

Speech: Modernising the UK's airspace

Introduction

Good evening.

It's a pleasure to join you for tonight's dinner.

It's also a welcome opportunity for me to talk a little about the progress we've made on aviation during my first 6 months as Transport Secretary.

As many of you will know, this is a job that I've always wanted to do.

In my first 6 months I've already had the pleasure of meeting many people in this room, in what's been a very exciting time for aviation.

One of my first acts as Secretary of State was to make a long awaited big decision: giving [London City Airport the opportunity to expand](#).

And this is a government prepared to make other big decisions – including the location on aviation expansion in the south east, recommending a [third runway at Heathrow](#).

More on that later.

Brexit

Because I'd like to start by saying a few words about Brexit.

I understand that you are keen to hear exactly what Brexit will entail for the airline industry.

My priority right now is to secure the right deal for airlines following negotiations with the rest of the EU.

At the same time, I will be working alongside the Prime Minister and my colleagues in the Cabinet to provide as much clarity as possible, as early as possible.

It was in that spirit that Theresa May used her [speech last week](#) to make clear our intention to have an open trading relationship with the EU when we leave.

We will be pushing for a new, comprehensive, free trade agreement, giving us the best possible access to the single market.

We also want the best possible access to European aviation markets.

We believe it is in the EU's interests to seek a liberal arrangement for aviation.

So that airlines can offer connectivity.

And passengers have choice.

Of course, the ultimate outcome for airlines – as for all areas of the economy – will have to await the conclusion of negotiations.

Yet as discussions with the EU proceed, I am confident that we will get what we need.

The fact remains that other countries want to do business with us.

That's why among the major developed nations we have the world's best performing economy.

And those nations want to do business with British airlines too.

Far from the gloomy forecasts that some economic commentators made in the summer, Britain ended last year as the strongest of the world's advanced economies.

Growth didn't just remain steady in the 6 months after the Brexit vote.

It accelerated.

Business activity hit a 17 month high in December.

Showing that confidence in our economy remains undiminished.

That's because the June vote wasn't just a vote to leave the European Union.

It was also a positive expression of our desire as a country to raise our ambitions and look beyond the EU.

To strengthen our position as a global country.

With the global connections and gateways to make that possible.

And that is why we will also look to replace or amend our EU agreements with countries such as the US and Canada.

Aviation industry strength

In this all, the starting position of the aviation industry is one of great strength.

We already have the largest aviation network in Europe.

Direct services to over 370 destinations abroad.

Last year, BA added new routes to San Jose, Lima, Costa Rica, Santiago and Tehran.

Tui added new routes to Colombo in Sri Lanka, and Keflavik in Iceland.

And demand for flights continues to grow.

2015 was a record years for passengers.

And though we're awaiting the final figures, the signs are that 2016 will break that record once more.

These passengers rely on an airline industry that is so often an exemplar of customer service.

Especially in the face of global events outside our control.

Last week the Foreign Office issued an alert about developments in the Gambia.

Within 72 hours, Thomas Cook had repatriated thousands of British holiday-makers – acting rapidly to do whatever was necessary to secure their safe return home.

With customer service like that, it's no surprise that the aviation industry is confident about the future.

Over the next 20 years, the industry estimates a doubling of the world's aircraft fleet.

That's another 33,000 aircraft – quieter, cleaner, more efficient aircraft that can actually deliver a fall in carbon emissions.

In the summer, Virgin Atlantic made an early contribution toward that global fleet of new aircraft.

With a multi-billion pound order for 12 Airbus A350-1000 planes, powered by cleaner, quieter Rolls Royce engines.

And as the world increasingly embraces aviation in the coming decades, in return, aviation will increasingly drive the globalisation of trade and commerce.

Few other industries can predict future demand with such certainty.

So what we have to do – together – is make sure our aviation industry is ready to play its part in that growth.

A modern industry with 21st century systems and technologies.

An industry with the capacity to grow in a sustainable and responsible way.

An industry that provides British business with a foothold in emerging markets – as well as maintaining links to established markets.

These are our challenges for the future.

So we can prosper in a post-Brexit world.

Heathrow

That's why in October we gave our backing to a [third runway at Heathrow](#).

It shows that we are open for business, confident about who we are as a country, and ready to trade with the rest of the globe.

An expanded Heathrow will make possible an extra 260,000 aircraft movements a year.

Or 16 million additional long-haul seats by 2040.

And it will allow us to compete against European hubs such as Amsterdam, Paris and Frankfurt.

