

# Foreign Secretary hosts Gulf Foreign Ministers in UK to boost security and economic ties

UK and Gulf Foreign Ministers have today agreed to strengthen security and economic ties, setting the stage for an era of closer cooperation in areas including trade, cyber security and green infrastructure investment into low and middle-income countries.

The Foreign Secretary convened the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait, the UAE Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and the GCC Secretary-General at Chevening House today (20 December 2021).

The group agreed to work together to boost clean, reliable, honest infrastructure financing into the developing world, using their collective expertise to maximise the impact of investments. The Gulf visitors also welcomed the relaunched British International Investment (BII) body, which will increase investments in infrastructure, tech and clean energy projects across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

In October, BII, then called CDC, announced a new deal with Dubai's DP World to modernise three ports in Senegal, Somaliland and Egypt. This is part of a wider programme to boost African trade around the world.

Foreign Ministers also welcomed work to increase trade between the UK and the GCC, which is worth more than £30 billion per year. The UK and GCC are working towards a new Free Trade Agreement (FTA), with negotiations expected to commence next year, which will boost links in areas like investment and services.

Liz Truss stressed in her first major speech as Foreign Secretary at Chatham House earlier this month that Britain and its partners needed to "be on the front foot" because "the battle for economic influence is already in full flow". The Foreign Secretary sees closer economic and security with the Gulf as key to standing up to malign actors.

## **Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:**

Closer economic and security ties with our Gulf partners will deliver jobs and opportunities for the British people and help make us all safer.

Co-investing with the Gulf in infrastructure will help low-and middle-income countries being strategically dependent on any one provider, while also boosting clean growth and encouraging enterprise and innovation to flourish.

It is a win-win for all parties. I want us to have much deeper links in key areas like trade, investment, development and cybersecurity with a part of the world that is important to Britain's long-term interests.

The GCC is one of the world's most important networks for key regional and security issues. The meeting was also used to discuss the conflict in Yemen, Iran's destabilising regional activity, and the Afghanistan crisis. The UK has worked closely with Gulf allies on these issues, providing urgent humanitarian assistance and working together on evacuations in Afghanistan.

As one of the first countries to publicly welcome the Abraham Accords, which normalised Israel's relations with the UAE, Bahrain and others in the region, the UK remains positive that this historic step can promote shared regional prosperity and security. The UK will support Israel and its partners in the Gulf to achieve this.

Last week, the UK welcomed the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tariq al-Said to London for talks with Her Majesty The Queen, His Highness The Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary. [They discussed key issues](#), including regional security, investments and trade.

## Notes to editors

- Representatives from all GCC member states were at the talks at Chevening House in Kent today, including: Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Foreign Minister of Qatar Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Foreign Minister of Oman Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, Foreign Minister of Bahrain Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Foreign Minister of Kuwait Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, UAE Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, and the GCC Secretary-General Nayef Falah Mubarak Al Hajraf.

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## Strand 5: Domain Knowledge

Government Campus helps departments make training more widely available, across organisational and technical boundaries.

Domain Knowledge is the knowledge and understanding civil servants need to work effectively in their specific subject area.

Specific subject areas usually relate to departments, for example, health, education or transport.

A specific subject area may also be relevant to more than one government department and profession, for example, climate change.

## **Explore the Domain Knowledge strand**

The types of training in the Domain Knowledge strand are those being developed within departments and across departments for all civil servants to access. You will seek domain knowledge if:

- You are interested in a particular department and want to know what general training they provide in their own areas
- You need to learn about a policy area that crosses departments, for example, climate change (Net Zero)
- You are creating subject matter training which you know will benefit others across government

If you are interested in getting involved you can email [gscu-external@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gscu-external@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).

## **Examples of the Domain Knowledge strand**

### **The impact of climate change**

The government is committed to Net Zero by 2050, and multiple departments, agencies and professions are involved in achieving this. The Department for Business, Energy, Innovation Strategy (BEIS) is coordinating the strategy across government and has recognised that there is a need for widespread training and awareness.

Defra has related requirements in the 25 Year Environment Plan which also create a need for cross-government training and awareness. Strand 5 is the home of cross-department and cross-profession training and will provide models, processes and communities of practice for developing and rolling out the training. A new Climate Skills training product is being designed and developed, with the aim of making this available to all civil servants in Spring 2022.

