

# Our special relationship must boost trade and remove barriers – First Minister's message ahead of United States visit

Ahead of the visit, the First Minister is calling on the special relationship to be a vehicle for removing barriers and boosting trade between Wales and the USA.

With more than 250 American owned companies based in Wales, the United States is one of Wales' most important trading partners and accounted for almost 40 percent of all our inward investment projects last year.

Over the next four days, the First Minister will meet with companies looking to invest and expand in Wales and will discuss trade and business links with political representatives.

As part of the response to Brexit, the Welsh Government will be strengthening its network of trade and investment offices across the US. The Welsh Government currently has offices in Washington, New York, San Francisco, Atlanta and Chicago.

The First Minister will also host a St David's Day reception on Capitol Hill for key political figures and investors, and a reception in New York geared towards promoting the Welsh tourist industry.

Speaking ahead of the visit, First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“For Wales, the special relationship is about building on the strong cultural and trade links that already exist between our two countries.

“Wales has long been a destination of choice for many American businesses and we want to welcome even more in the future.

Equally, Welsh businesses have been successful in selling to the United States across a range of sectors and I believe we can do even better in the future.

“In my discussions with American businesses, politicians and diplomats, I will be raising the importance of further developing free trade between our countries and the removal of barriers to make trade between us easier and quicker.

“We will also be committing additional resources to North America. We need a permanent presence in Canada, and a strengthened network here in the US. That is a priority for me over the next twelve months, as we restructure our activities overseas to take advantage

of new economic opportunities.”

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### Bus currency counters: Counting US\$2,900 daily

In Kunming, there is a group of female bus currency counters who wear blue uniforms and count tens of thousands of small bills and coins every day.

There are 4,000 buses receiving about US\$174,000 in cash daily, which means that each of the bus currency counters needs to count at least US\$2,180 in small bills and coins daily. Xiao Qiong, who has been working as a bus currency counter for 10 years, said the average daily counting amount is US\$2,900, and US\$3,633 at most.

The counting center of Kunming Bus Group is located in an ordinary building. All of the bus currency counters are female. They all wear blue uniforms and count the small bills and coins under the surveillance of more than 10 security cameras.

Xiao Qiong comes to the counting center at about 8 a.m. She needs to put on her blue uniform before entering the office. She has to stick her fingers with adhesive plaster because sometimes hard paper cuts her fingers.

It takes less than one minute for her to count more than 60 one-yuan banknotes. “The biggest trouble is folded banknotes, because it takes so much time to open the folded banknote,” said by Xiao Qiong.

These bus coin counters only rest half an hour at noon and they can only leave work after finishing the counting of the cash received from the previous day. Many of them suffer from occupational diseases, such as shoulder peri-arthritis, tendovaginitis and lumbar protrusion. According to Xiao Qiong, it is easier to get cramps in hands after coming back from holidays.

For final review, the bills and coins are handled automatically by machines. The machines can distinguish the money that can still be used from the money that should be destroyed automatically. Coins will be sent to an automatic coin sorter. The small bills and coins will be handed to People's Bank of China after final review by the bus counting center.

Sometimes, passengers may put their identification cards or other belongings into bus fare box by mistake. According to the head of the counting center, passengers can demand the bus team of the line to issue a certification and bring it to the counting center. The counting center can return the personal belonging to the passengers.

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## What is professionalism?

It is sometimes said there are only two professions, the law and medicine. By this people have meant that these two skills or arts require long study of the past corpus of knowledge, stiff professional exams, continuous professional development once qualified, and supervision by a professional regulatory body.

In practice today many other skills have come to be seen in the same light as these professions. Accountants, Investment experts, property specialists, opticians, architects, structural engineers and many others have a similar pattern to their lives. They too need to learn, pass exams and then accept some continuous professional training and supervision. You could widen the definition further to include gas heating engineers, plumbers and other important skilled trades where there is now a system of learning, exams, and regulatory expectations.

There is a general trend to add professions to the list under this definition, and to upgrade the level of qualifications people need to practice. Investment specialists now, for example, typically have a degree level qualification where a decade ago they may have held an A level equivalent, and thirty years ago may have been unqualified or have just passed the Stock Exchange exam.

