

Sajid Javid speech to Conservative Party Conference 2018

Sajid Javid MP, Home Secretary, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

“Thank you conference for that welcome.

It’s a huge privilege to be standing here as Home Secretary.

Now I know the question on your mind.

So let’s just deal with it upfront.

Yes, I did watch Bodyguard.

No, it wasn’t very realistic...

For a start, my codename is not Lavender...

And she didn’t even do the power stance!

But let me tell you about another story.

A story which started in the 1960’s.

Abdul-Ghani Javid left Pakistan and landed in Heathrow.

He spent what little he had on a coach ticket...

had his first night here in Birmingham,

then continued up north to Lancashire to find work in a cotton mill.

After standing outside the mill for weeks, he got that first job, and started a family.

Eventually, there were seven of us living in a two-bedroom flat...

on what the papers called “Britain’s most dangerous street”.

That’s my story.

And if you’d have told me back then what I’d be doing now...

...I’d have told you that it was less believable than any TV drama.

That makes me proud not just for myself and my family – but for my country.

So, what does the Conservative party offer a working class son-of-an-

immigrant kid from Rochdale?

You made him Home Secretary.

This new challenge is one that I am giving absolutely everything to.

So I'm especially grateful to have one of the best ministerial teams.

We've got Caroline Nokes, Ben Wallace, Nick Hurd, Victoria Atkins, and Susan Williams.

Backed up by our parliamentary team Simon Hoare, Rachel Maclean, Paul Masterton, Paul Maynard, and Zahida Manzoor.

So thank you to my whole team at the Home Office.

There is something profound about that word 'home'.

Most of my counterparts around the world run 'Ministries of the Interior'.

Interior ministry – it has a cold, brittle feel to it.

Home – is where you feel safe, comfortable and in control.

It reflects your identity and your values.

And it is your base for going out into the wider world.

That's exactly the kind of place we want the UK to be.

Here's the pledge of this Party:

Britain, a home for all its citizens.

Together, we will build a stronger home.

Beyond Britain, outside our home...

the winds of division and extremism are blowing strong.

All over the world,

we see the appeal being made to intolerance,

to closed societies,

to aggressive nationalism,

to autocracy.

Well not here.

Not in Conservative Britain.

It might not always feel like it, but our mainstream cultural values unite us

all.

We are – and will continue to be –
the home of the rule of law,
of civil liberties,
of firm but fair immigration rules,
of racial equality,
of respect for every citizen.

We will fight fear with optimism,
prejudice with tolerance,
hate with hope.

That's our Conservatism.

We choose the path of Modern Britain.

Tolerant Britain.

Global Britain.

That is the opportunity and challenge that leaving the European Union represents.

And to meet our best potential, we need to bring the country together.

The worst way to do that, would be to backtrack on the referendum result.

If Brexit feels like a dividing line in our country now...

just imagine what it would feel like if we didn't follow-through with the result of the referendum.

There's something very 'Liberal Democrat' about saying...

"That referendum was a total nightmare, let's have another one!"

We all agreed to honour the result.

So let's get on with it.

No second-guessing.

No best-of-three.

One vote...

one mandate...

one nation moving forwards together.

This is the time to reaffirm our identity and values as a country.

To renew our sense of citizenship – what it means, who is part of it.

And to do whatever we can to protect our society and its values in the years to come.

So I want to talk today about how we keep our home safe...

How we should and will continue to welcome people into our home...

And how we will make sure that our rules and values are upheld, for the good of everyone.

We are going to get these things right.

We are going to heal those divisions.

And we will build that stronger home.

The first duty of government is keeping our nation and our people safe.

Security underpins our liberty and our prosperity.

Last year, we experienced five terror attacks on British soil.

This year, we've seen a brazen attack in Salisbury by a hostile state.

For every successful attempt that makes the news, many other plots are disrupted.

Many cyberattacks neutralised.

Many journeys to radicalisation cut short.

I've been deeply impressed by the smart, committed people who spend their careers protecting us.

And I want to pay tribute to both Amber Rudd and the Prime Minister.

What dedication, firmness and integrity they brought to this role.

They deserve our profound thanks.

But I'd like to add something else.

Something that's a little uncomfortable, but it needs to be said.

