

# Speech: UK-Asia Tech Powerhouse

## Conference: Minister for Asia speech

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. It's a real pleasure to join you today.

Asia House and ABP have rightly focused on the sphere that will undoubtedly define how billions of lives are lived in the years ahead.

In my role as Minister of State at the FCO for Asia and the Pacific, one phrase has repeatedly come up in so many of my discussions with counterparts across the region, and that is 'the 4th Industrial Revolution'.

What is abundantly clear is that the world now stands at the threshold of a new age.

Technology is changing with bewildering speed how we live, work and trade. It will rapidly continue to reshape our economy and transform our society in the years ahead.

Clearly there are some challenges inherent in that, and I shall say more about those in a moment. But first I want to focus on the opportunities.

Specifically, from my perspective as a Minister who travels throughout the Asian continent, I should like to share how we in the UK are positioning ourselves to seize the opportunities of this new era, in short how we are working with our partners across the region to build partnerships for prosperity.

### **Global revolution**

Britain is at the top of the world rankings for research into the defining technologies of the future, from genomics and synthetic biology, to robotics and satellites.

Despite hosting a little less than 1% of the world's population, the UK is home to 12 of the top 100 universities, and London is home to Europe's leading tech start-up cluster, attracting more venture capital investment than any other city on the continent.

We have ensured that enduring success by embracing change.

We use regulation wisely – not to stifle, but to stimulate a creative environment.

Britain's businesses can compete with the world's best – not only because they have access to a skilled workforce and modern infrastructure – but also because this Government is committed to ramping up our support for science and technology, providing £7 billion in new public funding over 5 years to 2022: the largest percentage increase in the science budget for some four

decades.

## **UK strategy**

The UK's ambitious Industrial Strategy sets out an achievable, long-term plan to boost productivity and earning power across the UK. It identifies four areas where we can lead:

1. Artificial Intelligence and big data;
2. clean growth;
3. mobility;
4. meeting the needs of an ageing society

The first three are of particular relevance to your discussions today and tomorrow. We recognise that technology is an intrinsically global endeavour, and that we must collaborate if we are to maximise our success.

That not only means combining the ingenuity of the private sector with the catalytic and corraling power of government.

It also means building partnerships with countries across the vast Asian continent to make the most of our mutual strengths in science, technology and innovation.

For example, our new UK-India Technology Partnership is designed to pair up businesses, universities and start-ups in the UK with states in India.

Pilot schemes are underway: one links the Midlands with Maharashtra with a focus on Future Mobility, including autonomous vehicles and battery storage. Another pairs our Northern Powerhouse region with Karnataka, with a focus on AI and Data.

We are also working with the Indian Government on AI in healthcare. We have established the catchily-named "Healthcare Artificial Intelligence Catalyst", which will use new technologies to improve access to healthcare in India, particularly in rural areas.

## **Clean growth**

We are also working with our international partners on spreading the benefits of clean energy.

Last year, we agreed with South Korea jointly to invest up to £6 million over three years in a competition amongst entrepreneurs and university researchers to find new, more cost effective, energy systems.

The global shift to clean energy will require significant investment and will create major markets in associated technologies, systems and services.

Our Industrial Strategy's Clean Growth Grand Challenge aims to put the UK at the forefront of the development, manufacture and use of low cost, low carbon technologies.

## **Future of mobility**

We share ambitions in the future of mobility, where we are looking to build on our strong partnerships with Asian countries. We know that innovations in automation, electrification and demand-led transport will bring huge changes in how we move and how things move.

Here in the UK we are committed to ensuring all new cars and vans to be effectively zero emission by 2040.

That is why we have led the way in encouraging the development of the global electric car market.

At the Zero Emission Vehicle summit last year, we achieved a big first step by getting governments, and states as well as industry to sign the Birmingham Declaration, promoting the deployment of zero emission vehicles worldwide.

## **FinTech**

Collaboration on FinTech is something else that I have been working hard to promote across Asia, already with some tangible success.

The UK has signed FinTech Bridge agreements with Hong Kong, Singapore, China and South Korea.

In April, we launched a pilot with Hong Kong to provide bespoke support to 10 UK firms – through coaching, mentoring and arranging market introductions to Hong Kong's FinTech sector.

In building these FinTech bridges we are not just trying to develop stronger international connections.

We are also looking to ease regulatory barriers – for example, by creating a referral mechanism that allows firms already licensed in one market to seek authorisation to operate in another.

## **Cyber security**

As I mentioned earlier, where there is opportunity, there is also inherently risk, we must be clear-sighted that our increasing dependence on technology makes us all more vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

As a consequence the UK has fast developed expertise as a global leader in cyber security and a champion of the rules-based international system in cyberspace.

We are working tirelessly with our partners in Asia and around the world, and through multilateral organisations such as the UN, to ensure that cyberspace is free, open, peaceful, fair and secure.

We are supporting Japan's G20 policy commitment to increased data sharing.

And we are putting into action the Memorandum of Cooperation we signed at the

Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting last year to build cyber security capacity in the Commonwealth and amongst the ten-strong ASEAN confederation.

Over the next three years, our Prosperity Fund's Digital Access Programme will boost Indonesia's cybersecurity resilience and capacity, which – among other things – will make it safer for local and international firms to do business.

I am delighted to confirm that Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner to the Asia Pacific region, Natalie Black, will be speaking in more detail tomorrow about our cyber security expertise and how we are partnering with our allies to tackle this shared threat.

## **Conclusion**

I hope you find that session, and indeed the entire two day conference, both informative and productive. I look forward to hearing the outcome.

To sum up – the UK has real expertise in the technologies of the future and our Government is determined to seize the opportunities ahead.

We are not just on the front foot in terms of research and strategy. We are also leading the way in building partnerships with other countries at the cutting edge of technological innovation, most particularly and urgently in Asia.

I look forward to strengthening these worthwhile partnerships, with governments and with industry, in the exciting years ahead.