

Speech: The Ambassador's speech at the 2018 Queen's Birthday Party in Argentina

Good evening, everyone. It is a pleasure to welcome you at our Residence. The presence of so many leading figures from Argentina's political, economic, social and cultural life reflects the enormous progress achieved in bilateral relations lately.

We would like to give special thanks to all the companies who are with us tonight as sponsors, making this celebration possible. This is a very important day for us. It is the day when we celebrate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's birthday. And it is the equivalent of our National Day.

By the way, in just over three weeks the Royal family will celebrate the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. So those of you who are interested may go to into one of the rooms where you can have your photo taken with Windsor Castle in the background, to feel like you are part of the Royal Wedding in some way.

This past year has been very busy for us. In some of the screens at the Residence, you will be able to see the wide variety of projects, activities and visits that have kept us busy over these past few months.

But rather than go over the figures in our relationship, the events, the agreements we have signed, I would like to focus on three stories. Three stories that bring us together. Three success stories. Three stories with individual names and human faces, because this is what, ultimately, relations between countries are all about.

And if we talk about the things that Argentine and British people have in common, the first thing that comes to mind is our love for football. In only two months, the Argentine and English will take part in the World Cup, together with other 30 nations.

Driven by the football fever that is already gripping us all, we have included in this celebration two of best players in the Premier League – Argentina's Kun Agüero and England's Harry Kane. You will have the opportunity to have your photo taken next to them as if you were wearing the shirt of two World Cup winning squads: England 66 and Argentina 86.

But, as I was saying, the important thing is to give these stories a human face, and that is why we are lucky to have Jorge Burruchaga with us tonight, a World Cup winner in 1986. As you know, he was not only a part of the winning team in Mexico, but also the man who scored the last goal in the World Cup, as we can see in the video.

That was pretty good, Jorge, pretty good. The best thing is that, as we can clearly see, you played the ball with your foot, with no help from the hand

of God...

As well as our love for football, Jorge and I have other things in common. He has a daughter living in London, so he has a particular interest in visiting my country. And he started his career as a footballer in Arsenal, a team that shares the name with "my" Arsenal, the Holloway club.

Today Jorge is the manager of the Argentine football squad, and that is why we would like him to have the England shirt as a gift from the British Embassy.

Of course, during this World Cup I am going to be cheering for my team, hoping that they perform as well as in 1966. However, if they don't, you will see me rooting for Messi and Argentina. But please don't ask me to chant "el que no salta es un inglés" (he who doesn't jump is an Englishman), because I won't. So we wish Jorge and his team the best of luck. Let us give them a big round of applause.

The second story I wanted to tell you has to do with the world of business, technology, innovation and particularly, with the fascinating world of entrepreneurs.

This is the story of a group of Argentine friends who started researching on artificial intelligence at university, designed a project, which in the beginning was merely an academic project, and soon realised that it contained the seed of something bigger.

Tonight Nicolás, Adrián, Juan Pablo, Alexis, Alejandra and Federico are here with us. They are the founders of Eye Capital, the company that created an innovative technology, a sort of robot who makes automated decisions to operate in stock markets around the world. All six of them formed a multi-disciplinary team that managed to combine research, academia, technology and business acumen.

Only six years after taking that first step at university, combining coffee with experimental algorithms, they set up a company with an international expansion plan, which was legally incorporated in the UK a month ago. They decided to take the leap because they know that London is the Fintech capital of the world and that they will be able to find partners, customers, investors and resources to provide a global platform to this idea that came up as part of an academic project at an Argentine university.

This may be one of the most notable stories, but it is certainly not the only one. More and more companies, yes, Argentine companies, both large and small, are seeing the benefits of investing in the UK. After gathering information, they realise that it is much easier and accessible than they thought. We look forward to seeing many more projects like Eye Capital in the future.

The third story is the most profound and moving one, the one that gave rise to the touching images we saw exactly a month ago. Ninety families were finally able to see the place where their loved ones lie at Darwin's Argentine Cemetery.

A historic agreement signed towards the end of 2016 between the governments of Argentina and the UK and the Red Cross enabled the process of identification through DNA. The Red Cross put together a very professional team that included the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team and other organisations and, with the support of the Human Rights Department headed by Claudio Avruj, they worked for several months last year to achieve the results that the families had long been waiting for. Finally, in March this year, we were able to carry out the visit the families had dreamed about for so long.

It was a very moving visit, which required six weeks of intensive planning. I would like to highlight in particular the role played by two people who, through a very thorough logistic job, made sure that the families were taken to the Cemetery with the respect and care they deserved.

They were our Defence Attaché, Group Captain Robin Smith, and Roberto Curilovic, who works for Corporación América, the business group that, thanks to Mr Eurnekian's generosity, made the families' trip possible. It was highly motivating to see a Royal Air Force officer like Robin and a former Argentine Air Force pilot and veteran of the 1982 conflict like Roberto working shoulder to shoulder.

All of this shows that when goodwill exists, when we put humanitarian values ahead of individual interests, great things are achieved.

To conclude, I would like to show you a photo that summarises this spirit, the idea of giving priority to our sense of humanity, which is in the nature of Argentines and Britons alike.

The photo was taken in March during a ceremony held at the Argentine Embassy in London to present the Two Roses for Peace, an excellent initiative by Juan Carlos Pallarols. The two people embracing each other are María Fernanda Araujo, Head of the Families Commission, and Geoffrey Cardozo, the British Army Colonel whose mission it was to bury the Argentine soldiers.

The image cannot lie. María Fernanda is embracing the man who gave her brother a decent burial. Gratitude, compassion, genuine empathy between two human beings.

I propose that when we raise our glasses in a few minutes, we toast these sentiments too.

We are now going to listen to the national anthems of Argentina and the UK, played by the Argentine Air Force Band whom we thank for being here tonight. After the anthems, we will offer a toast to the Heads of State and the people of our two countries. On this occasion, I have chosen to toast the Argentine President and people with a glass of Malbec and the Queen with a genuine single malt scotch.

ARGENTINE NATIONAL ANTHEM

Toast to the President and the people of Argentina

Toast to Her Majesty the Queen

Thank you very much. Enjoy the party!

HMA Mark Kent during his speech at the Queen's Birthday party.