

## UK – CY Alumni reception

Your Excellency President of the House of Representatives and acting President of the Republic, Mr Dimitris Syllouris, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

I apologise for disrupting the DJ. I hope you've been enjoying his music, as well as the fish and chips, and the gin, and perhaps feeling a little nostalgic for those student days and perhaps some misspent nights in the UK.

On behalf of myself and my wife Denise I extend a very warm welcome to this very special gathering of very special people. That's you: the Cypriot alumni of British universities, from around the island.

In some ways it's surprising we've not had a reception like this before. With over 40,000 Cypriot alumni of UK universities it's not easy to organise an island-wide gathering of you all: the garden simply isn't big enough, especially on a wet evening. But I'm delighted to start with this select group this evening: you are obviously the most active and ambitious alumni!

Having studied in the UK you don't need me to tell you about the benefits of a UK education. Perhaps like me you saw the recent report which reveals that Cyprus is the 10th most important source country for international students in the UK. My guess is that means Cyprus sends more students to the UK per head of population than any other.

High Commissioner delivers his speech alongside HE the President of the House of Representatives and the Director of British Council Cyprus.

Not that education collaboration is a one-way street. UK institutions are increasingly looking to deliver British education here in Cyprus – through Cyprus-based campuses and departments, joint degree courses and distance learning. And I would like to pay tribute to President Syllouris for the strong personal support which he has offered for these transnational education initiatives, which are helping position Cyprus as a higher education hub in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Meanwhile research collaboration between Britain and Cyprus goes from strength to strength. We're showcasing many of these research collaborations and educational partnerships this evening, and welcoming representatives of three of the biggest research collaborations in Cyprus, which are all with UK universities: KIOS, RISE and Maritec-X with Imperial, UCL and Southampton respectively. You'd be surprised if as High Commissioner I didn't mention Brexit. As you know events appear to be reaching a climax, with some increasingly positive indications about the prospects for reaching a deal at the European Council in Brussels.

Whatever your views on Brexit, I want to assure you that the UK Government is fully committed to an even stronger and deeper relationship between Britain

and Cyprus, based on shared values, shared membership of the Commonwealth, and the wealth of personal connections of which you are part. While we have chosen to leave the EU, we are not leaving Europe. We were close partners before Britain or Cyprus joined the EU, and with your help and support, I am confident that we will be even closer partners in future.

Let me close with a few words of thanks:

To our sponsors for this evening: PWC Cyprus and Laiko Cosmos Trading

To the representatives of over 30 UK universities who have joined us here: they are in Cyprus for the British Council's annual Study UK Fair.

To the UK university alumni groups on the island. They have well-established networks of alumni, and are enthusiastic proponents of staying in touch with their institutions and keeping alive the connections they made there. We have joined forces in organising tonight's reception, and I thank them for introducing many new faces to the High Commission.

And above all, to you Your Excellency, Mr President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for joining us tonight. I encourage you to stay in touch with us, directly, through your university alumni groups or through our UKalumniCY page on Facebook.

Thank you very much.

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## [Z3R0 EM15510N future: government to introduce green number plates](#)

- consultation launched on introducing green number plates to celebrate and encourage uptake of electric vehicles
- green licence plates mean cleanest cars will be easily identifiable, helping their drivers to benefit from local incentives such as free or cheaper parking
- announcement will turbo-charge the zero emission revolution and help the government achieve its target of net zero emissions by 2050

Electric vehicles may become even greener, the government has announced today (22 October 2019) with the launch of a [consultation on introducing green number plates for zero emission cars](#).

As the UK moves at pace towards net zero emissions, the initiative aims to raise awareness of the increasing number of zero tailpipe emission vehicles on UK roads, help their drivers to benefit more easily from local incentives like free or cheaper parking and encourage greater uptake of new vehicle technology.

The announcement marks another milestone for the government's [Road to Zero Strategy](#), a £1.5 billion package of support which aims to make the UK the best place in the world to own an electric vehicle. Since the strategy's publication, the UK has seen record numbers of zero emission vehicles registered and the government has marked its intention to be the first G7 country to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050.