There should, however, be something more to a profession than passing some exams and ticking boxes for the regulator as the individual seeks to keep up with any requirements for Continuous Professional development or regulatory checks on his or her actions. A true professional is someone who has genuine skill or knowledge that he or she takes pride in. They keep it up to date not because they have to but because it is part of being professional and doing the job well. A professional does not work a 9 to 5 day, but does the hours necessary to meet the demands of his patients or clients. If the person is employed they will be on a good salary and expected to work longer hours or at week-ends when needed. Military officers, for example, have to be available for duty as needed. Investment bankers pursuing deals may work all

week-end to see it through to time. A professional goes the extra distance, strives for continuous improvement, and upholds high standards of integrity and honesty. A bent lawyer or a dangerous doctor should be struck off.

Today there is a bit of reappraisal underway over these ideals or standards. At the same time as the Regulators and law makers trust the professionals less, there is a danger the professionals respond by being less professional in some ways. If the Regulator checks up on how much professional development someone undertakes, some so called professionals respond by gaming the Continuous Professional Development system. If the regulator sets minimum hours for such additional study there is the danger the minimum becomes the maximum. As the professional standards become more and more codified, so more and more professionals just implement the protocols or standards whether they are optimal or not, as it is the safe thing from the career point of view to do. It can cramp challenge and reform of the standards which may be needed for overall improvement. As the concept of work life balance becomes more entrenched, so more professionals want to go part time or limit their commitment to their discipline. How big a limit can you place on your profession before you are no longer sufficiently professional?

I would be interested in your thoughts. Do you think the tightening of requirements on professionals mean modern professionals are better than before these changes? Or are the professions becoming too bureaucratic, gripped by group think, to the detriment of their clients and patients?

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## **South Sudan: UN official calls for unfettered relief access to avert further catastrophe**

28 February 2017 – With hundreds of thousands in need of assistance in famine-struck parts of South Sudan and rising insecurity hampering relief work, a senior United Nations relief official in the country has called on all parties to ensure that humanitarians have immediate, safe and unhindered access across the nation.

“The people of South Sudan are suffering beyond measure. [The famine] represents only the most extreme tip of the iceberg of needs in this country,” said Eugene Owusu, the Humanitarian Coordinator in the country, in a news release issued by the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

On 20 February, famine was formally declared in parts of the country. A formal declaration means people have already started dying of hunger.

To avert further catastrophe, it is imperative that humanitarians are

able to act swiftly and robustly,&#8221 Mr. Owusu underlined.

The UN official's call follows a series of recent events which have hampered humanitarian operations and placed civilians at risk. For instance, during clashes in Jonglei state, humanitarian compounds were looted by armed actors and community members; and 28 humanitarian workers were forced to relocate from Mayendit County, one of the two counties hit by famine in Unity state, due to insecurity.

Aid workers were also denied access last week to key locations outside of Lainya town, in Central Equatoria, where tens of thousands of people in need have not been reached with aid in months.

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&#8220I implore all parties to this conflict to uphold their responsibilities under international humanitarian law, place the plight of the people first, give aid workers unfettered access, and protect civilians,&#8221 Mr. Owusu added.

&#8220Time is of the essence, and lives are in the balance, so it is critical that these words be translated into concrete actions on the ground immediately.&#8221

The news release also noted that President of South Sudan provided reassurances that all humanitarian organizations will have unimpeded access to needy populations across the country.

According to OCHA, insecurity and lack of access have complicated an already worrying situation: more than 100,000 people face starvation in the famine-declared parts of the country, and a further one million are on the brink of famine. There are also fears that by the height of the lean season in July, some 5.5 million people could face severe food insecurity across the country.

Additionally, since December 2013, about 3.4 million people have been displaced, including about 1.5 million who fled as refugees to neighbouring countries.

Against this backdrop, humanitarian organizations have appealed urgent funds to respond to the escalating crisis, with \$1.6 billion required to provide life-saving assistance and protection to some 5.8 million people across South Sudan in 2017.