

Conor Burns celebrates 2,000 year old Tunisian trade links

Good morning friends.

Thank you, Louise de Sousa, Ambassador to Tunis. Thank you for the invitation to join you this morning.

On behalf of the Her Majesty's Government, I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to Mr Abassi, Governor of the Central Bank of Tunisia, and all of the senior delegation from the government of Tunisia today.

And may I also take a moment to thank Ambassador Ben Kheder and his team at the Tunisian Embassy in London, as well as the Developing Markets Association and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, for the enormous amount of time and effort that has gone into putting on such a great programme today.

I was delighted to receive the Tunisian Ambassador's invitation to speak. This forum represents a superb opportunity to reflect on the current UK-Tunisia economic partnership, and look towards further opportunities for collaboration in key sectors.

And for businesses, this is a unique chance to develop your relationships, networks and understanding of the investment environment.

Looking around the room, I'm particularly pleased to see such a strong turnout from the private sector, including Clarke Energy, BP, Vodafone, Credit Suisse, Shell and Hewlett Packard to name just a few.

That speaks to our shared appetite for strengthening trading, investment and commercial collaboration between Tunisia and the UK, and that businesses are switched on to the diverse opportunities out there waiting to be grasped.

UK-Tunisia Association Agreement

And we have a firm foundation on which to build those opportunities.

Back in September I met with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Bachtobji and Ambassador Ben Kheder at the sixth Tunisia-UK Bilateral Forum here in London, where both sides committed to finalising a broad bilateral UK-Tunisia Association Agreement to strengthen co-operation between our 2 countries.

A month later that agreement is now signed.

This is testament to the hard work and strong will on both sides to realise our shared long-term ambitions for a deeper economic partnership. We now look forward to working ever more closely to ensure its speedy ratification.

The agreement provides vital certainty and stability for both UK and Tunisian

firms that the trading arrangements between us can continue, uninterrupted.

But this is not just about continuity in our trading relationship. It's also a historic opportunity to strengthen and deepen our trade and investment relationship for the years to come.

Both the UK and Tunisia find ourselves in periods of transition. Times of transition offer great challenge, but also, I believe, of opportunity, to those who are willing to grasp it.

Doing so must be a joint endeavour on both sides, incorporating government but also the private sector. Businesses like yours will be at the very forefront of this new dawn in the UK-Tunisia partnership.

UK-Tunisia trade

Now many people might be surprised to hear that Tunisia and the UK are, in fact, very longstanding trading partners.

If you take a mere 2 hour drive up the A350 from my constituency in Bournemouth, you will find yourself in the charming village of Saltford. It was here 4 years ago, that a fascinating discovery was made.

Nestled amongst the silt deposited after the River Avon burst its banks, a tiny copper coin was unearthed, bearing the image of the goddess Tanit, chief deity of Carthage. Dated by experts to 2,300 years old, it indicates an ancient trade route stretching all the way from the Mediterranean to Britain.

This remarkable little coin tells us that even our Iron Age ancestors had identified the benefits of a strong trading relationship between us!

In the twelve months ending March 2019, total trade between the UK and Tunisia was worth £400 million, an increase of 8.4% compared with the previous 12 months.

I'd like to see that figure grow still further in the coming years. There is so much potential there as our bilateral relationship continues to move from strength to strength.

Against a backdrop of protectionism gripping some parts of the world, it is important that we look outwards: towards new markets and commercial partnerships where the opportunities of the future can be found. And Tunisia is very much among these.

In an era of increasing globalisation and ever evolving technologies, we no longer have to be confined to the same old trading relationships. We are better equipped than ever to connect with friends and partners across the world, and to seize the global opportunities laid out before us.

UK-Africa Investment Summit

In that spirit, the UK is looking forward to hosting the UK-Africa Investment

Summit in London on 20 January as a chance to demonstrate the scale of commercial opportunities in Africa, as well as to showcase the UK's unique offer to investors and our African partners.