Through the introduction of green number plates, local authorities would have a useful visual identifier should they wish to introduce incentives to promote the use of zero emission vehicles, such as allowing these drivers to use bus lanes and to pay less for parking. A similar scheme was trialled in Ontario with drivers of electric vehicles given free access to toll lanes and high occupancy vehicle lanes. Ontario saw an increase in electric vehicle registrations.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The UK is in the driving seat of global efforts to tackle vehicle emissions and climate change and improve air quality, but we want to accelerate our progress.

Green number plates are a really positive and exciting way to help everyone recognise the increasing number of electric vehicles on our roads.

By increasing awareness of these vehicles and the benefits they bring to their drivers and our environment, we will turbo-charge the zero emission revolution.

Elisabeth Costa, Senior Director at the Behavioural Insights Team, said:

The number of clean vehicles on our roads is increasing but we don't notice as it's difficult to tell clean vehicles apart from more polluting ones.

Green number plates make these vehicles, and our decision to drive in a more environmentally-friendly way, more visible on roads. We think making the changing social norm noticeable will help encourage more of us to swap our cars for cleaner options.

Potential plate designs include:

- a fully green number plate with black lettering
- the addition of a green flash on the plate
- the addition of a green dot or symbol

The consultation seeks views from industry and the public on a number of aspects surrounding the scheme, including vehicle eligibility, number plate

design and the rollout of the plates.

It follows the Transport Secretary's recent announcement that he has [doubled funding for chargepoints on residential streets, to help make charging an electric car easier for those without access to off-street parking](#). The government is also currently reviewing responses to the consultation on requiring chargepoints to be built into all new homes with a parking space.

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## [Government introduces landmark Withdrawal Agreement Bill to Parliament](#)

The Government has today introduced its [landmark Brexit bill](#), which enshrines the new deal we have negotiated with the EU in UK law.

This deal abolishes the backstop in the old deal. The Government put forward a reasonable compromise, based on the key principles of consent for the people of Northern Ireland, and the UK leaving the EU Customs Union whole and entire, which was agreed at European Council last week. The EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill puts those internationally agreed obligations into domestic law.

This week MPs will have the chance to pass this bill, to respect the result of the referendum and to leave with a deal on October 31 in an orderly and friendly way. MPs voted overwhelmingly to trigger Article 50 in 2017 to start the process of leaving the EU and supporting this bill is the final stage to make that happen. This will allow the country to move on and for the Government to return its focus to delivering on the people's domestic priorities: investing in the NHS, tackling serious and violent crime, and levelling up funding on schools.

The bill will implement the new deal agreed with the EU in UK law:

- Delivering Brexit, with a deal, on October 31
- Ending vast annual payments to Brussels
- Protecting the integrity of the UK as we leave the EU, without the need for the backstop
- Protecting the rights of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens in UK law so that they can continue to live, study and work in the UK
- Securing an implementation period to give businesses continuity and greater certainty as they prepare for the change in relationship we will have with the EU.

Brexit Secretary, Steve Barclay, said:

"The Prime Minister has successfully negotiated a great new deal without the anti-democratic backstop which many said would be impossible.

"MPs and Peers today have in front of them a bill that will get Brexit done by October 31, protect jobs and the integrity of the UK, and enable us to move onto the people's priorities like health, education and crime.

"This is the chance to leave the EU with a deal on October 31. If Parliament wants to respect the referendum, it must back the bill."

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## Statement to the House on Brexit preparedness

Mr Speaker, with your permission I would like to make a further statement on our preparations to leave the European Union on 31 October. And before I do, can I underline the gratitude of members of all sides of the House to the efforts not just of the House Authorities but also of the police, as you pointed out earlier, on Saturday. And I would like to thank opposition members including the Members for Manchester Central and the Member for Brent South for the kind words that they uttered on behalf of all members of the House.

The Government is determined to do everything it can to leave the EU with a deal.

And the agreement that the Prime Minister concluded at last week's European Council gives this House the opportunity to honour the votes of the 17.4 million people who voted to leave the EU, and we can do so on time and in an orderly fashion.