Not all threats come from outside.

Anything that undermines our response to threats is a threat itself.

Imagine having someone in no.10 who has voted against vital counter-terrorism

legislation.

Someone who refuses to condemn the Kremlin over an attack on our soil.

Someone who seriously suggested sending a nerve agent sample to Vladimir Putin, to see if the Russians could tell us what it was.

Who compared the actions of the US military, our closest ally, to Daesh.

Who voted against banning Al Qaeda.

This is the truth. These are the facts.

And on these facts alone:

Jeremy Corbyn is a threat to our national security.

And let me tell you something else, this isn't a party political point.

Because a vast number of Labour MPs know this is right.

If Mr Corbyn were ever to be prime minister this behaviour wouldn't just be naïve,

it wouldn't just be misguided, it would be downright dangerous.

And it is our duty to stop him.

Keeping our liberal, tolerant democracy safe is about more than national security.

Threats to our law-abiding society are evolving quickly.

We must evolve with them and step-up our response.

Online there are new threats to cyber security and keeping our children safe.

I won't flinch in responding to these challenges.

That includes standing up to the tech giants and demanding that they take their responsibility seriously.

And they should be in no doubt: we will legislate.

How we legislate will be influenced by the actions they choose to take now.

Offline, the scandal of child grooming gangs is one of the most shocking state failures that I can remember.

I will not let cultural or political sensitivities get in the way of understanding the problem and doing something about it.

It is a statement of fact – a fact which both saddens and angers me – that most of the men in recent high profile gang convictions have had Pakistani heritage.

This behaviour is a disgrace to that heritage.

So I've instructed my officials to look into this unflinchingly.

And where the evidence suggests that there are certain cultural factors driving this...

I will not hesitate to act.

Just as there is damage in insensitive words or actions...

these cases have shown the cost of being over-sensitive.

As well as the awful cost to victims, if problems like this are left unchecked, they will also give fuel to those who want to stoke division between our communities.

This is how the seeds of destructive populism are sown.

I'm in a position to deal with this confidently – and I will.

Those who break the law undermine the foundations of our home.

That's why Conservatives will always be the party of law and order.

I know that some people are starting to feel a sense that law enforcement is becoming too detached from day-to-day crime...

... too distant from rural areas.

Faced with increasing demands and finite resources, our police forces do a fantastic job ...

... and I will always support them.

The rise in serious violence in London and our cities is especially worrying.

There's no time for sitting around when young people are dying on our streets.

We need to bring everything – and everyone – to bear on this.

Through our Serious Violence Strategy we have already brought together all the key parts of government, law enforcement and society.

And now we will do more.

We will take steps to introduce a statutory duty for all agencies to tackle this problem together.

That means those in health, education, social services, local government, housing – the whole lot.

I'm also pleased to announce today a new £200 million endowment fund, that

will target young people at risk of starting a life of crime and violence.

We know that one of the causes of the rise of serious violence is changes in the market for illegal drugs.

We need a much better understanding of who drug users are, what they take, how often they take it, and so much more.

So I will launch a major review of the market for illegal drugs.

Armed with this evidence, I will step up our fight against drugs gangs that prey on our children.

On my watch, illegal drug use will never be tolerated.

It is fundamental to our sense of security that the homes and streets we live in feel safe.

I do have a confession to make, though.

It's a confession I had to tell the Police Federation.

When I was younger, I was in a gang.

A gang of two.

It involved me and my brother Bas.

I was eleven, he was nine.

We called ourselves The Crime Busters.

Our mission: to find crime and stop it.

Our equipment: two knackered old bikes, and two cheapo walkie-talkies.

Years later, my little brother is still a crime buster – only this time, for real.

He's a Chief Superintendent – right here, in the West Midlands.

I am so so proud of him.

And I know we are all grateful to West Midlands police, and to supporting forces, for keeping us safe here at conference.

So you can believe me when I say:

I will be the champion of giving police the tools and protection they need to do their job.

We must trust our police to do that job.

They are the enforcers of our rules.

If those rules break down then so does a sense of fairness, mutual trust, and security.

It doesn't matter who you are, how old you are, or where you are from.

In Britain everybody plays by the same rules.

Because we all share the same home.

