

Speech: Mark Garnier speech at the Midlands Engine Trade Summit

Thank you. I'm delighted to be back in this great city at the inaugural Midlands Engine Trade Summit.

I want to thank my department's regional team here in the Midlands for organising this event. I know it's taken a lot of hard work.

Personally, this is an important event for 2 reasons:

First, as a Minister at the Department for International Trade – I am responsible for ensuring the world knows that the Midlands, like every other region in the UK, is open for business.

And secondly, because I have the honour of being a Midlands MP.

Wyre Forest, my constituency, is based in Worcestershire.

So I know, better than most, the potential of businesses in the Midlands.

They are diverse, innovative and can be world beaters.

And history is on our side.

If you head up the A41 for 2 miles you'll arrive at the birthplace of the industrial revolution.

It was in Soho that James Watt created his steam engine: a manufacturing marvel that led to levels of productivity the world had never seen.

It allowed Britain, and this region in particular, to become the manufacturing powerhouse of the world.

It's a well-known fact, particularly if you have a friend from these parts, that Birmingham has more miles of canals than Venice – albeit with fewer gondolas.

150 years ago, these canals were the arteries of the Midlands economy – carrying everything from Black Country coal and iron ore, to Wedgwood pottery heading to the markets of Birmingham and Manchester.

Today, we talk a lot about innovative disruptors shaking up the modern economy – the likes of Uber and AirBnB; however historically, the Midlands has been the world economy's disruptor in chief.

Whether that was Rolls Royce in Derby developing their iconic Merlin aero-engine, or Cooke Optics in Leicester, who produced the camera lenses with which they filmed Star Wars – this region has always led, never followed.

There will be some who dismiss the Midlands Engine as an empty political

slogan.

They are mistaken.

Between 1997 and 2010, manufacturing output in the Midlands fell from over £15 billion to under £12 billion. No other UK region had a greater fall.

Regional productivity here is also on the wrong side of the national average.

These are real issues that need more than gimmicky solutions.

That is why the Chancellor recently announced our strategy for the Midlands Engine – focussing on the key themes of connectivity, skills, enterprise and innovation. The strategy demonstrates our commitment to the Midlands and we will work with Sir John Peace and the Midlands Engine partners to ensure it is a success.

For me, the Midlands Engine is a commitment by this government to ensure that the best days for this region are not those consigned to history, but those of the future.

It is a commitment to harness this region's 11.5 million people, a fast growing economy, and expertise across many sectors, to create the jobs and growth that spreads prosperity from Dudley to Derby.

That is why I entered politics; that is why I joined the Department for International Trade.

And that is why we will make the Midlands Engine a success.

Let me outline 3 areas government will focus on to ensure the Midlands fulfils its huge potential.

Midlands exports

The first is to use the momentum of the Midlands Engine to drive this region's exports to new heights.

Transport technologies, advanced manufacturing and engineering as well as healthcare and life sciences are just some of the centres of excellence in the Midlands.

This is expertise the world wants.

Over 27,000 businesses in the Midlands export nearly £40 billion worth of products to over 100 countries.

Incredibly, even the so-called factory of the world, China, runs a goods deficit with the West Midlands. But these impressive figures belie a bleaker national picture.

Only about 11% of British businesses export anything beyond our borders, despite hundreds of thousands having a product or service that is export

ready.

This unfulfilled national potential is not just affecting the businesses themselves, who forgo the additional profits and productivity that overseas trade unlocks, but also the national economy – the strength of which relies on our ability to trade overseas.

That is why my department was created: ensuring that Britain becomes a champion of global free trade – lowering barriers and raising prosperity wherever and whenever possible.

For the first time, the 3 pillars of trade – policy, promotion and finance are under one roof – so we can be more coordinated in our approach.

Our objectives are simple and clear.

We will promote UK companies abroad; we will attract inward investment into regions such as the Midlands, and promote our businesses across the world; and finally, we will build a strong trading framework for the UK outside the EU.

But what does this actually mean in practical support for the businesses here today.

It means DIT delivering 20 Midlands Engine trade missions by 2020.

Eighty Midlands companies and over 100 delegates have already participated in DIT-led trade missions across the globe, from the USA to the UAE to China.

We are encouraging companies from Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire to meet with buyers from Shanghai, New York, and Dubai.