Parliament had the opportunity on Saturday to support a meaningful vote which would have allowed us to proceed smoothly to ratification of our deal and exit on October 31st.

But the House instead voted in such a way as to put an orderly exit on that date in doubt.

Now I appreciate and understand the honest intentions and genuinely sincere motives of many of those who voted for the amendment which stood in the name of my Right Honourable Friend, the Member for West Dorset. And let me place once more on the record the very high personal regard in which I hold him – I know he always acts in what he believes to be the national interest and I deeply deprecate the personal criticism directed towards him.

But the House's decision to request that a letter seeking an extension to Article 50 be sent creates unfortunately no certainty about our exit in an

orderly fashion on October 31st.

Before Saturday's proceedings in the House, European leaders including the President of the Commission, the President of France and the Taoiseach, deliberately and explicitly explained that members should not cast their vote on the assumption that the EU Council will offer an extension.

There is no certainty in this matter.

Furthermore, no formal response from the EU has yet been received to the two letters sent by the Prime Minister on the evening of Saturday 19 October: the first of course requesting an extension to the 31 October deadline as required under the terms of the EU (Withdrawal) (No2) Act; the second setting out the Government's position that we believe that a delay to Brexit would be corrosive, a view shared by the EU 27 leaders.

With no clear agreement yet in this house to ratify our withdrawal agreement and no certainty that an extension will be granted by 31 October, I must I fear take the appropriate steps now to prepare for the increased possibility that the legal default position will follow, and we will leave on October 31st without a deal.

The clear advice to me from officials is that we must now intensify contingency arrangements.

That is why the Cabinet's X0 Committee met yesterday to agree that Government's Brexit preparations now move into their final, most intensive phase, and Operation Yellowhammer is triggered.

Let me be clear – no one would be happier than me to turn off those preparations and stand down planning for no deal. I do not think anyone in this House can doubt my desire to see a deal concluded.

But if we are to be certain to avoid a no deal outcome on October 31st then we have to vote for the Prime Minister's deal, we must ensure the vessel which brings certainty passes expeditiously through this Parliament and we must avoid attempts to delay, capsize or hold it below the waterline.

In that spirit, can I thank the many parliamentarians across the House who have indicated they will be backing the Prime Minister's deal – which, until he brought it home, many people thought would be impossible to negotiate.

This deal ensures we can leave the EU, it is entirely consistent with the Belfast Agreement and also with all our other domestic and international obligations.

And I can also underline that once a withdrawal agreement has been ratified, this whole House will be involved in agreeing the mandate for negotiations on our future partnership arrangements with the EU, and we will work particularly closely with all parties to ensure vital protections for workers and the environment are secure.

And in underlining the vital role that all MPs will play in securing a strong

future partnership, can I also emphasise that we want business, trade unions and civil society to help us to shape a bright future outside the EU.

And it is indeed striking how organisations from the UK Chemicals Industries Association to UK Finance, and the Country Land and Business Association as well as the Federation of Small Businesses, have welcomed progress on the deal and have asked parliamentarians to end the uncertainty by supporting an agreement.

But, as I have explained, in the absence of that certainty, preparations for the risk of no deal have to be intensified.

We will now accelerate our efforts to help business and individuals mitigate any dislocation and disruption that may ensue.

From today, the Government's X0 Committee will meet seven days a week, to provide strong ministerial focus across government.

Hundreds of public servants across the UK will have to be redeployed. They will transfer to work in operations centres, ready to identify challenges, work together to resolve problems swiftly, and implement contingency plans.

Government, local resilience bodies and operational partners will be working together, ready to respond 24 hours a day according to need.

We are also finalising the latest update of our reasonable worst-case planning assumptions and we will share these with the House very shortly.

And of course we must maintain our public information campaign. From tomorrow, this will reflect the renewed urgency of preparation.

The advice will help businesses and individuals appreciate what they must do to prepare, given the uncertainty which still unfortunately prevails.

