

Speech: 'We champion the rights of women and girls around the world'

You may be thinking why am I here speaking to you today.

I'm a middle-aged man. I have 2 sons. You could easily describe me as 'part of the patriarchy'. Why am I here today talking to you on the International Day of the Girl Child?

This is a day to think about how to tackle issues that contribute to gender inequality, and the challenges that young girls face everywhere on a daily basis.

There are 1.1 billion girls today (aged under 14) – this is a powerful constituency for shaping a sustainable world that's better for everyone.

We all need to be invested in empowering them to reach for their dreams and build better lives for themselves and their communities. This is not just for girls and women. We all have mothers and grandmothers. We all have a female relation, and some of us have sisters and daughters.

I also come from a different culture. I was educated in the Western, Christian tradition. I studied the bible, and learnt Christian ethics and morality from the New Testament which recorded the life and wisdom of Jesus Christ.

Wisdom does not necessarily come with age. Nor does it come with gender. Nor does one religion have a monopoly on wisdom.

In preparing for today, I wanted some wisdom from local religions. I don't have such a knowledge or understanding of the Hindu tradition, but we have just celebrated Durga Puja.

Ma Durga is the warrior goddess, who combats evil and unleashes her forces against wrong, oppression and evil. She is worshipped not just as a mother or a daughter but also as a leader and a fighter. The message is strong here that girls can be anything they want to be.

India is also the cradle of Buddhism. And in the teachings of the Buddha, there is relevant wisdom from the Dhammapada, in a text on 'punishment' (translation by K Kaul):

Punishment and death
Are the bitter fruits
Of evil deeds
Done in ignorance of reality
So bear in mind
That everyone lives in fear
Of punishment and death

Loving life as you do

So do unto others
As you would have them do unto you

... if you seek happiness
In doing noble deeds
That bring happiness to others
You shall be happy in this life and after.

Being happy. Treating others as you would have them treat you. How can we do that? Let me talk of 3 things.

First – language. It is by our own words that we condemn ourselves.

We communicate in many different ways. We talk, and words come out of our mouth. There is the tone of what we say, the context, the facial expression when we speak, and so on.

But when we speak, someone is listening. When we transmit, someone will receive. When we express ourselves to an audience, others will be trying to make sense of what we are saying.

And what I mean with the words I use, may not have the same meaning to my listeners. Some listeners may understand, agree and identify with what I am saying, others may not. And we have a great choice of the words that we use.

In our daily lives, we all like to laugh. Life is better when you are laughing. The best medicine in life is laughter. Laughter releases good hormones that reduce stress and increase feelings of well-being and pleasure.

What if you make someone else the object of your laughter?

It perpetuates gender discrimination and inequality. We all need to make a conscious effort to put a stop this.

What can we do?

Diplomats constantly seek for reaction. We want to know what others think of our countries (by that I mean what they think of our governments). In our ordinary lives, it would be boring if we went around the whole time asking how others feel about us.

But we can ask about our words, our languages and our jokes. The best feedback is when people speak up without asking. Easily said – but what should we do?

Secondly: behind the choice of words we use, lie stereotypes.

Sexual stereotypes – such as women being the weaker sex – are rooted by the age of 14. This is the case whether you are in a rich or poor country.

From an early age the messaging that girls are vulnerable and boys are

stronger and independent are being reinforced from all parts of society – parents, relatives, siblings, classmates, teachers, clergy, coaches, social media, TV and other media.

Boys are more likely to be encouraged to spend time outside of the home unsupervised. Girls tend to stay home and do chores. The role of the mother here is important – does she treat her son and daughter equally or is she finding comfort in the patriarchal hierarchy?

UN Women has set up the #HeForShe solidarity campaign for the advancement of women. Its goal is to engage men and boys as agents of change by encouraging them to take action against negative inequalities faced by women and girls.

Grounded in the idea that gender equality is an issue that affects all people – socially, economically and politically – it seeks to actively involve men and boys in a movement that was originally conceived as ‘a struggle for women by women’.

We fear being the odd one out. But we have a responsibility to speak up especially if we want to put a stop to them and change things for the better.

Finally outcomes on equality of opportunity. Let me talk about my organisation.

My parent ministry – the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – is a global institution with over 12,500 staff. As an organisation, we advocate for diversity and inclusion around the world.

