

Speech: Building a strong new partnership with Lithuania

In the coming weeks and months, Britain will embark upon the negotiations to build a strong new partnership with the European Union.

For the UK and Lithuania, that new partnership will extend beyond our individual relationships with the European Union as a whole; you as members, and us as strong external partners.

Because our two countries share many principles: on defence and security, on trade and the economy – we are working together. In the past year alone we have collaborated closely on issues from mutual development of our financial technology sectors to the training of our military.

Last year, the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death was commemorated across Lithuania, from schools in Klaipeda to the national parliament, as part of our shared European culture. All of these joint endeavours have been based on our strong mutual values and vision for the future.

So as I travel to Lithuania today, on my first visit to the country as the UK Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, I want to stress our determination to enter an even closer and more fruitful period in our relations.

We are firmly committed to strengthening the ties between our two countries because, while we are leaving the EU, we are emphatically not turning our backs on our friends and allies across Europe.

As part of that we will continue to be a keen partner to Lithuania. We will go on co-operating extensively on defence, security and foreign policy. We will collaborate on culture and education. We will work with Lithuania on economic issues and we will pursue an ambitious future trade agreement that is in the interest of the UK, Lithuania and the whole of the European Union.

For the UK wants the EU and each of its member states to prosper politically, economically and socially. The new partnership we will seek as we leave can, I believe, help to that end.

On security, Lithuania and the UK share a particularly close and important relationship.

The UK has led European action on keeping our continent safe – whether implementing sanctions against Russia following its aggressive action in Ukraine or securing Europe's external border.

Such partnership continues to be of vital importance, particularly in the face of growing concern about the threat to security across the continent. And that is why we will continue to work closely with your armed forces on land, sea and air, with hundreds of UK troops training and exercising in Lithuania.

As key members of NATO, we both know the importance of collaboration on defence and security. For the UK, our commitment to defend the interests of the western world remains absolute. For you, having the full force of NATO right behind you is of huge value. Solidarity is crucial and the UK will continue to stand by all its allies – including Lithuania.

As Britain leaves the EU, we will seek to enhance the trading links that we currently have with member states and the British Prime Minister has been clear that the UK will be pursuing a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU.

For Lithuania, the UK is its fifth largest trading partner in goods and its eighth in services. So it's in no one's interest to see new barriers to trade. Instead, we see opportunities in building on our existing trading ties with Lithuania.

But we are not just allies and friends because of our cultural connections, military commitments and trading links. Our relationship goes far beyond that, with the firm friendship that exists between our people.

Hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians have made Britain their home. Your people are our healthcare workers, our financiers and even the conductor of our world class Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

I understand that the thousands of Lithuanians currently living in the UK want certainty about their rights once the UK leaves the EU. And, while Lithuanians' existing rights are not affected, the British government wants to get a deal done to secure long term rights quickly that protects the rights of all EU citizens living in the UK, and British citizens living in the EU.

Indeed, we would have liked to have come to such an agreement already and have been clear it will be an absolute priority once formal negotiations begin.

It is only fair that those who have built lives for themselves abroad, who are contributing to foreign economies and giving back to overseas communities, have their rights and status guaranteed rapidly.

And the approach that we take on this issue – one of reasoned goodwill to secure mutual benefits – is the one that we will adopt throughout the negotiation process.

Because the UK is not stepping back from its role in the world – it is stepping up.

CPC meeting discusses draft government work report

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on Tuesday chaired a meeting on the draft government work report.

The meeting, attended by members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, discussed the draft report, which is scheduled to be submitted to the upcoming fifth session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC).

Tuesday's meeting also reviewed a special report on inspections of central Party and governmental authorities, and another document on a Party education campaign.

At the meeting, China's top leadership pledged to stick to the basic tone of "seeking progress while maintaining stability" in 2017, aiming for more progress from supply-side structural reform.

The meeting highlighted the significance of 2017 as the 19th CPC National Congress will convene.

Acknowledging that China has scored a strong start for the 2016-2020 period, the meeting called for further efforts to balance multiple economic tasks in 2017, including stabilizing growth, advancing reforms, pushing restructuring, improving people's livelihood and preventing risks.

At the macro level, China will continue to implement proactive fiscal policies and prudent monetary policies, according to a document released after the meeting.

Reforms in key areas will be deepened, while the role of innovation will be boosted to facilitate economic upgrading, said the document.

China will also intensify efforts to tap the potential of domestic demand and strengthen internal growth momentum.

Other tasks include pushing supply-side structural reform in the agriculture sector, widening opening-up, promoting green development and improving government services for people's well-being.

The meeting came ahead of China's annual two sessions in March, during which lawmakers and political advisors will gather in Beijing to discuss the social and economic policies for the year.

Since the CPC's 18th National Congress, anti-graft teams have carried out 11 rounds of inspections across all provincial-level governments, central authorities, key state-owned enterprises and central financial institutions, according to the document.

The inspections, which focused on the adherence to the Party's leadership,

comprehensive and strict governance of the Party and observation of the Party's Constitution and rules, have been effective political "microscopes" and "searchlights," the document stated.

