

Press release: Foreign Secretary underlines UK support for media freedom and human rights in Russia

In a speech at the Plekhanov University, in Moscow, Boris Johnson also took the opportunity to underline the UK's support for civil society and basic freedoms by meeting a range of civil society representatives and heard first-hand about the state of human rights in Russia.

The Foreign Secretary referenced the restrictions placed on media in Russia – reiterating that the UK believes that an open and free media is essential to any functioning democracy.

Addressing a room of students and journalists in Moscow, he recalled his own experiences growing up during the Cold War, and praised the benefits of a free, diverse and open civil society, as a way to boost economic growth and productivity.

If you look at both of our societies today it is obvious that the free market, in which people are free to find a market among the rest of the population for whatever goods they choose – within reason – to sell, and at whatever price they choose to sell them, is a more effective system of furnishing humanity with its desires than any other system. It was that brute fact alone that ensured the demise of communism.

Yet that freedom – free market economics, or capitalism – is simply not enough on its own.

That is why I want to make the case again today for the economic benefits of freedom of expression. I want to argue that the more tolerant a society is, the more supportive of free speech it is, the more likely that society is to be rich and successful.

I am sure that everyone can see that the media have played a crucial role in western democracies in holding politicians to account, and in telling the truth to power.

So a free media is in the interests of taxpayers, of shareholders – and of consumers. So it is in the interests of prosperity. Indeed it is no accident that if you look at the global prosperity index, and then you look at the societies where journalists are free and well treated, you will see that the most prosperous societies are the ones where freedom of speech is most cherished.

Equally if you have a society where journalists are shot because they investigate the business doings of the rich and powerful, then you will tend to find countries that are less economically successful, less equal, and less attractive as places to invest.

We have huge difficulties in our relationship [with Russia] today. We cannot ignore those difficulties and the UK will remain firm in its principles. We are forward looking.

But equally I hope I don't have to belabour my credentials as an admirer of this country. I not only have Russian ancestry but am the first Foreign Secretary in history to be christened Boris – and may be the last for some time. I look back at that time in the 1990s, when in my conversations with Russian journalists and politicians we seemed to share the same ideals of freedom: free markets, freedom under the law, freedom to speak your mind without fear of intimidation, freedom to express yourself and your sexuality provided you do no harm to others.

And I hope that moment of convergence will seem not to have been a fluke, not an illusion, not a mirage or a false dawn. I hope that time will come again.

News story: The AAIB is sending a team to Bristol

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The AAIB is sending a team to Bristol Airport to investigate an aircraft incident.

Speech: Looking Back to 2017: Looking Forward to 2018 – UK and Chile – Celebrating Business

Welcome everyone to the Residence for the Embassy Christmas reception. Christmas is a time for celebration, for getting together with family and friends – and that is just what we want to do this evening. A celebration of friendship between UK and Chile.

And I would particularly like to thank the choir from The Grange School for their wonderful contribution to the celebrations. I understand this used to be a tradition, and I hope it is a tradition we can renew.

And there has been a great celebration of Chile in the UK in the last week. The Escuadra Palmas de Peñaflor has been at the London Olympia International Horse Show, showcasing some of the best of Chile's horsemanship and culture. Their visit has had wide press coverage and included meetings with the HRH

Duchess of Cornwall and HRH Countess of Wessex. A truly innovative way of rising Chile's profile in the UK.

Royal connections also highlighted Chile's leading role on ocean issues – and further opportunities for partnership with the UK. HRH Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales met with Foreign Minister Heraldo Muñoz, at Our Ocean conference in Malta in October 2014. HRH praised Chile's commitment to ocean issues, as shown by the commitment to over 1 million square kilometres of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This is also an important theme for the UK.

Only yesterday, there were discussions in Parliament on ocean issues, led by Sir Alan Duncan, the FCO Minister for the Americas. Sir Alan highlighted the UK's Blue Belt Initiative – a global programme, in partnership with the UK's Overseas Territories, with a commitment to protect over 4 million square kilometres of ocean by 2020.

As we highlighted in the UK presence at IMPAC4 – the major conference on MPAs, convened by Chile in September 2017, there is much the UK and Chile can do together on this agenda, both sharing experience and learning, and encouraging global dialogue and action. As can be seen in the fantastic new BBC series 'Blue Planet II' by Sir David Attenborough, the ocean is fundamental to the future of our planet. Sustainable use of resources, combined with demands of economic development, against a backdrop of global maritime trade and security means we are all going to need to develop innovative approaches, in partnership. I hope that Chile and the UK will further develop their partnership on this agenda.