Sometimes you have to be tough in enforcing shared rules.

But being strong and safe doesn't have to mean being closed and unwelcoming.

We are so lucky to live in an open, welcoming society.

I'm proud of the welcome we give to people from other countries...

And the openness to the world that has helped us to thrive.

If you look at some countries across Europe, populist, nationalist – even outright racist – parties have won significant numbers of seats.

Not here.

We see people from diverse backgrounds succeeding in all walks of life, and at all levels.

This progress is happening in our politics too.

That requires role models and pioneers.

People on all sides.

Including people we wouldn't normally praise in our Party conference.

People like Diane Abbott.

Yes, Diane Abbott.

We might disagree with the Shadow Home Secretary on almost all her policies.

But it takes guts and determination to become the first black woman to be elected to the House of Commons.

And we should pay tribute to that.

As Conservatives:

we focus not on where you're from, but on where you can go.

We believe in opportunity for all.

We believe in respect for all.

And I mean all.

Every individual and every community must feel safe to live their lives in our society.

But at this moment that is not true.

That's something I never expected to say in 21st century Britain.

It is deeply shocking to see an entire community – our Jewish community – united in their fears and concerns about a major political party.

And to see that party – especially its leader – repeatedly failing to respond to those concerns with the seriousness that's required.

This party will root out antisemitism wherever and whenever we find it. Anti-Muslim prejudice is also completely unacceptable.

It is a prejudice that is sometimes turning into violence.

I know from many friends, and family, that the Muslim community needs reassurance.

We stand with them too.

Together, for all our citizens, we will build a stronger home.

This is my view of what it means to be British.

Following the decision to leave the EU,

we have both the need and the opportunity...

to define our country once more.

To define ourselves at home and abroad.

So I want to talk about our shared British values.

And what we should be as a country.

Britain at its best is open, welcoming and tolerant.

And Britain has high expectations too of the behaviours, standards and values of which we are all proud.

I stand before you as the first Home Secretary in a generation...

that is actually able to define an immigration system, without being constrained by the EU.

This is an incredible opportunity.

And it falls to us to ensure that these rules are not just a technocratic exercise.

But that they are an expression of our values – our British values.

We shouldn't brush aside the legitimate concerns that many people – most people – have had about the way immigration has been managed, especially the anxieties of those on low pay or in low skilled jobs.

The irresponsible way Labour increased immigration, without any real mandate, has understandably undermined the public's trust.

They lost faith that politicians will manage immigration sustainably.

But that doesn't mean they are hostile to individuals.

Just look at the reaction to difficulties faced by Afghan interpreters who helped our troops.

Or Caribbean families who started coming here in the 1950's.

When the British public cries out for decency, they're usually right.

The Windrush scandal was a public policy failure many years in the making.

These were people who rightfully settled here from the Commonwealth decades ago and became pillars of our communities.

The way the system had been treating them – over many years – deeply offended our sense of fairness.

So we are doing everything to put it right.

Our eyes were opened in a different way by the tragedy of Grenfell.

That fire affected a truly diverse community of residents.

For me, even responding to it was the most moving and harrowing experience of my life.

And it laid bare how some communities have not been given the same standards and opportunities that we all expect.

We have to put that right too.

But there is a wider, more positive story here.

It is my strong belief that immigration has been good for Britain.

We have adopted many of the best bits of other countries.

It has made us a global hub for culture, business and travel.

It has broadened our horizons and boosted our economy in so many ways.

It has made our home stronger.

And after Brexit we will still need it to stay strong and prosperous.

We want to welcome people to this country.

And I say to those EU citizens, who have already made the UK their home...

You have benefited our country.

You are part of our country.

Part of many of our families.

Part of our home.

So let me be very clear:

Deal or no deal...

We want you to stay.

We need you to stay.

You can stay.

Thanks to the referendum we now have a unique opportunity to reshape our immigration system for the future.

A skills-based, single system that is opened up to talent from across the world.

A system that doesn't discriminate between any one region or country.

A system based on merit.

That judges people not by where they are from, but on what they can do.

What people want – and they will get – is control of our own system.

With a lower, and sustainable level of net migration.

And above all, that has to mean one thing: an end to freedom of movement.

A safe home.