The document said that central Party and governmental authorities play an important role in the Party and the state and they must uphold the authority of the CPC Central Committee and its centralized and unified leadership.

It stressed that all problems detected in the inspections should be properly addressed.

The document said that the Party education campaign – which focuses on the study of the Party Constitution and rules, as well as the speeches made by Xi, and calls for being qualified Party members – plays an important role in Party building and governance.

Deeming it an effective tool in Party building, the document said the education campaign had helped shape the approach to governance of the Party under a new situation.

It said the education campaign should be regular and institutionalized, as this would help members understand the essence of Xi's speeches, ensure Party members unite closer around the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, and scoring new achievements in socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The document called on Party organizations at all levels to make the education campaign a strategic and basic project.

It stressed that ideological education must be prioritized and efforts should be made to educate and guide Party members, especially leading officials.

Leading officials should set a good example in the campaign, the document said, adding that evaluations of the education campaign should be carried out annually.

News story: Launch UK brings together UK commercial space sector

Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson and Minister for Aviation Lord Ahmad spoke alongside the UK Space Agency CEO Katherine Courtney at the Launch UK conference at the Royal Aeronautical Society on 21 February.

A key strand of the government's Industrial Strategy is for the UK to hold a greater share of the commercial spaceflight market, worth an estimated £25 billion over the next 20 years, by developing competitive, commercial and

safe spaceflight proposals for UK-based satellite launch services and sub-orbital flights.

The conference brought together potential UK spaceports and spaceflight vehicle operators – the component parts of the consortia that are working to provide commercial launch services from the UK.

The UK Space Agency has made grants worth £10 million available to help develop the capability for spaceflight. The consortia are being invited to provide their business cases for funding to develop key technologies or infrastructure in the UK.

The conference took place as new legislation – the Spaceflight Bill – was delivered to the House of Commons and the House of Lords today to facilitate and regulate commercial spaceflight.

Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

“We really do stand at the dawn of a very exciting era. This is a big and incredibly exhilarating moment for this country.

“The traditional space sector is changing and the way we access space is changing too, which is why this is a truly important moment for us. It’s vital that we don’t miss the exciting opportunities that are now ahead of us.”

Minister for Aviation Lord Ahmad said:

“We are boldly legislating where no British government has legislated before.

“It’s clear we are galvanised and ready to grasp this huge opportunity for our country. We want to move quickly but we also want to get it right too.

“It’s our ambition as a government, as a collective industry, as a country that the UK is the best place in Europe for space flight operations.”

Seven potential regional spaceports gave presentations and a panel of industry experts discussed innovations in commercial spaceflight, looking ahead to 2025, while there was also an opportunity for networking.

Katherine Courtney, CEO UK Space Agency, said:

“With our partners across government we continue to create a supportive environment for commercial innovation and cutting edge science.

“Together, we are working to embrace the emerging small satellite launch market to capture a share of the £25bn global opportunity. I’m confident that 2020 will see the first launches from British soil, and we’re working hard to make that a reality.”

[Press release: Shoreham flood scheme enters next phase](#)

A major flood defence scheme that will significantly reduce flood risk to over 2,300 properties in Shoreham and East Lancing has taken a step towards completion this week, with piling works at 2 of the project's 10 phases now finished.

The huge jack-up barge, that has been working to install one of the new tidal flood defence piled walls in the town centre since November, will leave the site next week having completed its phase of the work.

Of the planned 10 construction phases, 3 have been worked on since the project started in October 2016, and work so far has been progressing well. The scheme will significantly improve the current ageing flood defences, and when the whole project is complete, in 2018, it will reduce the tidal flood risk to thousands of homes and a significant number of commercial properties in the area. It will also protect important local infrastructure such as the road network, railway line and Shoreham Airport.

Russell Long, Flood Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

Work on the scheme is progressing well, and further phases of work are set to begin later in the year. We are aware of the impact that the development of these schemes can have on local communities, and we thank the residents of Shoreham for their understanding during the works.

The Adur Ferry Bridge will need to be closed for a few hours when the jack-up barge leaves Shoreham next week (week commencing 27 February), and shuttle buses will be provided during this time. Exact timings of this operation will depend on weather and site conditions, and we will do all we can to keep the community informed of our plans. I'd encourage residents to monitor [@EnvAgencySE](#) on Twitter, go to www.shorehamadurtidalwalls.co.uk, or visit the project's visitor centre to find out more.

The Shoreham scheme's dedicated project visitor centre is located at Beach Green Car Park, Shoreham-by-Sea, and is open between midday and 5pm on weekdays.

For further information, you can view the webpage [Shoreham Adur Tidal Walls Scheme](#) or you can call 03708 506506. You can also request information by email at shorehamwestbank@ea.gov.uk or by writing to

SSD Enquiries

Environment Agency

Guildbourne House

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Notes:

The visitor centre may be closed during scheduled visits from schools and interest groups.

For all media enquiries please call 0800 141 2743.

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