

Speech: Speech by Ambassador to Mongolia at the 55th Anniversary of UK-Mongolia Diplomatic Relations Reception

Your Excellency, Minister of Defence, MPs, Ladies and Gentlemen. Today, fifty-five years ago, the UK and Mongolia established diplomatic relations. Much has changed in our countries since 1963. But some things have not changed. In fact, reading through the documents on our early relations many things haven't changed at all. They have simply grown – possibly unimaginably for those who wrote them – from that early dialogue.

There were discussions about increasing Mongolian exports to the UK, of bringing innovative UK equipment into Mongolian industry. Discussions on student exchanges. And, appropriately given where we are tonight, and the phenomenal success of Mongolian Opera singers in the last two BBC Cardiff International Singer competitions – how to link the Opera singers of our two countries.

Fifty-five years on the UK is Mongolia's second largest export market, British companies have invested billions into Mongolia. And British innovation and technology is strengthening Mongolian business and industry across the country. Examples of this, I would like to thank tonight's principal sponsors Transwest, representing Joy Global's UK-made conveyors and Komatsu, and Cummins. Across Mongolia you can find heavy machinery and trucks, including Komatsu's, powered by formidable Cummins engines made in the UK.

I am, also delighted to be able to make two announcements this evening. Firstly, almost as I speak, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, is informing the UK parliament of the appointment of Julian Knight MP as her Trade Envoy to Mongolia. Secondly, that UK Export Finance, the world's oldest export credit agency, will increase support available for UK trade with Mongolia to £200million. And also the ability to support transactions in Mongolian Tugrug, as part of its world-leading local currency financing offer. This will allow Mongolian buyers of UK goods and services to access finance in your own currency.

Fifty-five years on the UK and Mongolia are working closely together on some of the greatest global challenges. Peace-keeping, human rights, climate-change, sustainable development, countering the illegal wildlife trade.

Fifty-five years on the UK government's Chevening Scholarship scheme, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, is flourishing, as are the ever growing links between UK and Mongolian universities and our vibrant alumni network.

When I am asked about diplomatic relations, there is often the sense that I am being questioned about the first word: diplomacy. The treaties, MOUs, bilateral agreements that provide the formal structures for our countries' work together. But we should never forget that critical second word. Relations. A country, a culture, an ethos are the sum of its people. People and ideas shape the world we live in.

The UK and Mongolia stand together today as proud democracies. Outside this building you can see the work of a Mongolia artist, Batmunkh. A Mongolian rendition, in an appropriate medium for a Mongolian January, of the Houses of Parliament. Behind it the Ikh Khural. But you will also see a sculpture of the Beatles. They released their first single in 1963. And their music. Their message – unmediated by diplomats or governments – helped inspire a generation of young Mongolians to shape the country and democracy you live in today. Tonight is the last formal event that I will host as British Ambassador to Mongolia. And, how fitting that my abiding memory of you and Mongolia is exactly that of my first predecessor, Sir Terence Garvey. In his report back to London after handing over his credentials in 1963, he wrote: 'no effort was spared... to mark the occasion with gestures of friendship. The effect of this was much enhanced by the natural grace, good humour, good manners and friendliness of the Mongolians.'

For all of the grace, good humour, good manners and friendliness that you have show to me, and to the British Embassy and the United Kingdom over the last 55 years, thank you. I am confident that together our two countries and two peoples will continue to turn our vision and ideas into realities. Here, in the UK, and globally, for the next 55 years to come. And from me, personally, I hope it is goodbye and not farewell.