A third of our staff are UK based – diplomats like me, but also staff who work only in Britain – and 2/3 local staff. Overall 43% of UK Based staff are female, and 42% LE staff are female.

Britain’s first female ambassador, was Anne Warburton, in Denmark. She was appointed in 1976. By 2008, we had 22 female Heads of Mission (Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Governor’s General, Consul Generals and Heads of Diplomatic) out of around 280.

We now have 54 female Heads of Missions around the world.

We champion the rights of women and girls around the world, and in February appointed Joanna Roper as the UK’s first ever Special Envoy for Gender Equality.

In India, we offer the Chevening Scholarships for studying for Masters in the UK. Almost exactly 50% of the scholars selected are women.

We also offer several Chevening Fellowships in different fields. 40% of the fellows selected are women. In fact almost half of the Chevening Alumni in India are women.

To return where I started, I am here speaking to you today on the International Day of the Girl Child because I am a man. I have a mother and sister and I have sons. ‘I am of woman born’.

I want to make the world a happier place. A place where everyone laughs. And where everyone can speak up and be heard.

That is why it is my role, just as much as yours, to work for gender equality.

Press release: Board of Trade convenes to ensure the benefits of free trade are spread throughout the Union

- Welsh Secretary joins President of the Board of Trade Dr Liam Fox at the first new Board of Trade today in Bristol
- First meeting attended by representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Advisers from across the United Kingdom present, providing local expertise to guide the Board on trade and investment matters

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will today (12 October) take his place at the table of the new Board of Trade convened to help boost exports, attract inward investors and ensure the benefits of free trade are spread equally across the country.

The new Board of Trade will bring together prominent figures from business and politics from each part of the UK to provide local expertise and guide the Board on trade and investment matters.

Alun Cairns will be joined two expert business advisers from Wales, Lord Rowe Beddoe and Heather Stevens CBE.

Lord Rowe Beddoe has a distinguished international business career and brings with him decades of experience gathered during his years as Chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and Cardiff Airport.

Heather Stevens CBE was part of the small team which launched the insurance group Admiral in 1993 in Cardiff. Since its launch Admiral has grown to become one of the largest private sector employers in Wales with a turnover of more than £2bn. She is also currently the chair and founding member of The Waterloo Foundation, an independent grant-making foundation, dedicated to projects that help globally such as support for child development and protecting the environment.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Every day in every country around the world, there are business

opportunities for Welsh companies' products and services. But we know that striking out into new and unfamiliar markets can sometimes look daunting – particularly now as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

The Board of Trade will engage with the whole of the UK on our global trade and investment agenda and aim to demonstrate that there has never been a better time for Welsh companies to export overseas.

I'm delighted to be joined by Lord Rowe Beddoe and Heather Stevens in this effort. Together, we will be a strong voice for Wales as we aim to help more businesses across the nation build their brand abroad and encourage more inward investment to our shores.

Wales is already an exporting nation. There are currently more than 3,800 businesses in Wales that export, with a combined value of £13 billion in the first quarter of 2017. Wales is also an attractive place for inward investment, with latest figures showing that 85 foreign direct investment projects were secured in Wales, creating 2,581 new jobs and safeguarding almost 9,000 more.

To mark the reconvening of the Board of Trade, Mr Cairns will visit Pontypridd based business Concrete Canvas which is celebrating another record breaking year of export growth, with 85 per cent of turnover directly resulting from export sales. (See case study below). The company has benefitted from UK Government support to access new global markets and is now looking to explore export opportunities across Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and other neighbouring countries in the region.

Darren Hughes, International Business Development Manager, Concrete Canvas said:

When we first started exporting, we received invaluable support from the Department for International Trade (DIT), both with specific market advice and funding for trade missions and in-market projects. We gained a lot from visiting our target markets in person and meeting local contacts whilst we were there.

DIT provided important advice to us when entering new markets and the potential risks, helping us to grow our revenue streams, but whilst safeguard our intellectual property – the foundation of our business.

The Board of Trade will meet four times a year with meetings rotated around the UK guaranteeing all parts of the union have a chance to raise the issues most important to them.

The first meeting will be held today at Bristol Robotics Lab. The lab which

brings together over 200 academics, researchers and industry practitioners, is the most comprehensive academic centre for multi-disciplinary robotics research in the UK, and is spearheading Britain's efforts to become a world leader in modern advanced robotics.

