

News story: UK hosts 5th UK-UAE Joint Economic Committee to boost bilateral trade

- The UAE and UK affirmed their commitment to continue deploying UK Export Finance's £9 billion market capacity to support British exports to and investment in the UAE;
- Liam Fox calls UAE a "natural home for British business in the Middle East".

Yesterday (Wednesday 24th April) the Department for International Trade hosted the 5th UK-UAE Joint Economic Committee (JEC), the first for four years, at Standard Chartered's HQ in the City.

The government to government meeting, led by Baroness Rona Fairhead, saw a wide-ranging discussion on bilateral trade and investment, the Expo 2020 Dubai, and ways to increase market access and enhance cooperation on standards.

The meeting saw the British and Emirati governments agree to develop a new economic partnership statement which will set out a mutually agreed approach to enhancing the UK-UAE trade and investment relationship.

Both sides also affirmed their commitment to continue working together to deploy UK Export Finance's £9bn capacity for UAE (£4 billion for Dubai in addition to £5 billion across UAE). The £9bn can be used to underwrite deals for UK companies operating in the UAE. In the last 3 financial years, UKEF has provided £1.2 billion in support for projects in UAE, and this commitment will help encourage further uptake of the support on offer.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

The UAE is one of our most important trading partners – it is our 4th largest export market outside of Europe and accounted for £10.5bn of UK exports in 2018. The importance of this market to the UK will only grow as we leave the European Union.

Meanwhile, investors from the UAE are part of the reason why the UK remains the top destination for foreign investment in Europe – with FDI growing here while it is falling on the continent. Emiratis continue to recognize the fundamental strengths of the UK economy and now have more than £5bn of UK assets*. This is not just investment in the London property market – it is investment that works for people across Britain, creating jobs everywhere from Gatwick Airport to Manchester City Football Club.

Our links with the UAE are deep. Some 100,000 UK nationals live in the UAE and a million UK tourists visited Dubai in the first half

of 2018. This familiarity, combined with a stable business environment, make the UAE a natural home for British business in the Middle East – a commercial hub which can be used as a springboard to the rest of the region.

And the British government is on stand-by to support those companies who want to enter the UAE market –not least through up to £9 billion in UK Export Finance support for British firms exporting to or setting up in the UAE. The Joint Economic Committee my department hosted today will help improve the access British businesses have to this vital market.

The next meeting of the JEC will be held at Expo 2020 in Dubai.

Total trade in goods and services (i.e. exports plus imports) between the UK and United Arab Emirates was £16.3bn in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2018.

ENDS

- The stock of FDI from United Arab Emirates in the UK was £5.4bn in 2017, 26.3% higher than in 2016.

[News story: British Aerospace ATP, loss of electrical power](#)

The aircraft experienced a loss of DC electrical power during the cruise. This resulted in the loss of a significant number of flight deck instruments and systems. The crew decided to return to East Midlands Airport where they made a normal landing.

Testing of the aircraft's electrical system did not identify the cause of the failures that led to the power loss. However, the investigation identified that the aircraft's flight data recorder was corroded by moisture and was recording intermittently. Two Safety Recommendations are made, relating to moisture ingress and replacement of magnetic tape flight data recorders.

[Read the report.](#)

Press release: CMA blocks merger between Sainsbury's and Asda

In its final report, published today, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found that UK shoppers and motorists would be worse off if Sainsbury's and Asda – two of the country's largest supermarkets – were to merge. This is due to expected price rises, reductions in the quality and range of products available, or a poorer overall shopping experience.

Following an in-depth investigation, a group of independent CMA panel members concluded that the deal would result in a substantial lessening of competition at both a national and local level for people shopping in supermarkets. This would mean shoppers right across the UK would be affected, not just in the areas where Sainsbury's and Asda stores overlap.

Stuart McIntosh, chair of the inquiry group, said:

It's our responsibility to protect the millions of people who shop at Sainsbury's and Asda every week. Following our in-depth investigation, we have found this deal would lead to increased prices, reduced quality and choice of products, or a poorer shopping experience for all of their UK shoppers.

We have concluded that there is no effective way of addressing our concerns, other than to block the merger.

The CMA's investigation found that, as well as affecting in-store customers, the merger would result in increased prices and reduced quality of service, such as fewer delivery options, when shopping online. Furthermore, it would lead to motorists paying more at over 125 locations where Sainsbury's and Asda petrol stations are located close together.