We expect the business done at these trade missions to generate £5 million worth of deals over the next 12 months.

A simple face to face meeting with the right contacts can be a game-changer for SMEs.

Like packaging manufacturer B&G Products from Staffordshire, who landed their first export deal to the United States, worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, just 4 months after taking part in the first Midlands Engine trade mission.

Later you will hear from UK Export Finance's Chief Executive, Louis Taylor, who will explain how we are helping Midlands companies win, fulfil and get paid for their overseas contracts.

Last year, UKEF provided £19 million in support for nearly £200 million worth of export contracts for companies in the Midlands.

Businesses, as you know, run on cash flow; so we are making it easier.

We're also taking our export support online.

If you haven't already, please visit great.gov.uk – the government's new digital platform.

It should be every exporter's first port of call for information and my department's International Trade team will be on hand throughout the day to show you how to get the most from it.

Where else can you find nearly 1,500 live business leads for which you can apply today; or sell your products on the world's biggest online marketplaces like Amazon and Tmall at preferential rates; or have global buyers contact you direct to supply what they need?

It's all in one place; it's all digital; and quite frankly, I've seen nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Some of you may be thinking that it's all well and good politicians standing here and telling you about the benefits of exporting. They don't know what it's like running a business.

I'd be the first to agree that our best ambassadors and spokespeople are actually exporters themselves.

They know what it's like; they've felt the benefits; they have a story to tell.

Which is why I am delighted to announce today the launch of the [Midlands Engine Export Champions Programme](#).

Twenty eight experienced exporters based in the Midlands have agreed to serve as Export Champions and inspire others to either export for the first time or to export more.

They will promote the government's Exporting is GREAT campaign and raise the profile of the Midlands Engine in the UK and overseas.

Many of them are here today, ready to share their insights.

Investment

The second way to fulfil the potential of the Midlands is by continuing to attract investment into the region that creates jobs, introduces new technology and raises standards of living.

Last year alone, nearly 15,000 new jobs were created because of inward investment in the Midlands. And with the pull factors of the Midlands, it's easy to see why.

Investors will be dealing with a regional economy worth over £200 billion; they will be able to access 90% of businesses anywhere in the UK within 4 hours; and benefit from the talent and research fed by 25 universities.

I want these factors to be known worldwide.

That is why today, I am also launching the Midlands Engine Investment Hub.

Specialist staff will work with local partners to ensure investment projects

land effectively into this region.

They will work with our embassies and High Commissions to raise the profile of the Midlands overseas.

It is the only physical hub of its kind in the UK – and is currently hosting 12 global entrepreneurs from Eastern Europe who are looking to set up here.

Brexit

The final point I want to make is how businesses in the Midlands can thrive post Brexit.

I know Lord Bridges from the Department for Exiting the EU is leading a session later, so I will be brief.

There may be businesses in the audience who are currently exporting to mainland Europe.

In the short term, nothing changes. We are still EU members until the formal process of exiting is complete. During this time, goods and services will flow as usual.

The Prime Minister has been clear. When we leave, we will seek the greatest possible access to the single market so that British and EU firms can trade with as little friction as possible.

Brexit is not a rejection of European values, or the idea of the EU.

This country was built on those values and ideas; they form part of our own national identity.

We want the EU to succeed – it is in our national interest.

But if you look further afield, you will see opportunities beyond the borders of Europe too, which we can now look to seize.

90% of future global growth will be outside the EU.

We can strike trade agreements with global partners, who also happen to be some of the fastest growing economies.

Many of whom have already signalled strong interest in striking agreements with the UK.

The Midlands, as it so often has, is leading the way.

My department will ensure that the whole of the UK will be ready, willing and able to follow suit.

Conclusion

When it comes to Midlands, it is clear that with great potential comes great expectation.

If the Midlands matches its predicted growth over the next 15 years – it will create 300,000 jobs and inject £34 billion into the UK economy.

The Midlands Engine is how we go about meeting that expectation.

The great and innovative businesses of this region need only look to history to see how high the bar has been set.

Speaking as a local MP and a minister, I can assure you that both regionally and nationally, we are all backing you to succeed.

Thank you.