Under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who will host the event, the UK has a clear vision of working together with African countries on innovation, forging new investments that will create jobs, and boosting our mutual prosperity through a strong and enduring partnership.

And of course we will particularly look forward to welcoming the Tunisian government to London again so soon, and to building on the momentum of today's forum.

UK-Tunisia investment

I am truly delighted that Tunisia was the first country in the North African region to sign a continuity agreement with the UK. I think that says a huge amount about the Tunisian character; outward looking, forward thinking, and ready to embrace new opportunities.

That's why Tunisia has become an obvious entry point for firms looking to invest in Africa, and it's become easier than ever to tap into opportunities in the Tunisian market.

Tunisian government initiatives such as the 2016 Investment Code, the 2018 Start-Up Act, and the new Horizontal Law have done so much to simplify procedures for investors, and make Tunisia an increasingly enticing prospect.

The Central Bank of Tunisia has played a key role in leading the country's financial reform agenda, and I'm delighted that Mr Abassi is heading the delegation from Tunisia today. I'm so pleased that the UK, via our embassy team in Tunis, has been able to support the central bank in these vital reforms.

From the UK side too, we are keen to support those pioneering firms looking to grow their business in Tunisia. That's where our world-leading export credit agency [UK Export Finance](#) comes in.

UK Export Finance provides an additional level of security for UK businesses and has substantial capacity to support exporters selling to Tunisia, with a risk appetite of up to £2 billion.

We know how much companies who use UK Export Finance's products value them, and we are keen to see them taken up more.

UK-Tunisia investment relationship

Historically, the UK-Tunisia investment relationship has focused heavily on oil and gas.

Though maintaining and strengthening investments in this sector is a priority, I think the sectors represented here today show that we are ready

to take a step further. To move beyond these traditional investment areas and embrace the plethora of new opportunities presenting themselves.

I mentioned a moment ago that I attended the Tunisia-UK Bilateral Forum back in September, and I heard so much there that left me excited me about the prospects for our trade partnership.

The UK and Tunisia are natural partners, sharing a number of key interests and strengths in areas like energy, technology and agrifood. So there is certainly no shortage of fertile ground to develop our trade and investment links further.

On energy, UK companies have already made significant bids for solar energy projects in response to the tendering process launched by the Tunisian government this year.

We want the UK to be a key partner in this sector, sharing our technical and commercial expertise to contribute to Tunisia's clean energy reforms and the welfare of our planet.

On technology, both countries are leaders in innovation in their respective regions. The UK is home to over 70 tech unicorns – businesses valued at over \$1 billion – and Tunisia's burgeoning tech credentials are growing all the time.

If we look at artificial intelligence, Tunisia ranked second in Africa in the Government AI Readiness Index this year, and again, there is a major opportunity for collaboration with the UK. The UK government has put artificial intelligence at the forefront of our modern industrial strategy, and the UK is internationally renowned for its work in this field.

But energy and technology are just the tip of the iceberg.

Beyond these sectors, we also see significant promise in infrastructure, with the Tunisian Public Private Partnership Authority working closely with the UK on opportunities there.

Likewise in tourism, we have seen steadily increasing numbers in response to security reforms. It is no secret that this area took quite a tumble following the barbaric and tragic attacks in 2015, but it is now making a real comeback. It's my sincere hope that travellers will continue to gain confidence and rediscover the fantastic Tunisian climate, culture and people!

Conclusion

With the UK's imminent departure from the EU, an incoming new Tunisian government, a new bilateral trade agreement in place, and the upcoming Africa Investment Summit, the timing really could not be better to delve into the pool of opportunities for UK-Tunisia trade and investment.

Paul Arkwright, CEO of the UK-Africa Investment Summit will tell you more about the event, and the UK's investment offer to Tunisia, later. I hope to

see many of you there in the new year!

So once again, I urge all the business leaders and investors here today to take advantage of this chance to learn more about the exciting opportunities available in Tunisia.

You won't regret it.

Thank you.

