JCB and Rolls Royce – who have made TUKTIC possible.

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But the purpose of this evening is to celebrate our Queen's 93rd birthday. It is an honour to represent the person who has for nearly 70 years served as a living embodiment of British values in an uncertain and turbulent world, someone whose unswerving integrity and loyalty to our country and our people is unparalleled.

Ladies and gentleman, I give you The Queen.

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Tonight it is fitting that we also celebrate the ties which bind Britain and Turkmenistan. Baroness Nicholson's presence here, as well as that of her predecessor, Charles Hendry, attest to the enduring strength of the bilateral relationship, and to the desire on both sides to strengthen the business links between us, to the benefit of our two countries.

President Berdimammedov has dubbed 2019 the Turkmenistan's Year of Prosperity. We could wish for nothing more for the Turkmen people. We would like to partner them as they move to a prosperous future. But above all, we wish them health and happiness in this beautiful country.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give to a toast – to the President and the people of Turkmenistan.