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Montenegro](#)

2015 – present FC0, Temporary duties in the Middle East & North Africa, Finance and Prosperity Directorates 2013 – 2015 Sana'a, Deputy Head of Mission 2013 Full time language training (Arabic) 2010 – 2012 FC0, Head of Policy Unit, National Security, Middle East, North Africa & South Asia 2008 – 2010 FC0, Deputy Director Estates & Sustainability, Estates and Security Department 2007 Kurdistan Region & Northern Iraq, Consul General 2006 – 2007 Liberia, Political Chargé 2004 – 2005 FC0, Near East Team Leader, Arab, Israel North Africa Group 2002 – 2004 FC0, Head of Political Team, Afghanistan Unit 1999 – 2002 Colombo, Second Secretary Political 1997 – 1998 FC0, Desk Officer Greece and Cyprus 1997 Joined FC0

[Press release: HS2 marks National Apprenticeship Week by launching its search for apprentices](#)

Work can now begin on Britain's new railway after the first phase of the route between the Midlands and London secured Royal Assent last month. High Speed Two (HS2) will create around 25,000 jobs during construction as well as 2,000 apprenticeships. It will also support growth in the wider economy,

worth an additional 100,000 jobs.

HS2 apprentices will develop skills in areas such as engineering and project management, while getting paid to play a part in building Europe's largest infrastructure scheme which will create more space on our congested railways for passengers and freight and improve connections between the biggest cities and regions.

The launch of the HS2 Ltd apprenticeship scheme comes as former apprentice and newly appointed CEO, Mark Thurston joins HS2 Ltd. As a former Transport for London apprentice, Mark is understandably a strong advocate of the apprenticeship scheme.

Commenting on HS2 Ltd's apprenticeship scheme, Mark said:

My own career path demonstrates that apprenticeships can lead to a rewarding career, and I'm delighted that HS2 is playing its part in creating a talent pool for the future. Our commitment to creating 2,000 apprenticeships across the project will play a key role in the development of a highly-skilled workforce in the high speed rail industry.

HS2's apprenticeship scheme marks a commitment by the company to bring new people into the business and create meaningful career opportunities that combine work experience with recognised qualifications.

The application process for the first 26 Level 3-4 vacancies opens today, with career opportunities in project planning, project management, project controls and procurement. Twenty of the posts will be based at HS2 Ltd's headquarters in Birmingham, with the remaining 6 positions based in London.

HS2 Ltd is keen to encourage a diverse range of candidates. The vacancies are open to everyone from school leavers to parents returning to work, or those looking for a new challenge. To qualify, candidates must hold 5 GCSEs, including English and Maths.

All successful candidates will start in post from September 2017.

HS2 is playing a key role in implementing the Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy, delivering 30,000 apprenticeships in roads and rail by 2020 and gender parity by 2030.

[**News story: British military chief**](#)

welcomes largest number of female Afghan officer graduates

Speaking today at a graduation ceremony for new Afghan officers at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Kabul, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger welcomed the increasing female participation in the Afghan security forces.

This year's class has the largest number of female graduates to date, with 23 officer cadets graduating today.

The ceremony took place the day after General Messenger, the MOD's Gender Champion, participated in International Women's Day events in Kabul, including meeting with British Council and Embassy staff who work closely with the Afghan Government and Civil Society to create a better future for women and girls, including increasing awareness of gender issues in Afghanistan's security institutions.

This work includes supporting efforts to make the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) a more attractive career choice for women, including improving accommodation arrangements for female ANAOA cadets. Training in the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is also provided to cadets as part of the Academy's programme.

Britain is also working to strengthen the role of women in the Afghan security forces through the training of future female leaders at ANAOA. The 23 graduates from the class of 2017 join the 57 female officers who have previously passed the intensive and sought after training. Today's ceremony also saw the Academy's total number of graduates going over 2000.

With Afghans in the lead for providing security throughout the country and training their next generation of future leaders, Britain is helping to 'mentor the mentors' at the ANAOA, where over 30 British personnel provide advice and assistance to Afghan trainers.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

Today's largest ever female graduate class demonstrates the progress the Afghan security forces are making in allowing women to help defend their country.

Britain's enduring commitment to Afghanistan means we're helping them in this task, as well as offering broader support to Afghanistan's security institutions.