Public given power to question 'lenient' prison sentences

- legislation laid today (29 October 2019) will add 14 new offences to Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme
- stalkers and child sex abusers could see prison terms increased
- gives more victims power to question 'lenient' sentences

Legislation laid today will add a further 14 offences to the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme – meaning criminals convicted of stalking, harassment, child sexual abuse and other sex offences could see their sentences increased.

The scheme gives victims or members of the public the power to ask the Attorney General to consider whether a sentence could be reconsidered by the Court of Appeal, where it could then be increased.

Crimes such as murder, robbery, and a range of terror offences are already covered, and now the government is introducing legislation to extend the scheme further to protect the public and make sure victims see justice done.

The extension follows wider action to restore faith in the criminal justice system – with the recruitment of 20,000 police officers, investing £2.75 billion in prisons, £85 million for the Crown Prosecution Service and reviewing sentencing to ensure violent and sexual offenders spend longer behind bars.

Secretary of State for Justice, Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, said:

We know that victims and the public sometimes feel sentences don't match the crime and we are determined to give them a greater voice in the system.

Sentencing will always be decided by our independent judiciary, but by extending the scheme we are sending a clear signal that this

Government will do everything in its power to build faith in the justice system and protect the public.

The Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, said:

This government is taking greater steps to tackle violent crime in our communities. The latest extension to the Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme means that perpetrators of the most heinous crimes such as sex offences against children and vulnerable adults and controlling and coercive behaviour could have their sentences increased, bringing some comfort to victims and their families.

As a result of the extension becoming law, the Attorney General and I can look at even more sentences than before and we will do everything we can to challenge those that we regard to be clearly wrong.

A statutory instrument laid in Parliament today will come into force 21 days from now. Sentences imposed for these additional offences from then on will be in scope of the scheme, meaning anyone will be able to query these sentences with the Attorney General.

The move will bring offences including controlling and coercive behaviour within scope as well as further child sexual abuse offences, such as those involving the taking, distributing and publishing of indecent images of children and abusing a position of trust with a child.

Notes to editors

- Whilst in the vast majority of cases sentences are deemed appropriate, since its introduction 30 years ago the scheme has helped hundreds of victims and their families – with 99 criminals seeing their sentences increased following review by the courts in 2018 alone.
- ULS scheme allows prosecutors, victims of crime, their family and the public to ask the Attorney General a review of certain sentences they believe to be too low.
- The Attorney General may then refer a case he believes to be unduly lenient to the Court of Appeal who is able to increase the sentence.
- The government published the cross-government Victims' Strategy in September 2018. It was the first time we have looked in such detail and in such a joined-up way at how we treat victims in the wake of crime. Commitments in the strategy included:
 - keeping the scope of the ULS scheme under review; and
 - considering a further extension of the ULS scheme, particularly for some additional harassment, sexual, and indecent images offences.
- An extension of the scheme so that it applies to further terrorism offences came into effect in August 2017 and nine more terror-related offences were added in January 2018.
- Through the cross-government Victims' Strategy we have committed to

working with the Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's office and Crown Prosecution Service to address concerns around the lack of awareness of the ULS scheme.

- Government has agreed to extend the scheme to the following offences....
 - Abuse of position of trust: sexual activity with a child (s.16, Sexual Offences Act 2003),
 - Abuse of position of trust: causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity (s.17, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Abuse of position of trust: sexual activity in the presence of a child (s.18, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Abuse of position of trust: causing a child to watch a sexual act (s.19, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Inciting a child family member to engage in sexual activity (s.26, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Sexual activity with a person with a mental disorder impeding choice (s.30, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Causing or inciting a person, with a mental disorder impeding choice, to engage in sexual activity (s.31, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a person with a mental disorder impeding choice (s.32, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Causing a person, with a mental disorder impeding choice, to watch a sexual act (s.33, Sexual Offences Act 2003)
 - Possession of indecent photograph of a child (Criminal Justice Act 1988, s.160)
 - Taking, possessing, distributing, publishing Indecent Photographs of Children (s.1 Protection of Children Act 1978)
 - Harassment: putting people in fear of violence (s.4, Protection from Harassment Act 1997)
 - Stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress (Protection from Harassment Act 1997, s.4A, Protection from Harassment Act 1997)
 - Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship (s.76, Serious Crime Act 201,).
- Applications to refer a case under the ULS scheme should be directed to the Attorney General's Office.
- Only one application is needed to review a sentence and the Attorney Generals' Office has 28 days after sentencing to make a decision.
- In August the Prime Minister ordered an urgent review into sentencing – focussing on whether violent and sexual offenders are serving sentences that truly reflect the severity of their crimes.

