

Speech: Speech by Ambassador to Mongolia at the Queen's Birthday Party 2018

Your excellency, Minister Tsogtbaatar, Honourable Ministers and MPs, my ambassadorial colleagues and members of the Diplomatic Corps, ladies and gentlemen. A very warm welcome to you all to the British Residence to join us in celebrating Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday in Ulaanbaatar. I and the whole team at the British Embassy are immensely grateful to you all for coming this evening.

It has been another memorable year for Her Majesty The Queen who celebrated her 92nd birthday this year. As well as hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit in April when we welcomed to London over 50 Heads of State and Government from around the Commonwealth of Nations, Her Majesty also became a great-grandmother for the sixth time with the birth of HRH Prince Louis to TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and of course Her Majesty attended the beautiful wedding just three weeks ago of TRH The Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

I am sure you would all agree these major milestones are a further reminder, if one were ever needed, of the remarkable nature of Her Majesty's long reign and the immeasurable contribution Her Majesty has made to the UK for so many years. And, lifting the words from our National Anthem you have just heard sung so beautifully by Zoloo, "Long may she rule over us"!

Here in Mongolia too, we are enjoying a milestone year with the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two nations. It is a well-known and often-repeated fact the UK was the first western country to establish relations with Mongolia. But I genuinely believe it is worth repeating as it was a bold step at the time. The world was of course rather different then and was experiencing the depths of the Cold War. The UK was clear that, as a new member of the United Nations, Mongolia was a country the UK wanted to get to know better and with whom to develop areas of mutual co-operation. Since then, our relationship has strengthened and particularly so since the peaceful democratic revolution of the early 1990s.

Today, our relationship is multi-faceted. And rather like the Commonwealth Summit I mentioned earlier, the themes of our relationship revolve around prosperity, environment and security. Let me start with prosperity and a few facts and figures. The UK (jointly with Australia) is the largest foreign investor in Mongolia through the Rio Tinto development at Oyu Tolgoi (as well as being its second largest export market). That investment totals \$12bn over the two phases of the Oyu Tolgoi project – equivalent to 100% of Mongolia's GDP. Oyu Tolgoi is already delivering and will continue to deliver clear benefits to the Mongolian economy through taxes and royalties paid to the government (\$1.5 bn since 2010), employment of Mongolian workers, procurement from Mongolian suppliers and, in future, dividends. But, Oyu Tolgoi

represents more than that. As well as the potential for expansion and growth at Oyu Tolgoi itself, the project will enable development of a successful mining sector in Mongolia, attracting further investment. If Mongolia makes the right strategic policy choices, then the economic future will be very bright indeed. If not, it would be a major opportunity missed.

Another area where we have been making very significant investment is in helping the Government of Mongolia on environmental issues. This has become a top priority for the UK's work in Mongolia in recent years. With the UK hosting a major summit on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in October (which I hope His Excellency our Guest of Honour will be able to attend) we have run a number of successful projects to help Mongolia combat smuggling and the illicit trade of some of its many iconic species. This year we also secured funding for the first time from the UK Space Agency for a major project with a British company and the National Agency for Meteorology to improve satellite data available to Mongolia to better tackle the effects of dzud on herders.

Furthermore, the UK has been a strong advocate on the Green Climate Fund Board for Mongolia-focused initiatives, and I'm delighted to see that many of these have come to fruition. We contribute 12% of this fund, which is supporting important solar power plant, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Ger Redevelopment projects here. Together, this means the UK has committed around \$25m to supporting the environment in Mongolia during this and the next couple of years.

Our defence and security relationship is also thriving. This morning I attended the flagship UB Strategic Dialogue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK is strongly invested in peace and security in the Asia Pacific. We share similar goals to Mongolia and, like Mongolia, we welcomed the constructive talks between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un which took place in Singapore on Tuesday.

As a further sign of UK commitment, I also attended this morning the opening of the Khaan Quest defence exercise which includes also a British contingent. We hold the Mongolian defence forces in high regard especially their contribution to peacekeeping operations and wish to continue to strengthen our defence relationship.

Looking ahead to the future, the UK will remain committed and, while some may say the UK's global role might diminish after we leave the EU next year, the opposite will be the reality as we forge a new relationship with our EU partners and strengthen the UK's presence around the world especially in the Asia Pacific, including here in Mongolia.

The UK also has a huge amount to offer in terms of our soft power which is becoming even more important in the digital age. I am always struck as I travel in this region the popularity of the Premier League and other sports (cricket is taking off here too!), British music, fashion and film and, perhaps most importantly, our educational institutions. It is heartening for me, as a parent, to see the dedication of young Mongolians to pursue their

studies either following the UK curriculum in schools in Mongolia such as the British School or at university in the UK. The number of British alumni is growing including through the British Government's Chevening scholarship scheme. We are also keen to help with wider reform in the Mongolian educational system through collaboration with the world-renowned Cambridge Assessment International Education. As you all know, if a society gets education right, everything else falls into place.

Of course, there are many other things which make up the UK/Mongolia relationship and all of you here this evening play your own particular role and I am grateful to you all for that. Before I finish, I wanted to say a big thank you to our sponsors this evening: Uran Tusul, Jaguar Land Rover, Aggreko, Diageo, Chinggis Beer and Ahmad Tea and to our caterers, the Kempinski Hotel and Cozy Corner. And of course to the excellent Embassy team who have worked tirelessly for several weeks to bring this event to fruition. So please enjoy the food, drink, music and company and thank you again for coming.