

# The Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP gives speech at British High Commission in New Zealand

Tēnā koutou katoa. It is wonderful to be here in New Zealand.

I've spent the last week meeting people across Australia, Vanuatu and New Zealand, experiencing the incredible hospitality of the Pacific family. It's been great to see first-hand how we're working together on shared challenges and opportunities. And I've enjoyed meeting so many people, from Ministers to scientists, businesspeople and people of the land.

Although we are half a world away from my home in Cannock Chase in the English Midlands, you might be interested to hear that my local area has a very meaningful link to New Zealand. As some of you may know, there was a large military base called Brocton camp at Cannock Chase during the First World War. It became a training centre for the New Zealand Rifle Brigade in 1917, getting soldiers ready for the horrors of battle on the Western Front. There's an Anzac Day service there every year to honour those brave troops, and it's my great privilege to attend it as the local Member of Parliament.

Those New Zealanders fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the British to defend the freedom, democracy and human rights that our nations cherish. Those shared values, and the friendship between our countries, remain just as strong today. But today, once again, democracy is under attack. Autocrats and despots are trying to undermine the values that guide our way of life. And a trio of challenges – pandemic, conflict and climate change – are destroying lives and livelihoods.

These challenges can only be addressed by countries working together. So the hand of friendship stretching across the oceans between our nations is as important today as it has ever been. I'd like to reflect on just a few aspects.

Firstly, tackling climate change and biodiversity loss is a top priority for the United Kingdom and New Zealand. We have both pledged to reach net zero by 2050. We both demonstrated our leadership and ambition at COP26. And we stand united in our commitments to deliver on the Glasgow Pact and keep 1.5 alive.

Along with mitigation efforts and net zero commitments, we know that adaptation finance is crucial to help people cope with the impacts of climate change. That's why the UK has committed more than £11 billion over five years to support developing countries. And I look forward to seeing New Zealand's new climate finance strategy published soon, following your \$1.3bn commitment.

I heard first-hand in Vanuatu about the impacts of climate change in the Pacific, and the importance of supporting Pacific Island Countries to build

resilience. The UK is helping Pacific nations and others to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty through our £500m Blue Planet Fund.

At COP 26, we announced £274 million for a new 'Climate Action for a Resilient Asia' programme across the Indo-Pacific. This will support up to 14 million people to adapt to global warming. We also pledged £40 million to help Small Island Developing States become more resilient, including in the Pacific.

The UK and New Zealand are working with partners to ensure those States can access climate finance, and that Pacific Island voices are heard. This includes collaborating with Fiji to address concerns raised through the Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance.

The UK and New Zealand are also united in our desire to boost the resilience of the Indo-Pacific region. This is a key focus of British foreign policy, on climate but also on trade, security, science and more.

Together with New Zealand, we will work ever-more closely to support security and stability in the region, co-operating with our partners, including the Pacific Islands Forum. Our countries took a hugely positive step in June when we launched Partners in the Blue Pacific along with the United States, Japan and Australia. We also have a clear interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Along with our G7 partners, the UK expressed concerns over recent threatening actions by China – in particular, live-fire exercises and economic coercion. These risk unnecessary escalation. We do not support any unilateral attempts to change the status quo, and we call on China to resolve cross-Strait differences by peaceful means.

Meanwhile the historic 'Research, Science and Innovation Arrangement' that our prime ministers signed last month will strengthen collaboration between the UK and New Zealand. Together, we will share expertise and develop new technologies – including in the fields of agriculture and climate-change.

The UK will welcome some of New Zealand's most advanced agritech companies to our shores next month, to build new links. Some of our own leading firms will head here on a similar mission in November. This is just the first of many exchanges that, I am sure, will lead to some fantastic new initiatives.

On trade, the UK is glad of New Zealand's support as we seek to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. This is a brilliant opportunity to deepen our access to the massive consumer markets of the Asia-Pacific region. And it's a fantastic way to boost prosperity here, and at home, as we all seek to bounce back from the pandemic.

We are also looking forward to our free trade agreement entering into force and watching our trade with New Zealand soar. But this is about so much more than business opportunities. It's about the participation of indigenous people and women in trade. And it's about a greener deal; bolstering

commitments to the Paris agreement and Net Zero, while encouraging investment in low-carbon tech.

Just as importantly, our countries are equally committed to promoting and protecting the international rule of law through the trading system. Together, we will support a global system that's free from aggression and economic coercion, where the sovereignty of nations is protected, regardless of their size.

On that note, I cannot end without talking about Putin's unprovoked, illegal war in Ukraine. He's thrown the international rules out of the window, shattered global stability and stamped on the principle of territorial sovereignty. The United Kingdom and New Zealand continue to stand with Ukraine. We must ensure that Putin loses, and that Russian aggression is never again allowed to shatter peace, freedom and democracy in Europe.

So we will carry on co-ordinating on sanctions to raise the costs for Russia – targeting its economy as well as its elites to cripple Putin's war machine. And we will stand firm in our security and defence collaboration.

Our Five Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement is a key part of this, to promote and defend our interests in cyber space, quantum computing, artificial intelligence and more.

Early this year, UK and New Zealand defence forces worked together to assist Tonga following the volcanic eruption.

In May, New Zealand deployed military personnel to the UK, to train Ukrainian soldiers to help defend their country. And I welcome yesterday's announcement that this support will be extended, with additional New Zealand teams deploying over to the UK. And that brings me back to where I started – with New Zealand troops on British soil, standing up for freedom, democracy and sovereignty.

More than a hundred years have passed since those New Zealand boots trod the paths of Cannock Chase, but our countries still stand together, just as we did then. Yes, we face a great many challenges. But there is also a great deal to be hopeful about, as we look to the future.

I can't wait to see what we achieve together.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.