An open, welcoming, tolerant home.

And finally, a home of shared values.

A home where all the different residents and guests come together under one roof.

With one common set of values to live by, for everyone's benefit and comfort.

We welcome newcomers.

In turn, we expect them to live by our British values.

And it is only right that we make it clear to all new citizens what we are for, and what we are against.

The existing "Life in the UK" test for new citizens is not enough.

Maybe it is helpful for people to know the name of the sixth wife of Henry VIII.

But far more important to me, is that they also understand the liberal, democratic values that bind our society together.

Citizenship should mean more than being able to win a pub quiz.

We need to make it a British values test – and that's exactly what I will bring in.

It's about signing up to those values that we share and live by together.

It's about starting as you mean to go on.

It's about integration, not segregation.

And I'm determined to break down barriers to integration wherever I find them.

Take for example, the most basic barrier of all: language.

When I was the Communities Secretary, we found that over 700,000 people in the UK cannot even speak a basic level of English.

700,000.

How can we possibly make a common home together if we can't even communicate with each other?

That's why I created a new Integrated Communities Fund, to work with people already in our country.

And now, as Home Secretary, I will apply these principles to those who arrive in our country.

So not only will there be a new values test...

...but we will also strengthen the English language requirements for all new citizens.

Getting integration right also means breaking down barriers to our values.

I think especially of oppressive, medieval practices affecting women like forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and so-called honour-based violence.

We already have some of the toughest laws in the world against these crimes.

But we need to do more.

So we will consult on making it a mandatory duty for professionals to report

forced marriage whenever they come across it.

And when women have the courage to come forward ...

... and inform us that they have been forced to sponsor a spousal visa against their will ...

... we will not only protect their anonymity ...

... but we will do everything we can to deny or revoke that visa.

It is not liberal to stay silent about illiberal practices – that's just weakness. If we see people undermining our values and don't do anything about it, we undermine our values still further.

We cannot allow that.

We will not allow that.

And we will not stand back when some people go absolutely against everything we stand for.

If you leave our home to go abroad to join Daesh or other terrorist groups, you are rejecting our values, and endangering our security.

That's why, in the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill, we will introduce a new Designated Area offence.

This gives the Home Secretary the power to criminalise travel to terrorist hotspots – like Daesh's so-called caliphate.

You have to have a damn good reason to go somewhere like that.

If you don't, you will be prosecuted.

And if you are actively engaged in fighting for these groups...

you should also know that you're putting your citizenship at risk.

The Home Secretary has the power to strip dual-citizens of their British citizenship.

It is a power used for extreme and exceptional cases.

It should be used with great care and discretion – but also determination.

In recent years we have exercised this power for terrorists who are a threat to the country.

Now, for the first time, I will apply this power to some of those who are convicted of the most grave criminal offences.

This applies to some of the despicable men involved in gang-based child sexual exploitation.

So our message to the very worst criminals is clear:

If you grossly abuse the laws of this country.

You will no longer be welcome in our home.

It is when we're comfortable in our own security, identity, and values...

that we are also comfortable being open with others...

whether at home or abroad.

That means building that safe home...

That tolerant and welcoming home...

That home where everyone plays by the same rules.

We are the party that can make this happen.

Driven by a patriotic belief in what our country is about...

and what we are capable of.

Proud of who we are.

Proud of what we do.

And proud of where we're going.

I speak with feeling about this country...

because for my family, Britain was a choice.

They came here for freedom, security, opportunity and prosperity.

It is because of these strengths that I have always been an optimist about Britain's future.

And now it is my duty as their son, and a child of this country,

to help secure for this generation –

and for future generations –

all of the things that make this country a beacon for the world.

Together, we will build that stronger home."

ENDS

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121.

David Gauke: Disrupt drugs trade in prisons and foster rehabilitation

David Gauke, Secretary of State for Justice, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

“It was an enormous privilege, earlier this year, to be appointed Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor.

I am the first solicitor to be Lord Chancellor. I am also the first Lord Chancellor from my home town of Ipswich since Cardinal Wolsey in the 16th century.

Admittedly, it didn't end well for him. But then again, he had to undertake a very complex negotiation with a supranational, European bureaucracy!

Being Justice Secretary is such an honour because of the type of country we are.