I would again urge everyone to check the information relevant to their situation on GOV.uk, and also the comprehensive summary of actions to take which are contained in the Government's No Deal Readiness Report which was published on 8 October.

We are complementing this information campaign with hands-on advice and assistance.

The Department for Transport is continuing to give personal advice to hauliers at sites across the UK and the European Union, working with local resilience forums to finalise traffic management plans, and particularly making sure that we have smooth flow of people and goods across the Short Straits.

And I should say to supplement that on 11 October 2019, it was announced 4 operators: Brittany Ferries, DFDS, P&O Ferries and the Stena Line had been successful in their bids to deliver freight capacity for a six month period from 31 October to 30 April. They will operate over 13 routes and from 8 ports in England: Teesport, Hull, Killingham, Felixstow, Harrich, Tillbury,

Poole and Portsmouth.

And can I commend my Rt Hon Friend, Secretary of State for Transport, for the smooth and effective way in which that extra freight capacity has been secured.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs is stepping up work to deliver its export webinar programme to thousands of firms.

Defra is distributing a Farming Brexit advice guide to agriculture businesses.

And BEIS is reaching hundreds of companies at readiness roadshows.

At all key departments we have helpdesk capacity in place with advisers ready to give the direct support required.

And this will build on the estimated 850 recorded engagements with business by DExEU, and other government departments.

We are taking note of all of the comments and feedback left on GOV.uk by people who seek advice, and we are passing on details of specific issues and concerns to the relevant government departments.

And of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are also accelerating our programmes of key policy and legislative decisions to ensure full readiness, including making and laying secondary legislation.

We will be laying the final SIs to ensure that all critical Brexit-related legislation necessary for day one is in force by 31 October.

This includes the legislation for the new temporary tariff regime for customs, and also for avoiding a hard border in Northern Ireland.

It remains the case that Northern Ireland would face unique challenges in a No Deal Brexit and we will need to take steps to ensure effective governance and give direction to the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

For the past two years, in the absence of devolved government – today's session being a rare exception – my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has made alternative arrangements for governance.

Legislation and guidance have been introduced to empower Northern Ireland's superb civil servants to continue to take decisions that are in the public interest. I'd like once again to record my gratitude to the Northern Ireland Civil Service, to the PSMI, and all those who work in Public Service in Northern Ireland for their unstinting commitment to safeguarding the welfare of all of our citizens.

Now this arrangement has been sustainable to date, but leaving without a deal would represent a formidable challenge to the current position.

In that case, we would have to start formal engagement with the Irish



Government about further arrangements for providing strengthened decision-making.

That would include the real possibility of restoring a form of direct rule. We would of course do everything to ensure that the interests of all communities across Ireland were safeguarded in any arrangements. But we all must recognise that this would be a grave step from which, experience shows us, it would be hard to return, particularly in the context of leaving without a deal.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even as we prepare for the challenges of a no deal, we will make the case in every forum we can for leaving with a good deal.

Parliament has previously shown determination and a focused resolve to pass laws expeditiously when the occasion warrants.

The deal that we have secured honours the referendum mandate that this House pledged to uphold, and allows the UK to leave the EU whole and entire and puts in place the pathway to a new partnership with the EU based on free trade and friendly cooperation.

That is why I again urge my colleagues in this House, all of us democrats first and foremost, now to support the Prime Minister's deal.

And I commend this statement to the House.

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## [Foreign Secretary update to Parliament on Harry Dunn case](#)

Today, I want to update the House on the tragic case of the death of the 19 year old Harry Dunn in a car accident in Northamptonshire, and what we are doing to support his family in their search for justice.

As the father of two young boys myself, I can only begin to imagine the grief and suffering of losing a child. It's every family's worst nightmare. I'm sure the whole House will join with me in expressing my deepest sympathies to Harry's family for their unbearable loss.

Mr Speaker, let me start with the facts of this case, and the steps that the Government has taken in recent weeks to support the police investigation.

On 27 August, Harry Dunn was killed in a road traffic collision while riding his motorbike in Croughton, Northamptonshire. The suspect in the police investigation is an American woman.

