

Minister for Europe praises work of Western Balkans Missing Persons Group

The Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, met with representatives of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and the 'Missing Persons Group' in the margins of the Western Balkans Berlin Process Summit in Poznan.

The Missing Persons Group, comprising representatives of the domestic institutions responsible for missing persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, was established with UK funding support after the London Western Balkans Summit in 2018. It carries out work across the region to help solve 12,000 cases of persons still missing following the conflicts of the 1990s.

The group reported on its progress made over the past year to the Minister, including establishing operational groups to exchange information and to agree joint actions to resolve individual 'no name' cases, creating a landmark regional public database of active missing persons cases and identifying clandestine gravesites for future joint excavations. The Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

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During the conflicts of 1990s, approximately 40,000 people disappeared in the Western Balkans, never to be seen again. Many of them were victims of ethnic cleansing and other atrocities: they were murdered and ended up in anonymous mass graves.

To this day, this remains a heart-breaking, agonising legacy of the conflict. But the region also has an incredible story to tell of accounting for those missing. To date, more than 70 percent of those reported missing at the end of the fighting in the Western Balkans have been accounted for. No other post-conflict region has ever achieved such a high rate of resolving missing persons cases.

There is still scope to do more: through the expert DNA technologies to improve identification, through encouraging public engagement in the search for information and most importantly through cooperation between institutions across the region, for example to uncover clandestine gravesites. The UK is doing everything to fund programmes and shape action, which can make a material difference to this painful legacy of the conflict.

The Minister met Berlin Process Foreign Ministers during the summit where he outlined the UK's enduring commitment to supporting reconciliation and regional cooperation. Prime Minister, Theresa May, will meet Berlin Process leaders on Friday where she will set out how the UK is implementing its pledge to double UK support to £80million and to double UK staff working on

security challenges in the Western Balkans region.

Further information

[The AAIB has sent a team to West Sussex](#)

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[Honduras invited to participate in the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London](#)

The UK and Canadian governments are working together to defend media freedom and improve the safety of journalists who report across the world. The Global Conference for Media Freedom is part of an international campaign to shine a global spotlight on media freedom and increase the cost to those that are attempting to restrict it.

It will bring together global leaders and representatives from the media industry, journalists, civil society and academia and is supported by [Luminate](#). The Global Conference for Media Freedom in 2019 will be the first of its kind.

The conference will be structured around four themes:

- protection and prosecution, including impunity
- national frameworks and legislation
- building trust in media and countering disinformation

- media sustainability

Global leaders, representatives from the media industry, journalists, civil society and academia will gather to attend interactive panel discussions. The first day will focus on defining the challenges, the second on framing solutions.

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Northern Powerhouse Trade Mission Launched at India Roadshow

A golden opportunity now exists for Northern businesses to mark their stamp in India, audiences were told at the India Roadshow in Manchester and Sheffield this week.

The roadshow, organised by the Department for International Trade (DIT) and Invest India, is visiting 7 UK cities to bring to life the many opportunities on offer for British companies in this market of 1.3 billion people.

Speaking in Sheffield on Thursday, the head of the Northern Powerhouse region at DIT, Natalie Bain, announced a new trade mission to Bangalore and Mumbai in October, which will focus on opportunities in digital technology, clean energy, health innovation and education.

The roadshow provided an opportunity for companies across the North to access expertise and share best-practice when expanding into and doing business in India. Alongside specialists from DIT and Invest India were representatives from the UK India Business Council (UKIBC) and the Manchester India Partnership.

Northern businesses which shared their experiences of trading in India included TGW Global (Wolstenholme Machine Knives), Gripple, Grant Thornton, JSR Genetics and MIDEL.

In 2018, total UK exports of goods and services to India grew by 19.3% to reach a value of £8.0 billion, while inward investment from India in the 2018/19 financial year also grew to 106 projects.

Exports of goods from the Northern Powerhouse to India grew by 18.1% from 2017 to 2018 to reach a total value of £698 million.

India now has a thriving middle class, is the world's 6th largest economy and has the highest expected growth rate in the G20. A major attraction for UK exporters is the sheer pace of expansion and the country's notably young

demographic. India has a population with a median age of 27, and rising affluence is the biggest driver of increasing consumption.

Natalie Bain, Head of the Northern Powerhouse region at DIT, commented:

The Indian economy is more relevant, faster growing and more open to UK exporters than ever before.

Now is the moment for Northern Powerhouse businesses to make their move and establish a presence in this diverse and exciting country.

DIT is on hand to help navigate the Indian market, and with a team of 60 International Trade Advisers in the Northern Powerhouse alone, we have the resources, sector expertise and financial support through UK Export Finance to help you leap into India.

[Guatemala invited to participate in the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London](#)

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