

Minister Heather Wheeler's address at the PIF Partners' Dialogue in Tuvalu

Mr Prime Minister, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to come to this beautiful part of the world for the first time, on my first overseas visit as the UK's Minister for Asia and the Pacific.

Global Britain Uplift

We may live on opposite sides of the globe, but I can assure you that the UK is more committed to this region and addressing climate change than ever. By the end of this year, we will have doubled our diplomatic presence in the Pacific to six missions, enabling us to work more closely with you on issues that matter to us all.

Challenge of Climate Change

Clearly, climate change is one of the most pressing of those issues. Visiting Fiji and Tuvalu I have seen for myself some of the challenges the region faces. I also witnessed the resilience, ingenuity and determination of its people in adapting to these challenges. I'm keen to see what more we can do to tackle climate change together.

UK Action

The UK is already taking a global lead on the issue – we were the first major economy to legislate for net-zero emissions by 2050, and we are sharing our expertise in clean growth with partners around the world.

We recognise our responsibility – as one of the world's major economies – not only to meet the commitments of and ensure continued momentum on the Paris Climate Agreement, but also to raise global ambition even further.

This is why we are bidding to host COP26, in partnership with Italy, next year, and co-leading the resilience strand of the UN Climate Action Summit next month. We will be reliant on High Ambition Coalition partners in the Pacific to add your voices to our own. I sincerely hope that we will have your continued moral and vocal support on an issue that affects us all.

Climate Finance

Resilience and adaptation are vital, to address the impacts of climate change that are already here to stay. The UK has listened to the concerns of countries in this region that more climate finance needs to be devoted to adaptation. That is why we are committing nearly £6 billion in international climate finance over five years to 2020, split evenly between adaptation and mitigation.

It is also why, as co-chair of the Green Climate Fund in 2019, we are pushing for funds to be disbursed more efficiently and projects to be started more quickly.

Oceans

As an island nation, like all of you, we are particularly aware of the importance of protecting our ocean. We joined the '30by30' pledge to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 and I am pleased to say that we are doing our bit to honour that pledge, thanks to our Blue Belt Initiative, which is on track to designate 4 million square kilometres of ocean as Marine Protected Areas by 2020.

We are also working with Commonwealth partners on issues related to our oceans. Countries in the Pacific are benefiting from our £26.5 million Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme, and we are proud to co-lead, with Vanuatu, the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, to tackle the scourge of plastic pollution. The commitment of Pacific countries to this issue is clear, and we want to work even more closely with you.

That is why I am delighted to announce our support for a scoping study, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the South Pacific Tourism Organisation, on how to reduce litter from cruise ships – which, as you will be well aware, is a key contributor to plastic pollution.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think we all recognise that limiting any further global warming will be challenging. However, the UK believes it is achievable if we all work together. With our enhanced diplomatic network here in the Pacific, that is what we are determined to do.

I look forward to working with island leaders to build resilience to climate change and to advocate relentlessly for a level of global ambition to match the scale of the climate crisis we face.

[£250,000 boost for broadband in conference centres](#)

- The competition is part of the UK Government's Tourism Sector Deal
- Investment will help to boost the £32 billion business events sector

Tourism Minister Rebecca Pow has launched a competition for conference centres across the UK to apply for funding to improve broadband infrastructure with the aim of hosting more international conferences at UK venues.

The £250,000 funding will be awarded to venues across the UK to support the improvement of on-site broadband facilities and help them attract more international business events.

Applications for funding will be open to event venues with conference facilities, including hotels and event centres, that bid for – or plan to bid for – events which attract international delegates.

Winners will be able to upgrade their existing connectivity to full fibre broadband which will support faster data speeds and higher usage volumes. This forms part of the Government's commitment to rollout the required digital infrastructure to create more opportunities for businesses. Conference venues will be able to offer more interactive content, and organisers can live stream the events to international audiences.

Tourism Minister Rebecca Pow said:

We want the UK to attract the biggest and best international business events to help grow our economy and encourage trade and investment. Ensuring our conference facilities can deliver the connectivity and facilities organisers want and need is crucial to help achieve this and there is a great deal of scope to expand this area.

Our Tourism Sector Deal is providing a broadband boost to the country's business events industry, and I would encourage all eligible venues to apply."

In 2017, the UK hosted 592 international association meetings with business visitors making up almost a quarter of the 38 million visits to the UK in 2018 and providing a boost to visitor numbers during the off peak season. The sector is currently worth £32.6 billion to the UK economy with delegates spending £4.5 billion and more than half returning as leisure visitors.

This investment, part of the UK Government's Tourism Sector Deal, will help to attract more business visits and events by making destinations across the UK more attractive to international event organisers.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Building Digital UK scheme has already boosted the broadband capacity at more than 60 hotels through the Gigabit voucher scheme.

Michael Hirst, Chair of the Events Industry Board said:

The business events industry welcomes the UK government's new £250,000 competition to improve broadband connectivity in event venues. This is a strong recognition of the importance of helping to support the growth of first class infrastructure in Britain's

large range of diverse world class business event facilities. It will help immensely in continuing to present Britain as a leading global destination for business events.

To be eligible, venues must have capacity for more than 400 delegates, have hosted at least one international event in the last year where a third of attendees were from outside the UK, or be able to demonstrate plans to do so in the next year.

The funding is part of the UK Government's Tourism Sector Deal which sets out how we will work with the sector to grow the country's tourism industry and to ensure we have the infrastructure to cope with the predicted growth in international business and leisure visitors.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Further information on the scheme and application forms can be found [here](#).
- By 2025 experts predict that there will be an additional 9 million visitors to the UK each year.
- Trade conducted at international business is estimated to be worth over £150 billion annually.

[PM call with Prime Minister Serraj of Libya: 15 August 2019](#)

The Prime Minister received a call from Prime Minister Serraj of Libya to congratulate him on his appointment.

The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Serraj for the close cooperation of Libyan authorities in securing the extradition of Hashem Abedi, the brother of Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi.

The two leaders discussed the ongoing conflict in Libya and the Prime Minister reiterated the importance of all sides committing to a ceasefire and the need to return to political dialogue.

The leaders looked forward to meeting at the earliest opportunity

Grace 1: UK statement on the outcome of Gibraltar's legal proceedings

The UK notes the conclusion of Gibraltar's legal proceedings and the steps Gibraltar's authorities have taken to prevent the ship's cargo from reaching Syria in contravention of EU Syria Sanctions.

We note the Government of Gibraltar has received assurances from Iran that the Grace 1 will not proceed to Syria. Iran must abide by the assurances they have provided. We will not stand by and allow Iran – or anyone – to bypass vital EU sanctions on a regime that has deployed chemical weapons against its own people.

There is no comparison or linkage between Iran's unacceptable and illegal seizure of, and attacks on, commercial shipping vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and the enforcement of EU Syria sanctions by the Government of Gibraltar. Freedom of navigation for commercial shipping must be respected and international law upheld.

PM call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: 15 August 2019

The Prime Minister received a call of congratulation from NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary General said they were pleased to be working with one another again and looked forward to the NATO Leaders' Meeting in London in December.

On burden sharing, the Prime Minister reiterated the UK's firm belief that all NATO members should work to meet the target of spending 2% GDP on defence. The Secretary General thanked the Prime Minister for the UK's leadership in this area.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary General discussed a number of other important issues affecting the NATO alliance, including the war in Afghanistan, Turkish acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defence system and Russia's violation of the INF Treaty.

Both the Prime Minister and the Secretary General agreed that NATO partners must continue to work together in the future to overcome shared challenges and evolving threats.