So we want to get the runway built as fast as possible.

And it will be subject to public consultation very soon.

We expect the National Policy Statement to pass through Parliament and be designated next winter.

Of course, the third runway at Heathrow is not just great news for Heathrow, but also for the rest of UK aviation.

Which is why most regional airports and airlines supported the decision.

But we've said that the runway must be delivered without hitting passengers in the pocket.

The Airports Commission is clear that this is achievable, as is the [Civil Aviation Authority](#).

We're not interested in expansion at any cost, but expansion at the right price.

So I expect the industry to work together to drive down costs for the benefit of passengers.

And the CAA is ready to ensure that new capacity fosters competition, keeping landing charges close to current levels.

I have full confidence in their ability to do so.

And at the same time, I expect the industry to commit to a world-class package of environmental and community mitigation measures for those living near the airport.

After all, a third runway will be an investment in our country's future.

It will deliver major economic and strategic benefits to the UK.

New aviation strategy

Yet we're not going to focus on a third runway at the expense of all the other challenges and opportunities facing the industry.

We are currently working on our new Aviation Strategy.

It's a long-term framework covering airports, safety, security, competitiveness, consumers, regulation and capacity.

We're focusing on issues where government can make a difference.

Where we can support the industry.

And we'll stay clear of issues where we can't.

It's part of our plan to build on the momentum of the Heathrow decision – so the whole of Britain can benefit from new aviation capacity.

Airspace

And as the industry grows in the years ahead, we must make the best use of the assets available to us.

As airlines often point out, our airspace is one such asset: a critical piece of national infrastructure.

But like much of the rest of our infrastructure, it is increasingly congested and modernisation is overdue.

While modern aircraft are fitted with the latest satellite navigation technology, most of our airspace arrangements are half a century old.

I know how frustrated you and your passengers are by the delays this causes.

And I recognise the damage it does to your businesses.

Without action, flight delays will increase enormously in the next few years.

This wouldn't just be damaging for passengers, but also for the economy and the environment.

That is why I am determined to address this challenge.

We will shortly be launching a consultation on measures to support airspace modernisation.

These measures will provide for the use of modern technology.

To reduce delays, cut noise for local communities, and lower carbon emissions

And speaking of carbon, last week I was pleased to see the release of your strategy, [‘Responding To The Carbon Challenge’](#).

It's an important statement of all the industry is doing on carbon reduction. And an indicator of the complex challenges created by the pace of change.

Conclusion

So together we have a lot of work to do.

Yes, we're facing a time of adjustment and challenge.

But we're also facing a time of extraordinary potential for this industry.

A chance for aviation to help make Brexit the success I know it will be, delivering the services and connections that will define our future outside the European Union.

I look forward to working with you to make that happen.

Thank you.

[Enhancing regional partnerships among top priorities for UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2017](#)

25 January 2017 – Strengthening the United Nation's partnerships with the African Union, empowering women and youth, and greater cooperation with the World Bank will be among the key priorities this year for the UN Peacebuilding Commission, its new chair today said.

Outlining the intergovernmental advisory board's objectives, Cho Tae-yul, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the UN, told journalists in New York that he is "very much encouraged" by the enthusiasm among Member States for great international cooperation which "bodes very well for the Peacebuilding Commission."

He detailed a number of priorities, including building on progress achieved in strengthening partnerships with regional and sub-regional groups.

"They are better poised to understand the root causes," Mr. Cho said, adding that he is personally in support of stronger regional cooperation, particularly in Africa, where all six of the countries currently on the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) agenda are located. Those countries are: Burundi; Sierra Leone; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Liberia; and Central African Republic.

In addition to country-specific work, the Commission also works thematically, on issues such as institution building, and enhancing the participation of women and youth.

The PBC will also this year continue to work on becoming a “more transparent, accountable and flexible body” through the use of new working methods. A number of new improvements were introduced just this morning, Mr. Cho said.

Created in 2005, the PBC supports a country through all stages of a conflict, including post-conflict recovery and socio-economic development. It sits between the UN Security Council, whose 15 members are primarily tasked with maintaining peace and security in the world; the General Assembly, whose membership includes all 193 Member States; and the Economic and Social Council, or ECOSOC, which works with the 14 specialized UN agencies.