The agenda of the meeting will include a Bristol Airport Presentation on Regional Transport Access, an area that will be key in the promotion of future UK exports for the whole of the UK.

The President will also invite a discussion on how the Board will promote a culture of exporting and investing across the whole of the UK and celebrate the very best of British businesses which are already creating jobs and driving prosperity through their international outlook.

Concrete Canvas

Welsh business Concrete Canvas is celebrating another record breaking year of export growth, with 85 per cent of turnover directly resulting from export sales.

Founded by Peter Brewin and Will Crawford, Concrete Canvas manufactures a range of innovative products that disrupt traditional construction techniques. The material is a flexible concrete impregnated fabric that hardens on hydration to form a thin, durable, water proof and fire resistant concrete layer. The duo invented their unique material technology whilst studying Innovation Design Engineering at Imperial College and the Royal College of Art.

Their first concept was the Concrete Canvas Shelter, a rapidly deployable hardened shelter which only requires air and water for construction. Essentially, the Shelter is a "building in a bag". This product won numerous accolades, including a Saatchi & Saatchi award for World Changing Ideas and was the subject of a National Geographic short video which has received over 10 million views and generated immeasurable international interest in the product.

Whilst the domestic market was key to proving the business model and providing early growth during the company's infancy, international markets were quickly identified as an enormous potential opportunity and key to the long-term success of the business. In the last six years, the company has attended numerous trade missions, OMIS and ITO projects across South East Asia, Oceania and MENA resulting in the strong distribution network that Concrete Canvas now has in place as its primary route to market.

The company has now exported to 85 countries globally, with continued double-digit growth year on year.

In the last financial year, over 85 per cent of turnover came from export sales.

Concrete Canvas is now looking to explore export opportunities across Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and other neighbouring countries in the region. The

company recently attended a trade mission to Kazakhstan with support from the Department for International Trade (DIT). In-country DIT International Trade Advisers were on hand to provide specialist advice on international market research, product assessment and sourcing local partners to work with.

The company has grown rapidly and now employees over 40 staff, with 4 based overseas in regional hub offices in Sydney, Kuala Lumpur, Durban and Brussels.

Notes to Editors

Further info

(i) Secretary of State for Department for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Chair)

(i) Secretary of State for Scotland

(ii) Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

(iii) Secretary of State for Wales

England (6)

(i) Patricia Hewitt – outgoing Chair of UK India Business Council

(ii) Andrew Mills – CEO Virtualstock

(iii) Collette Roche – Chief of Staff, Manchester Airport

(iv) Marnie Millard – CEO Nichols PLC

(v) Iqbal Ahmed – Chairman, Chief Executive and Founder of Seamark Group

(vi) Edward Timpson – former Minister of State for Children and Families

Scotland (2)

(vii) Brian Wilson – former Trade Minister

(viii) Ian Curle – CEO of Edrington Group

Wales (2)

(ix) Lord Rowe-Beddoe – former Chair of Welsh Development Agency

(x) Heather Stevens – Chair and founding member of The Waterloo Foundation

Northern Ireland (1)

(xi) Mark Nodder (CEO of Wrights Group)

News story: Sunmi and Patrol report published

MAIB's report into the fatal accident during pilot transfer between general cargo vessel Sunmi and pilot transfer vessel Patrol on the River Thames, London on 5 October 2016 is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, subsequent actions taken and recommendations.

Press enquiries

Press enquiries during office hours 01932 440015

Press enquiries out of hours 020 7944 4292

Speech: Winner of the 2017 Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am very pleased to be here with you this evening to present the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award at the 2017 British Construction Industry Awards.

An awards ceremony which recognises and rewards excellence in construction and how projects can transform society. I am also informed that this awards ceremony is in its thirtieth year, so congratulations to you all!

Thanks to your hard work, the construction industry in the UK has a world-class reputation and underpins our country's continuing economic growth – creating much needed infrastructure and jobs, and helping export UK construction expertise around the world.

The government has a strong role to play in shaping this industry, with over a quarter of construction output from the public sector and central government being the biggest single construction client.

That is why these awards are supported through the Prime Minister's Better

Public Building Award, sponsored by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority in the Cabinet Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

What makes a 'better' public building

Tonight we are all here to celebrate some of the very best examples of construction – from grand projects that are reshaping our cities, to smaller, more local, efforts that are serving our communities.

