

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Amman: speech by Ambassador

أهلاً وسهلاً! مرحباً بكم، نيابة عني، ونيابة عن عائلتي وفريق السفارة بأكمله، في هذا الاحتفال بعيد ميلاد جلالة الملكة إليزابيث الثانية. إنه لمن دواعي سروري البالغ، بعد عامين تأثرت فيهما حياتنا بكوفيد، أن أراكم جميعاً شخصياً، ولا يوجد سبب أفضل للاجتماع من الاحتفال بالإنجاز الرائع الذي حققته جلالة الملكة على العرش لمدة سبعين عاماً.

Welcome, on behalf of myself, my family and the whole British Embassy team, to this celebration of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's birthday.

This is a particularly remarkable year as Her Majesty has become the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

Embodying the values of duty and public service, Her Majesty has been an inspiring and reassuring figurehead during times of enormous social transformation.

As His Majesty King Abdullah kindly said in his beautiful tribute to The Queen, she has dedicated her life to serving the monarchy and the people, setting the highest standards of public service.

And I would echo the words of another British national treasure, Paddington Bear when he had tea with Her Majesty at the Palace last week. He spoke for all of us when he said simply "thank you, ma'am, for everything".

As a diplomat, with over a quarter century serving Her Majesty and the UK, I look up to The Queen as our country's foremost international representative through seven decades. No one has done more to strengthen the bonds of friendship, understanding and respect between the UK and the rest of the world. And I'm proud to have been chosen to be her first female representative to the Hashemite Kingdom.

Her extraordinary reign has seen her undertake over 260 official visits overseas, including nearly 100 state visits.

One of those state visits, of course, was to Jordan back in 1984. The pictures of Her Majesty exploring the ruins of Petra and being greeted by HM King Hussein in ceremonial military uniform have become iconic images of the ties between our royal families.

His Majesty King Abdullah took up the mantle with a first visit to the UK soon after becoming King in 1999, and has nurtured the relationship ever since.

Those ties have been much in evidence over the last year. His Majesty King

Abdullah visited London last October to meet our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall visited Jordan in November.

Those visits were characterised not only by the rich history we share with Jordan, but by all the work we are doing on both sides to further develop our thriving, modern partnership.

2021 was a year of leadership for the UK, as we led the G7 and hosted COP26. His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales focused during his visit on the challenge of climate change, which requires the sustained engagement of all countries. We welcomed Jordan's announcement at COP26 in Glasgow of a considerably improved national commitment to reduce emissions.

Also in the past year we held our inaugural Association Council to take forward implementation of our new post-Brexit trade agreement. This aims to stimulate trade and remove barriers for business in the interests of both our outward-facing, trading economies. Indeed, there is excellent scope for us to support Jordan's new economic vision outlined earlier this week by his Majesty King Abdullah.

British companies and British technology are involved in some of Jordan's most advanced projects, from the use of solar power in industrial desalination; to supporting Jordan's cyber security defences; to partnership between leading teaching hospitals.

I'm delighted to say, just this week, University College London signed an agreement with the Saudi-Jordan Investment Fund to become the academic partner in a significant new health project, worth \$400 million in total, which will create 5000 new jobs and bring world-class UK healthcare expertise to Jordan.

That announcement was part of our first trade mission to Jordan in over two years. I am sure you all share my relief as we begin to turn the page on the COVID-19 pandemic. Doors are reopening to our cooperation in all fields.

We welcomed this year over 2000 Jordanian students to study face-to-face in the UK, taking advantage of our world-leading academic offer. Among them were a special few benefitting from our Chevening scholarships – and we look forward to welcoming back these talented Jordanians who, I am sure, will be future leaders in this bilateral relationship.

Jordan's young people are the future both of Jordan and of this relationship. The Chief Executive of our cultural institute the British Council visited Jordan this week and saw how the Council is offering English language tuition, British school exams, professional development workshops, arts and cultural exposure to almost 50,000 young Jordanians every year, helping them develop the skills and confidence they need to thrive in this interconnected 21st century we live in and to build Jordan's productive economy for the future.

Our cooperation with Jordan's fine military and security institutions is

still the backbone of our relationship and I am hugely grateful to all of those in uniform serving both our countries, working every day – and working in genuine partnership – to keep us all safe. Indeed, we mourn with you the recent loss of three service personnel, to whose family we extend our condolences.

A great positive is that our military cooperation is becoming more inclusive. Together with others in the international community, we are increasingly supporting the participation of women in both the Jordanian military and police. The female officers are amongst some of the most dedicated and professional Jordanians I have met.

It is vital that we continue to work together to ensure women are well represented across Jordan's political, security, economic and business institutions. Experience and evidence teaches us that more diverse and inclusive participation in decision-making and delivery produces better outcomes for citizens, including greater security and prosperity.

In closing, I want to underline the UK's commitment to Jordan for the long term. As we grapple with the tragic and globally destabilising consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we are reminded that future security and prosperity depend on our ability to build a network of strong partnerships, and to support each other when in need.

I am proud that the UK works in partnership with Jordan to help meet the needs of its vulnerable populations, deliver the economic reform which will underpin its stability, and to meet the costs of providing safe haven to refugees.

During COVID the UK provided emergency social protection support to 293,000 economically vulnerable households who lost their jobs and livelihoods in the informal sector. And UK funding has this year ensured that 190,000 Syrian and other refugees have had access to quality, inclusive education. We recognise the weight of hosting a large number of refugees and continue to provide cash transfers for up to 71,000 refugees and protection for the most vulnerable.

Our partners are key and in that spirit I would like to thank most sincerely all of our sponsors whose kind support has made this evening possible. You can see them all on the screen behind me. I would also like to thank the wonderful band kindly loaned to us for the evening by the Jordanian Armed Forces.

I would like to thank all of my team at the Embassy and at the Residence for their work to make this evening possible and for all their hard work throughout the year. And I would like to thank my family for all their support.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for everything you do to contribute personally to the relationship between the UK and Jordan for the benefit of our people. For all the strength of our institutional ties, they would be nothing without the individual contributions you all make of all kinds.

شكراً لكم جميعاً لدعمكم ودوركم في نجاح الشراكة بين بريطانيا والأردن.

Do, please raise your glasses, to a great British-Jordanian partnership, to His Majesty King Abdullah II, and, on her Platinum Jubilee, to Her Majesty The Queen. To The Queen!