We are a country governed by the rule of law.

We value the role played by our independent judges.

Our individual liberty and our economic prosperity are reliant upon the fact that that is the type of country we have long been. And that must continue to be the case.

That shouldn't need saying. But when a Shadow Cabinet Minister celebrates the lawbreaking Militant Tendency Council that brought Liverpool to its knees ...

... and a Labour MP calls for an illegal General Strike...

... and, in response, the Shadow Justice Secretary stands up and claps ...

we need to make the case for mainstream values and the rule of law.

Fortunately, I have an excellent team working with me to fight for these values.

I would like to thank my ministerial team, Rory Stewart, Edward Argar and Lucy Frazer, for the fantastic work that they do.

Our whip Amanda Milling and PPSs, Peter Heaton Jones and Ranil Jayawardena provide fantastic support in the House of Commons ...

... and in the Lords, we have an outstanding team in Richard Keen as our spokesman and Charlotte Vere as whip.

I am also deeply grateful to the dedicated people who serve our justice system, whether in the courtroom or the prison landing, for what you do. Whether it be prosecuting or defending the accused, supporting victims, protecting the public or rehabilitating an offender ... our country depends upon you.

CHALLENGES AND ACTION

We were fortunate enough to hear just now from Jacob, who travelled here today to share his story with us in person.

We also saw, on the video, Ben who had a really rough life, ended up in prison and then with help from Jacob and others, turned his life around. Also we heard from Natasha Porter from Unlocked, talking about their great work attracting top talent and demonstrating the real value that prison officers bring to their roles.

And, of course, I would like to pay tribute to Iain Duncan Smith, who has long been an advocate for social justice and reform.

We want everyone to have the opportunity of a good life. That means being able to go about their lives free from crime.

Jacob and Ben both ended up in prison – despite their different backgrounds. And both of them had a choice when they were released. Return to crime? Or contribute to society as law-abiding citizens?

We need offenders to make the right choice, to reject a life of criminality and take the opportunity to work, accept responsibility and be part of society. Reforming the way that we get offenders to do that is my mission, and what I hope defines me as Justice Secretary.

Getting prisoners rehabilitated will reduce crime and ensure there are fewer victims of crime in future. It will also cut the £15bn cost that reoffending has on society.

But to do that, we also need to deal with some very real challenges facing the prisons system.

That's why this summer we announced £40 million to tackle the violence in prisons that is fuelled by the drugs trade and fight the use of illicit mobile phones by gangsters on the inside.

We have increased prison officer numbers by 3,500 – and we will continue to recruit more.

And to further crack down on drugs and violence in prison, this month we are launching a new Financial Crime Unit which will track and seize the money that criminal kingpins use to deal drugs in prison. My message to them is this: we are already blocking your phones, putting you in isolation and now

we will make sure you can't access your money. Dealing drugs in prison will no longer be profitable because we will find your assets and we will seize them.

Our criminal justice system must protect the public and punish offenders. But if we want to bring down crime, we must also reduce reoffending.

That is why I launched the Education and Employment strategy, which will expand opportunities for offenders to get education and skills training, and work experience so they can get a job when they get out.

Today I can announce that:

... We have successfully opened up the market for prison education, increasing the number of potential providers from four to twelve...

... We are systematising offender training and employment in prison industries such as cooking, cleaning and maintenance across the prison estate. This builds on the success of the approach within custody and community which we have developed with organisations such as the Clink Charity.

And, we have agreed a formal partnership with the construction industry, led by CITB and Lendlease, to fill skills gaps in the industry and help more prisoners do a working day during their sentence and find work on release.

To further cut reoffending...

... We have set out our Female Offenders Strategy, using alternatives to custody when this is more effective and providing better support to many women offenders who are themselves victims of abuse and suffering from addiction or mental health issues.

... We've launched pilots to make greater use of community treatment orders that address the mental health issues or substance abuse that drives someone to criminality.

... We're making it easier for prisoners to keep in contact with their families by allowing access to number-restricted in-cell telephones.

And it's because we want to cut reoffending that we have made the case that, for minor crimes, custody should only be used as a last resort. Reoffending rates for those on short sentences are higher than for the community alternatives. Short sentences are disruptive. Offenders too often lose their jobs, lose their homes and damage their family relationships. They are more likely to commit crimes on release.