It works closely with regional bodies such as the African Union, European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and representatives from the countries who are the top financial and troop contributors to the UN, as well as from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Increased financial support for the Peacebuilding Fund, which has allocated \$623 million since its creation at the end of 2015, is also a key priority for the year. Mr. Cho said that he has “started preliminary dialogue” with the World Bank to see how to secure the targeted annual figure of \$100 million.

He is also working to “enhance the Fund through strategic partnerships” with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners.

The *UN News Centre* highlighted the work of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund in a feature series this past August. Travel with us to Mali to see how the Fund is helping communities come back together after war.

[UN, NYC Mayor's office team up to promote Global Goals' mental health targets](#)

25 January 2017 – Addressing an event on mental health, a special advisor to the President of the United Nations General Assembly today stressed the importance of mental health for all actions to be taken to achieve sustainable development goals.

“All actions start with good health,” Dessima Williams, Special Adviser on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, told an event titled ‘Mental Health for All: Local Strategies,’ organized by the New York City

Mayor's Office for International Affairs and its cosponsors, including the World Health Organization (WHO).

She said that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by UN Member States in September 2015, are all interlinked, and noted that Goal 3 addresses mental health.

"We all know that the SDGs are indivisible," she continued, explaining that, for example, education has an impact on skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, and in this way can help change production and consumption behaviours and patterns.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly, she said, is raising awareness of all the SDGs.

She noted that Assembly President Peter Thomson had sent a letter to all Heads of Government, urging them to support teaching about the SDGs. The Office was represented at the World Innovation Summit for Health, held in Doha, Qatar, last year, and which featured some 1,400 health professionals examining a report on healthy populations.



Dessima Williams, Special Adviser on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, addresses at UN Headquarters an event titled 'Mental Health for All: Local Strategies.' UN Photo/Evan Schneider

The Office is also raising the awareness of the need for universal healthcare and universal health care coverage by setting aside 12 December to mark the Universal Healthcare Coverage Day.

While applauding New York City's local initiative on mental health, Ms. Dessima stressed the worldwide need to end the stigma surrounding mental health and to convey the importance of early attention for good mental health "as a good in itself and as a conduit to a life worth living."

Also addressing the event were Chirlane McCray, First Lady of New York City, Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations, and Richard Buery, Deputy Mayor of New York City for Strategic Policy Initiatives.

The event also included a panel discussion on NYC's initiative, "ThriveNYC: Local roadmap to mental health."

[Press release: Department for](#)

International Trade Director of Communications Appointment

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Toby Orr is appointed as new Director of Communications for DIT.

As part of the department's ongoing drive to build capability across all corporate areas, Toby Orr has been appointed as the Director of Communications at the Department for International Trade. This follows an external open competition for the role.

Toby Orr brings with him extensive experience of delivering communications strategies and programmes across the world. He joins the department from Portland, where he established the company's international team and led numerous high-profile global campaigns. He will take up the role in April 2017.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

Toby brings a wealth of experience in developing and implementing communication strategies in a global environment. As Director of Communications, he and his team will deliver a key corporate function for the Department for International Trade, communicating the department's priorities to our target audiences at home and abroad.

Toby Orr said:

It is an honour to be joining the department at such an important time, working to devise and deliver an ambitious communications strategy to advance the UK's trade agenda and promote Global Britain. I look forward to working closely with colleagues across the department and Whitehall on this exciting mandate.

Somalia: UN mission condemns Al-Shabaab attack on popular Mogadishu hotel

25 January 2017 – The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has condemned the coordinated suicide bombing attack earlier today at a hotel in Mogadishu for which Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility and which reportedly killed dozens of people.

According to the United Nations, the attack, on the Dayah Hotel (known locally as the Dayax), reportedly killed dozens of Somali civilians and soldiers, while wounding many more. The hotel is located near the Presidential palace and is frequently visited by lawmakers in the capital.

In an interview with *UN News*, Joseph Contreras, the spokesperson for the Mission, said the attack provides fresh evidence of the violent extremists' desperate attempts to derail Somalia's electoral process. Moreover it reflects the terrorists' frustration over their inability to sabotage the recent voting for seats in the two Houses of Somalia's new Parliament.

As for the scene on the ground, he pointed out that first responders arrived at the hotel targeted by the attack "quite quickly and brought the situation under control."

"The latest figures that we have been seeing range from between 15 and 20 dead, some of whom were the attackers themselves, some of them Somali soldiers," Mr. Contreras said, adding that perhaps about half of were civilians and among the dozens of injured were at least 5 journalists. He was not aware if any lawmakers were visiting the hotel.