UK assistance at ANAOA is an important part of NATO's non-combat Resolute Support Mission, which trains, advises and assists Afghan security forces, building their capacity to provide security for the country.

Britain recently increased the number of personnel in Afghanistan, with 500 people now providing advice to Afghan instructors, developing the fledgling Afghan Air Force, advising Afghan security institutions and providing security as part of the Kabul Security Force.

As part of the UK's long term commitment to Afghanistan, Britain has pledged over £200million to support the ANDSF.

As Her Majesty The Queen today [unveiled](#) a Memorial in London recognising the contributions of the UK Armed Forces and all UK citizens who deployed in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan from 1990-2015, General Messenger on his visit laid a wreath at the Graves of the Fallen in Kabul.

Speech: "What I couldn't have done was tell you their stories, the lives behind those numbers; the human cost of the fragile security situation."

As co-lead for the Council's visit to the Lake Chad Basin, I'd like to focus my remarks this morning on the security situation, and my colleagues, the other co-leads, will tackle the other two big themes of our visit, which is the humanitarian and the longer term and development root causes. But before I do so, I would like to thank, on behalf of all of us, the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, as well as the United Nations, for making this visit possible. And thank you to all Council members for making the most of the visit, and an ambitious programme, and for keeping up with it.

If I was talking to you about security in the Lake Chad Basin a week ago, I'd have spoken about statistics, the numbers, 20,000 people killed, 2.3 million currently displaced. What I couldn't have done was tell you their stories, the lives behind those numbers; the human cost of the fragile security situation.

Last Friday, in Maroua, in northern Cameroon, with my colleagues I saw that cost in the eyes of a 15 year old boy whose village had been attacked by Boko Haram. He hid for days, before being interrogated and imprisoned by the authorities for two years on suspicion of being a member of Boko Haram. Most of his friends had already been killed.

I saw that cost in the eyes of a woman crying with her baby in her arms. I saw it in others who spoke of the murder of their husbands or sons, the kidnapping of their daughters, the burning of their homes. We heard from civil society how women were selling their bodies for sex just to eat.

All these people brought home the horrifying consequences of the chaos and insecurity wrought by Boko Haram. And I hope that together we brought some much needed focus to the suffering that has been neglected for too long.

And amid the horror, we also heard of the bravery and commitment of the people of the region as they try to bring stability and security back to the Lake Chad Basin.

We heard chapters from a success story on its way to completion. Stories from the Multi-National Joint Task Force of liberating twenty thousand hostages, successfully winning back territory that will act as future homes for the people of the region. But the story is not over. Security is not yet entrenched. It is fragile in too many places. Force commanders and generals outlined continued attacks; suicide bombings, IEDs are still far too common.

And Boko Haram's tactics are getting more barbaric – mothers turned into suicide bombers with infants strapped to them in addition to their bombs. Boko Haram are down, but they're not out. And make no mistake, their cruelty knows no bounds.

It was clear that international support remains vital for this fight. We visited Operation Barkhane Headquarters in N'djamena where we met French troops, and were joined by members of the British and American military. Together they are supporting the Multi-National Joint Task Force, as well the Nigerian military, through capacity building, training and intelligence sharing. We heard how further support was needed to enable better mobility and logistics in the fight.

Women's participation and protection was a constant theme throughout the visit, and it was clear that women must be more involved in efforts to tackle Boko Haram, and counter violent extremism, and build peace.

We also heard of the hundreds of Boko Haram defectors, including women and children. We made clear the need for compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law by all actors in tackling the scourge of Boko Haram. This is essential to prevent mistreatment, including of detainees; as well as to build confidence among communities and counter radicalisation.

Let me close with this final reflection. Only yesterday, here in New York, I met three inspirational young women from Chibok who were attending an International Women's Day event at the United Nations.

Far from being victims, far from being survivors, these women are now campaigners for education for women and girls in poverty. Despite everything that they had endured, despite being caught up in the hell unleashed by Boko Haram, they are determined to look to the future.

They showed what lies ahead. They showed a future possible when the fighting ends.

To achieve this reality, it's clear that there can be no military solution: only a comprehensive approach will bring stability and peace. And so let me reiterate that the United Kingdom will proudly stand side by side with the

region, with the four governments that we visited, and with the affected people in this effort.

With that, let me now hand over to Fodé to focus on the root causes and longer term development.