I know that there will be some who argue that this focus on alternatives to custody and rehabilitation is just 'soft justice'.

But I'll tell you this. If you've just been a victim of a crime, you're not going to take much comfort from the fact that the perpetrator just spent the last three months locked up for most of the day and was released last week with no job, no home, no hope and no chance.

Let me be clear that our community sentences should not be a soft option. That is why this Summer I announced an extra £22 million per year to improve offender supervision after they leave prison, as well as help them transition into work.

As a Conservative, I want everyone to reach their potential. And when I meet ex-offenders like Ben and Jacob, who have taken responsibility, who have addressed their problems, learnt the lessons and turned their lives around...

I am filled with optimism – and a belief that we can do much more.

We have a duty to help turn round the lives of those who accept their responsibilities and do the right thing. Not just for their sakes. But for the sake of society as a whole, to reduce reoffending, to reduce the number of victims in the future.

That's why we have to give them the opportunity to reform. And this is especially true for young offenders. We need to ensure that we focus on turning lives round at an early stage, before it is too late.

That's why...

... We're improving the skills and training for those working in the youth justice system, including getting more graduates into the system by expanding the excellent Unlocked scheme...

... and giving governors greater flexibility as to how they commission youth education contracts.

And today I can confirm that we are spending £5 million to introduce this country's first Secure School at Medway. Secure Schools are a radical new concept that places education and healthcare at the heart of youth custody. They will be run by not-for-profit academy trusts, bringing genuine expertise, knowledge and innovation into the youth custody sector. We will be launching the application and selection process for the provider later this month. And we intend to construct more purpose-built secure schools in the coming years to further transform the youth estate.

Together this package of reforms and investment will crack down on the drugs and violence in prisons, further support offenders in turning their backs on crime and, crucially, help young offenders find a path out of criminality into education and responsibility.

The problems won't be solved overnight. But if we refuse to be deflected, if we stay focused on our vision, if we are driven by the evidence and prepared to be bold, if we are willing to embrace reform, this is an agenda that can turn round lives.

And that is what we will deliver."

ENDS

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121.

David Mundell speech to Conservative Party Conference 2018

David Mundell MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

Opening statement

“Thank you David for the introduction.

I would firstly like to take this opportunity to wish my colleague and friend, Ruth Davidson, well, on behalf of the Conference, before she goes on maternity leave.

I look forward to her return and continuing the work to make her leader... of a Scottish Conservative Government at Holyrood.

Conference, the SNP have kept Scotland in gridlock for far too long.

Nicola Sturgeon continues to threaten us with a second independence referendum but has not called for one because she says that there is not enough clarity on the terms of the final Brexit Deal.

But we know what she is really saying is: Scots don't want independence today but maybe the polls will say something different tomorrow.

Conference, that is just not good enough.

Every day that Scotland is stuck in a constitutional Groundhog Day is a day that our economy is being held back and that the SNP Government is not getting on with the day job of managing our schools and hospitals.

So I want to use this opportunity to say to Sturgeon...

It is time to end the constitutional uncertainty that we have lived with for the past four years.

It is time for Scotland's two governments to work together in the best interests of the Scottish people.

It is time to move on.

Conference, it is clear that we are the only party that is standing up for a stronger Union.

Just two weeks ago, Jeremy Corbyn said that he 'would decide at the time'

what to do if Sturgeon asked for his consent for a second independence referendum.

Conference, a man that can't even make up his mind about the future of this country, is a man that we can never let into Downing Street.

Because it is this party that is delivering opportunity for all in Scotland

Transferring substantial new tax and welfare powers to the Scottish Parliament.

Investing over £1 billion directly in cities from Inverness to Edinburgh.

Supporting the North Sea oil and gas sector.

Saving our armed forces from an SNP tax grab.

And that is the work that we will continue in the months and years ahead.

[Karen Bradley speech to Conservative Party Conference 2018](#)

Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State of Northern Ireland, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

“Two days ago I was at the National Police Memorial Day in Belfast.

And there could be no more appropriate part of the United Kingdom to mark the bravery and sacrifice of those who protect us on a daily basis.