New Parole Board members announced

The Secretary of State has approved the appointment of 48 members to the Parole Board, the re-appointment of one independent member and the extension

of the appointments of 45 independent members.

The 48 new members comprise 27 independent, two retired judicial, 10 psychologist members and 9 serving judges. The independent, retired judicial and psychologist appointments follow the recent and highly successful recruitment campaign.

Independent Members

The following list of appointees commenced their tenure on 1 October 2019 for a period of five years:

- Maneer Afsar
- Ifty Ahmed
- Aysha Allibhaye
- Richard Bayly
- Zaiada Bibi
- Sarah Bodell
- Malcolm Brain
- Derek Bray *Marcia Brooks
- Lyn Cole
- Rachel Craven
- Damian Hughes
- Akeel Hussain
- Murad Hussain
- Stephen Garrett
- David Gravells
- Sara Johnson
- Michael Mellun
- Jenny Mooney
- Sukbinder Rai
- Rachel Robertson
- Joanna Hinds
- Vicky Pails
- Shubhada Patil
- Rachel Pickering
- Vinnett Walsh Sheila Wright

In addition, Kate Nickels was appointed from 1 November 2018 for a period of three years.

Retired Judicial Members

The Secretary of State has appointed Stephen Silber and Timothy King for a period of five years, commencing on 1 October 2019.

Psychologist Members

The following list of appointees commenced their tenure on 1 October 2019 for a period of five years:

- Rachel Atkinson

- Taljinder Basra
- Aimee Croft
- Christopher Dean
- Gerhard Fritz
- Julia Houston
- Noreen Shami
- Sarah Snuggs
- Claire Thompson
- Victoria Tunbridge

Serving Judicial Members

The following list of appointees commenced their tenure on 1 October 2019 for a period of three years:

- Bernadette Baxter
- Rebecca Crane
- Ruth Downing
- David Farrell
- Vanessa Francis
- Andrew Jeffries
- Anthony Lowe
- Barbara Mensah
- Elizabeth Smaller

Reappointments and extensions

The Secretary of State reappointed Sarah Wells for a further term of five years from 1st December 2019 until 31 January 2024.

The appointments of the members and panel chairs listed below have been extended for a period of two years from 1 October 2019:

- Richard Baldwin
- Jane Christian
- Lucy Gampell
- Ronno Griffiths
- Glyn Hibberd
- Heidi Leavesley
- Brenda McAll-Kersting
- Celeste Myrie
- David Mylan
- Aruna Walsh

Retired Judicial Member extension

The appointment of Edward Slinger as a retired Judicial Member and panel chair has been extended for a period of two years from 1 October 2019.

How Parole Board appointments are regulated

Appointments and re-appointments to the Parole Board are regulated – save for

retired and serving judicial members – by [the Commissioner for Public Appointments](#). These appointments have been made in line with the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Appointment of 48 Parole Board members

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The Parole Board's functions and duties are set out in Section 239 and Schedule 19 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Parole Board members make risk assessments about prisoners to decide who may safely be released into the community or make recommendations for transfer to open prison conditions.

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The Parole Board was established by the Criminal Justice Act 1967. It is an Executive Non- Departmental Public Body sponsored by MOJ.

[Letter from John Manzoni on the public information campaign](#)

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