As it has been widely reported, at the time of the accident, the American involved had diplomatic immunity. The UK Government had been notified of the

family's arrival in the UK in July 2019.

This diplomatic immunity was the result of the arrangements agreed between the UK Government and the US Government in 1995. Under those arrangements, US staff at RAF Croughton and their families were accepted as part of the US Embassy in the UK.

Pursuant to these arrangements, the staff and their families were entitled to immunity under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Under the exchange of notes in relation to the Croughton Annex, these arrangements waived immunity for employees, but the waiver did not cover spouses.

Returning to the specific case of Harry Dunn. On 28 August of this year, the US Embassy notified us that the spouse of a member of staff at RAF Croughton had been involved in an accident.

On 30 August, the US asserted that the spouse was covered by immunity, so a waiver was needed.

To enable the police investigation to follow its proper course, on 5 September, the FCO formally requested the US Embassy to waive immunity. Given the seriousness of the incident, our view was -and remains - that justice needs to be done.

If her immunity had been waived, Northamptonshire Police would then have been able to compel her to cooperate fully with their investigation.

However, on 13 September, the FCO was informed by the US Embassy that they would not waive immunity, and that the individual would be leaving the country imminently, unless the UK had strong objections.

We duly and immediately objected in clear and strong terms and have done since. Nevertheless, under the Vienna Convention, UK police could not have lawfully prevented the individual from leaving the UK.

When the FCO followed up with the US Embassy on 16 September, they informed us that the individual had departed the day before.

We immediately informed Northants Police.

When FCO's views were sought on timing, officials asked the police to delay telling the family by a day or two, so that they could inform me and other Ministers and agree the next course of action.

I am aware that the police did not tell the family until 26 September, which was 11 days after the family had left.

As the primary point of family liaison, the decision as to when to tell the family was properly a matter for the police.

Turning to the issue of waiver, I can reassure the House that representations

have been made to the US government at every level of the administration. The Head of the Diplomatic Service summoned the US Deputy Ambassador.

I raised this case twice with the US Ambassador, in order to express my disappointment with their decision not to waive immunity, and to request that the decision be reversed.

I spoke to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the same terms on 7 October, and the Prime Minister raised the case with President Trump on 9 October.

The scope of immunity is a complex area of law, because in some circumstances there may be a residual immunity that can continue once an individual returns home, depending on their status and the particular facts of the case.

Our position, in this case, is that immunity clearly ended when the individual concerned left the UK.

The US government in turn stated on 8 October that since the individual had returned to the US, in their view, immunity was 'no longer pertinent'.

We took time and we took care to resolve this point, because of its relevance to the case.

We also wanted to be fully confident in the legal position, before we communicated it to the family, given their anguish and frustration with the obstacles to the investigation. Once the position was clear, I conveyed it directly to the family by letter on 12 October.

We continue to urge the US authorities and the individual in question to fully cooperate with the investigation.

The case is now with Northamptonshire Police and the Crown Prosecution Service, and it is for them to consider next steps as part of their criminal investigation.

At every stage in this process, we have sought to clear away any obstacles to justice being done.

At the same time, I have been mindful of the need to avoid anything that could be construed as political interference, in case that might later be argued to prejudice the proper and fair course of the investigation, and thereby prevent justice being done.

Mr Speaker, let me now turn to our next steps.

First, we will continue to do all that we can to support the Police and the CPS during this process. And I can assure this House, as I assured Harry's family when I met with them on 9 October, that we will continue to fight for justice for them.

Second, I have already commissioned a review of the immunity arrangements for US personnel and their families at the Croughton Annex, holding privileges and immunities under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

As this case has demonstrated, I do not believe the current arrangements are right. The review will look at how we make sure the arrangements at Croughton cannot be used in this way again.

Mr Speaker, in one night, a tragic accident took the life of a young man with his whole future ahead of him.

That loss has devastated his family, as it would any of ours.

I can reassure the House that this government will do everything it can to give them the solace of justice being done. Our hearts go out to them, and I commend this statement to the House.