Innovation was a major theme last night with the launch of Chile's Congreso del Futuro 2018 – a major initiative involving over 100 of the world's top scientists and thinkers – many of them British. We look forward to welcoming the British speakers in January 2018. The world, and the global economy is changing rapidly, shaped by the emergence of new technologies. Our work on Science and Innovation has continued to be a major priority of the Embassy in the last year, facilitated through projects under the Newton Fund.

Looking to the future the UK's Industrial Strategy launched earlier this month. The 'UK Industrial Strategy – A Leading Destination to Invest and Grow' – ensures the UK remains one of the best places in the world to innovate, do business, invest and create jobs. It sets out how we welcome investment from overseas, participate in global supply chains, and buy and sell goods and services from all over the world. It highlights Britain's leading expertise, skills and global leadership in key emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, big data, clean energy, and self driving transport.

During this last year, the Embassy has promoted new links and collaborations here in Chile in many advanced high tech areas. For example the Government of Chile has promoted the introduction of BIM – building information management methodology in all future infrastructure projects. The Embassy has encouraged projects and partnerships in mining, on climate change, clean energy and growth and green finance. We have showcase ideas and technology – for example in transport – the 'bus de dos pisos' pilot which showed to citizens how

modern manufacturing and innovation can give a cost effective, customer friendly, solution to modern transport. We have furthered links on satellite technology, in life sciences and promoted the exchange of ideas and challenges on cyber security. We want to do more.

In a fast changing world, there are major global trends that are significant not just for our economies, markets and people, but for societies across the world. Our Industrial Strategy includes four 'Grand Challenges': Growing our Artificial Intelligence and Data-Driven Economy, Clean Growth, the Future of Mobility and our Ageing Society. The UK is committed to being at the cutting edge of innovation in these areas and to working with international partners such as Chile – and partners in both the government and private sectors to rise to these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities they present. Areas which create new prosperity for both countries. Areas which help improve quality of life. Areas which create new business, which is central to the work and priorities of the Embassy here in Chile – and always has been.

We have also continued to work in partnership with the British Council, promoting arts, cultural and higher education links – for example the Pacific Alliance seminar on innovation held in Valparaiso earlier this year. A city where we have also shared UK experiences on heritage and urban development; and development of museums. It is interesting to hear of Chile's recent announcement of a new Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage. Recent UK reports highlight the economic benefits of a thriving arts, cultural and museums sector.

We have celebrated many historical events anniversaries in this Residence during my tenure here. For example – the 90th Birthday of Her Majesty, The Queen; 50 years of the British Government's ownership of this beautiful Residence; 100 years since the rescue by Piloto Pardo of the Armada de Chile, of Shackleton 's men from Antarctica; and next year we will celebrate as part of the Armada de Chile's bicentenary, 200 years since the arrival of Lord Cochrane (the man in the hall) to Chile, and his role in the Armada de Chile and the fight for independence, establishment of democracy, and promotion of free trade.

Today, as well as celebrating Christmas, we are celebrating another – and important anniversary, connected with trade. 100 years since the formation of the British Chilean Chamber of Commerce in Chile.

A century of developing UK-Chile business links. A century of furthering free trade to the benefit of both our countries. And today, in this century, the concept and ideals of free trade have never been more important. We look forward in furthering discussions on trade negotiations with Chile and continuing to build and deepen our business links across many sectors of trade and investment. Britain is a great place to do business, as is Chile. I am proud of the partnership with the British Chilean Chamber of Commerce, which is co-located with us in the Embassy, and will now hand over to the Director, Greg Holland to tell us both about the work of a century – and the work for the 21st century to promote business between UK and Chile.

[Press release: Government announces champion for UK's 'Silicon Valley'](#)

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid today (22 December 2017) announced a new champion for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor – an area of the country that has the potential to become the UK's Silicon Valley.

Iain Stewart MP, who represents Milton Keynes South, will take on the role of standard-bearer for this important economic area working with partners to help it fulfil its potential.