But these awards are not just about the technical merit of a building or the precise functional feat of engineering, important as they are. They are also about recognising how better building and construction can transform lives, communities and the UK as a whole.

A better public building achieves excellence in design quality, innovation and procurement practices.

A better public building is first class financial management – delivered on budget and providing value for money for taxpayers.

A better public building is constructed on time and has real social and environmental value for its local community.

These are the principles this government is committed to and that we are recognising tonight.

Government Construction Strategy

And these are the principles that are embodied in our Government Construction Strategy.

Our strategy sets out how we want to make the government a better client, improve construction productivity and deliver £1.7 billion efficiencies and 20,000 apprenticeships in construction by 2020.

We know that innovation inside the public sector can be used to support growth in the private sector. So we want to work with industry to ensure effective procurement, efficient delivery, competitive pricing, and design excellence all become the norm.

Tonight's winner embodies all of these principles – it is a building that is well designed, innovative and enables a smarter public service.

It acts as a central hub, supported by nine local offices, putting this service more in touch with local communities.

It was delivered on time and on budget – in fact funded from the sale of its former building – so at no extra cost to the taxpayer! As Minister for Government Efficiency, you can see why I am particularly excited about the winner this year!

This approach has enabled more investment to be put into the public services

the building is there to support. And despite its high security, the design of the building makes it feel open, welcoming and more transparent to the public it serves.

As the judges said, it is 'fit for function' in the best sense of the phrase.

Announcement

I want to congratulate everyone involved in the projects shortlisted for the award this evening.

We continue to see increasing numbers of excellent projects all over the country. They are an inspiration to all public sector clients, and I'd like to see every new public building project meet the same high standards.

But there can only be one winner. So I am delighted to announce that the winner of the 2017 Prime Minister's Better Building Award is...

... the New Scotland Yard building on Thames Embankment!

Please join the stage to collect your award. Thank you.

[News story: Scotland Yard wins Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award](#)

The Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award recognises excellence in publicly funded buildings and infrastructure, and highlights projects that bring real change to communities, demonstrate innovative and efficient construction and deliver value for money.

The winning building is a £58 million project that remodelled and extended the former Curtis Green building. It represents a move back to Victoria Embankment by the Metropolitan Police service, having first previously occupied the address in 1890.

Other features include:

- a modern, flexible and efficient office environment for the Metropolitan Police Service
- extended floor space that facilitates agile working and more interaction between staff
- innovative design including an elegant curved glass entrance pavilion to enable greater access for the public

It was funded from the sale of New Scotland Yard's previous site at 10

Broadway, which was vacated in 2016 and acts as a central hub supported by nine local offices.

This award is supported by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA), part of the Cabinet Office, and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). It was presented for the first time in 2001. It is one of many awards presented at the British Construction Industry Awards (BCIA), organised by New Civil Engineer Magazine, and held in association with Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and the Architects Journal.

Minister for Government Resilience and Efficiency, Caroline Nokes MP, said:

This award for Scotland Yard is testament to the government's commitment to constructing public buildings which deliver value for money for the taxpayer and smarter public services.

The building's innovative design and use of technology helps the Met Police work in a more modern and efficient way. It was funded from the sale of its former building and acts as a central hub supported by nine local offices, putting police services more in touch with their local communities.

The project shows what can be achieved when government and the private sector work together to deliver innovative and efficient construction, completed on time and on budget. It demonstrates all the principles set out in the Government Construction Strategy – our plan to improve productivity and deliver £1.7bn efficiencies in government construction by 2020.

Cressida Dick, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service said:

I am delighted that our new building has been commended. This building, in the heart of Westminster and close to the Met's founding location, allows the Metropolitan Police Service to look forward to the future, providing excellent facilities and technology for our officers and staff.

From our glass pavilion and Eternal Flame Memorial, to the iconic revolving New Scotland Yard sign, the design has incorporated the past, present and future of policing in London. Many congratulations to all the colleagues past and present who made this a reality

Professor Tim Broyd, ICE President and BCIA judge, said:

Here is a building that is both functional for day to day police work and yet also accessible and welcoming to the public. The design is stunning, complementing its surroundings and

demonstrating a redevelopment that has been completed to the highest standard.