In making the decision to prohibit the merger, the Group reviewed a wide range of issues in detail, such as the increased competition presented by discount stores like Lidl and Aldi, and how new or expanding competitors could affect the retail market, including online. Whilst the panel carefully considered these industry developments, they did not allay its serious competition concerns about the merger.

The Group also carefully reviewed the companies' statement they would cut some prices. However, detailed analysis of the impact of the deal clearly showed that, overall, the merger would reduce competition in the market and is more likely to lead to price rises than price cuts.

This final decision to block the deal follows the publication of the CMA's provisional findings and a subsequent consultation period, during which the CMA reviewed responses from a variety of interested parties, including Sainsbury's and Asda themselves.

Further details are available on the [Sainsbury's / Asda case page](#).

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.
2. On 20 February 2019, the CMA published its [provisional findings and notice of possible remedies](#) and invited views.
3. The CMA's decisions in phase 2 merger inquiries are made by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's independent panel members. The members of the inquiry group are: [Stuart McIntosh](#) (Inquiry Chair), [Richard Feasey](#), [Roland Green](#), [John Thanassoulis](#), and [Claire Whyley](#). The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience.
4. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.

[News story: Laura Jane report and flyer published](#)

Our report on the fatal capsize of the fishing vessel Laura Jane on 7 May 2018, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, the subsequent actions taken and recommendation made: [read more](#).

A [safety flyer to the fishing industry](#) summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned, has also been produced.

Press enquiries

Press enquiries during office hours 01932 440015

Press enquiries out of hours 020 7944 4292

Speech: Urging ceasefire in Idlib and protecting lives in Syria

Thank you very much, Mr President.

I'm going to join others in thanking the Assistant Secretary-General for her briefing and to pay tribute to your teams on the ground and also to add our voice to those thanking Nujeen Mustafa for such an amazing and a compelling briefing and for telling your story and sharing that with everybody here. And I think everybody found it very moving and I think we owe it to you to try and make a reality of some of the things we've been talking about – about how to make life for the Syrian people better and bring the crisis to an end. And I'll come to that in a minute, Mr President, if I may.

I'm just going to say on the political process that the United Kingdom shares in full the statements made by the United States, by France and by Poland so I won't rehearse those arguments. Instead, what I'd like to do is ask some questions. So if I may first, to the Assistant Secretary-General: Ursula, we're very interested in access trends. We'd like to know what OCHA considers the key access improvements in the last three months and where the challenges still lie.

And to Nujeen, if I may ask you a question: You've come all this way to tell us your story. We've listened. 175,000 persons with disabilities in Idlib alone. The story about having to hide in the bathroom I think brought all of this alive for everybody in the Council and really brought home the human cost that people in Syria are suffering. What is it that we could most do in the Security Council to help you, to help people in the situation in Syria that you faced in Aleppo? What should it mean for us tomorrow and the day after and in six months' time? It would be really good to get a sense of, if there's one thing the Council could do, what would you like it to be.

And then if I may, Mr President, I'd like to address some questions to others.

I've got four questions. The first one is easy. It's to ask our Russian friends not to keep telling lies about the White Helmets. The White Helmets are a volunteer humanitarian organisation. We've had this debate several times in the Council and it has been proved beyond doubt that they are not terrorists. They are humanitarian. So that's question one.

And leading on from that, I think we appeal to our Russian and Chinese friends who were talking about progress on the ground in Syria: support the UN monitoring cross-border mission. Support it the Fifth Committee, allow it to have the funding it needs so the cross-border assistance can proceed as the Council has intended and has set out.

The rest of my questions, Mr President, if I may, are addressed to the Syrian Representative. Who I noticed doesn't look at women when we speak which, I think is quite interesting. So I would like him to tell us, in the face of what we heard from Nujeen about persons with disabilities and in recognition of the fact that throughout the United Nations, issues relating to persons with disabilities have always been non-political, they have always been areas where every Member State can cooperate. It's not a political issue. What are the Syrian authorities doing to address the situation of persons with disabilities, women and girls and particularly those in the worst hit places like Aleppo and Idlib? I'd really like to know the answer to that question and we hope for some positive news.

The third question is about this lack of access for humanitarians to Rukhban camp. Thirteen children have died recently of preventable causes. Why is it not possible to , quote, why is it not possible to allow unconditional UN access to that camp?

And my fourth question, Mr President, is to ask for an unequivocal assurance from the Syrian authorities through the person of the Syrian Representative today that the ceasefire in Idlib will be respected without qualification.

Thank you.