While I was there I met many relatives and colleagues of those who were murdered by terrorists during the troubles for defending democracy and the rule of law.

It served as a stark reminder ... as if one were needed ... of the debt we owe the police and our armed forces for the role they played in bringing peace to Northern Ireland.

And in this party we shall never forget it.

Thanks to their efforts ... and yes political leaders ... Northern Ireland is today a place transformed.

And under this Conservative Government it is thriving.

Unemployment at near record lows ... employment close to record highs ... and all driven by the private sector.

Exports rising... and NI has proven itself to be a top destination for inward investment from companies based overseas and within the UK.

And last week in America I met a number of businesses who are investing and creating highly skilled, well paid jobs.

Tourism is also booming ... with visitors enjoying Northern Ireland's stunning scenery, amazing hospitality and world class attractions.

All of this is underpinned by the strength and security that Northern Ireland gains from membership of our precious Union.

But what we're seeing today is only a glimpse of the potential Northern Ireland has to offer.

And to unlock that we really do need to see the restoration of devolved government.

It's a source of immense frustration that in this 20th anniversary year of the historic Belfast Agreement there is no government at Stormont.

That's why my absolute priority is getting Stormont back to work ... and last month I announced a plan to help get us there.

What was achieved 20 years ago was of such magnitude that we owe this and to future generations to make it work.

And this Conservative Government ... along with this Secretary of State ... will not be found wanting in our efforts to deliver it."

ENDS

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121.

[Alun Cairns: Delivering a better connected Wales](#)

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

"It's a pleasure to be here and I'm delighted to see so many of our Welsh membership here in Birmingham.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who are involved in the Party in Wales, our Chairman Byron Davies and my Ministerial team, Mims Davies and Lord Bourne and my PPS Glyn Davies.

I want to pay tribute to Andrew RT Davies – recognising his service to the Party and his commitment to holding a tired Welsh Labour Government to account.

And it was a privilege to hear Paul Davies yesterday address Conference as the new leader of the Welsh Conservative Group in the Assembly.

This year will bring new political leaders in every party in Wales – UKIP have gone through three!

And whilst we will have a new First Minister we can expect the same old Welsh Labour with the same old tired policies, chasing yesterday's economy. And if anything, a further lurch to the left as the front runner is a fully signed up Corbynista.

The only way to deliver better public services, more jobs and investment and a stronger Union, is to elect Welsh Conservatives and Paul Davies as the next First Minister of Wales.

Amongst all these leadership changes and personalities let me be clear, as we leave the EU the Union of the UK is more important than ever before.

This principle is at the heart of the Prime Minister's agenda.

From her first day on the steps of Downing Street to the negotiating table in Brussels, the Prime Minister has been clear that it's the Conservative and Unionist Party who believes in the precious bond between our four nations.

Being part of the Union of the UK has delivered:

- A new funding settlement for Wales – putting right the unfair funding Labour oversaw for many years;
- We will have City or Growth Deals in every corner of Wales; and
- Looking to the industries of tomorrow we have a thriving compound semi-conductor cluster in South Wales and a nuclear arc in the North including the new multi-billion-pound plant on Anglesey which will power the UK.

But as we seek frictionless trade in Europe we find within our own union an economic and psychological barrier. To cross into South Wales hauliers were paying £20 and commuters thousands of pounds a year.

Last year we committed to deliver a toll-free crossing into Wales and today I'm delighted to announce that the Severn tolls will be scrapped on 17 December 2018.

This decision will not only bring our nations together but it will immediately boost the economy of South Wales by £100 million a year.

And it sends a powerful message to businesses, commuters and tourists alike that South Wales and the West of England – this Great Western Gateway, this Severnside Super Region, this global hub – are truly open for business.

With this focus on the Union it is little wonder that:

- Wales is the fastest growing part of the UK outside London;
- Employment is at a record high; and
- Unemployment is below the UK average

Conference, this shows what Conservatives in Government can deliver.

We are working to build a stronger, fairer country where if you work hard and do the right thing you have the opportunity of living in a united, fair and outward-looking country – where we come together so all four nations thrive after Brexit and we stand tall and strong in the world.

Conference, thank you, diolch yn fawr iawn.”

ENDS

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