As part of the [Budget](#), the Chancellor set out an ambitious locally-led development programme for the area covering infrastructure, housing and business investment. This includes a housing deal with Oxfordshire for 100,000 homes by 2031 and investment in transport infrastructure.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid, said:

We know that this corridor has the potential to transform into globally significant economy, we must grasp this once-in-a-generation opportunity to unlock growth.

We have a bold vision for the region and want to attract the brightest and the best. The appointment of Iain Stewart as a dedicated champion will help us work in partnership with communities and secure the corridor's position as a world class economic area, and a key driver of UK prosperity.

As part of the role Mr Stewart will:

- champion a vision for the corridor with stakeholders including local authorities, local councillors and MPs on a cross-party basis, local enterprise partnerships and local businesses
- gather intelligence on local issues and update government to help deliver this vision in a way that is locally informed
- attend events and meetings, along with local stakeholders and ministers as appropriate, to promote the corridor, for example to promote trade and investment

- carry out media engagements to promote the corridor

Iain Stewart MP said:

As someone who has lived and worked in the region for many years, I'm delighted to be given the opportunity to champion the government's vision for the corridor.

It's vital that government and communities work hand in hand to deliver economic growth, and I look forward to bringing together stakeholders and working to transform the corridor into the UK's answer to Silicon Valley.

At the Budget, the government [published a vision document](#) for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor.

This role will not have decision-making power. Decisions will still be locally-led.

In November, the National Infrastructure Commission [published its final report into the area](#).

[Press release: Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson press statement in Moscow](#)

"We have to work hard to address those difficulties. We have to find a way forward." Boris Johnson tells media in Moscow

It is very good to be here in Moscow. I think I am the first British Foreign Secretary to be here in about five-and-a-half years. But, of course, this is a very old diplomatic relationship that is 450 years old and dates from the time when Queen Elizabeth sent an envoy to Ivan the Terrible or Ivan the Fourth, as Sergei [Lavrov] has said he was called.

The reason for the length of my absence is that this is a difficult time in the relations between UK and Russia, as Sergei himself has just said. We can't ignore those difficulties, we can't pretend that they don't exist, and we don't share a common perspective on events in Ukraine or the Western Balkans or, as the Prime Minister Theresa May has said, on the Russian activities in cyberspace.

We speak up for the LGBT community in Chechnya, and elsewhere, as people would expect from us. But they would also expect that Britain and Russia, as

two P5 countries, should be able, where possible, to coordinate and to work together on the issues that matter to our voters on the issues, that matter to people of the world. I believe that having talked many times to Sergei, and particularly after our conversations today, that there are things that we can do together as P5 member across the range of dossiers, as Sergei Lavrov has just said.

We may not have an identical point of view for instance about North Korea, but we share the same objective to make sure that there is peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and indeed that it is a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. Neither of us want to see North Korea armed with a nuclear ICBM, and that is very clear. We want to see progress in Syria on the basis, as Sergei has said, of Resolution 2254 – peace and progress for the people of Syria. That is something that unites us and I was very pleased, Sergei, in conclusion to hear what you had to say about our bilateral cultural, artistic, and scientific agenda.

In times of difficulty, this is always an area where we can do more together and it's great that there was a Shakespeare logo train on the Moscow metro. We reciprocated. It took a while to get a Russia emblazoned train on TFL but I think it happened eventually. There are things we can do together on scientific collaboration, space research.

There is plenty of opportunity for academic, cultural exchanges and 2019 is the year of music and we intend to make the most of it. I'm delighted that trade, in spite of the difficulties, in spite of the sanctions regime, trade is increasing and we certainly want to see more of that. Exports, as I said, are I think around £5 billion worth to Russia at the moment. It is good news that Russian customers are buying loads more British things from kettle crisps to Bentleys. I would in no way discourage that.

I would just make one point very fervently. I am a Russophile, a committed Russophile. I took the trouble before becoming Foreign Secretary to station my ancestors around the world. I have them in Germany, in France, all over the place, America, and of course here in Moscow as well. I am certain that I am the first that the Foreign Secretary in the history of my office to be called Boris – probably the last for some time, I would think. Be in no doubt that I want to see an improvement in the relations between our peoples.

That in no way diminishes the difficulties that we currently have in our relationship at the moment. We have to work hard to address those difficulties. We have to find a way forward. We have to find a way forward and in the meantime what we want to do, as the UK and Russia, is to cooperate in those areas where we can to build that future. So thank you very much Sergei for generosity and your hospitality and for welcoming me and my team today.”