### **Understanding trade**

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's Trade Policy and Negotiations Faculty ran what is known as the '[Expert Deep Dive Programme](#)' to improve knowledge of the critically important specialist area of negotiations. This training is of use to others across government and through Strand 5 of the curriculum. The reach of this valuable and stimulating programme can be extended further.

### **Domain knowledge guiding principles**

Strand 5 will be the place for the guiding principles for organising and/or developing the learning designed to provide civil servants with the knowledge and understanding they need to work effectively in their department. This can include its history, operational context, and other essential knowledge which will help learners become highly competent team members, policy-makers and ministerial advisers. It could also provide access to what departments want others to understand about them.

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# Research into ageing set to blast into space

Scientists at the University of Liverpool, funded by the UK Space Agency, are using space to understand what happens to human muscles as we age, and why.

When astronauts spend time in space, without the effects of gravity, their muscles get weaker, just as they do in older age, before recovering when they return to Earth. By studying what happens to muscle tissue in space, the team can compare the findings to what happens on Earth.

This will help to solve the puzzle of why muscles get weaker as we age and look at ways to prevent it.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

As we get older, our bones and muscles get weaker, but scientists don't fully understand how this happens.

The research of our scientist astronauts like Tim Peake on muscle loss in the microgravity of space is helping identify potential cures for musculoskeletal disease, which causes agony to millions and costs the NHS billions.

By harnessing the unique environment of the International Space Station our pioneering scientists could help us all live healthier, stronger lives.

It is well known that our muscles lose mass and strength as we age. This can have a profound effect on the ability to carry out everyday tasks and causes a range of problems, including an increased risk of falling and longer recovery times from injuries.

Human muscle cells.

This new experiment, called MicroAge, will take human muscle cells, the size of a grain of rice, that are grown in a lab and carefully put them into small 3D-printed holders the size of a pencil sharpener.

Once in space, these will be electrically stimulated to induce contractions in the muscle tissue, and the scientists will look closely to see what

happens.

Professor Malcolm Jackson from the University of Liverpool, said:

Ageing is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and we will learn a great deal about how muscle responds to microgravity and ageing from the data we obtain from this study.

The team has had to work extremely hard over the last three years to overcome the many challenges of sending our science into space. For example, the electronic equipment necessary to undertake these studies usually fills a large desk but we have managed to shrink this to the size of a pack of cards. This development work on automated and miniaturised systems represents an exciting innovation that could have a wider application in the future.

MicroAge team from the University of Liverpool.

As part of the mission Kayser Space, based at the Harwell Space Cluster in Oxfordshire, designed and built the scientific hardware to accommodate the muscle cells to ensure they survive the potential changes in temperature, vibration and g-force during launch.

David Zolesi, Kayser Space Managing Director, said:

We are thrilled to have our hardware ready for launch, after three years of fantastic work in cooperation with a top-level team of scientists and the UK Space Agency. MicroAge is our third payload launched to the ISS in 2021. This is an important achievement to bolster our position as a leading partner to the UK scientific community for implementing experiments in space.

MicroAge is due to launch on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, at 10am (GMT) on Tuesday 21 December. The experiment will return to Earth in January 2022 for further analysis.

Kayser MicroAge team.

As part of the mission the 24 muscle cell containers that are being sent to the International Space Station will carry mission patches designed by children, following a competition run by the University of Liverpool. The overall winner was nine-year-old Jessica Barry, from Wiltshire. Jessica's patch is the official patch used on the clothing and documents for the mission.

People can keep up to date with the progress of the study through a MicroAge App with timely updates and links to helpful information, podcasts, activity packs and information on healthy ageing, exercise and other aspects of the study.

The UK Space Agency has provided £1.2 million in funding to the University of Liverpool for the MicroAge experiment. Academics in the UK can use the International Space Station (ISS) for research, thanks to the UK's membership of the European Space Agency's exploration programme. ESA is also providing the launch and operations.

The launch comes at an exciting time for the UK space sector, with the James Webb Space Telescope set to lift-off later this month, which sees UK scientists at the forefront of space science research. Webb, a collaboration between ESA, NASA and the Canadian Space Agency, will look further back in time than any other telescope – to 400m years after the Big Bang.

MicroAge is the second experiment funded directly by the UK Space Agency to fly to the ISS. The first launched in June 2021 and saw scientists from Nottingham and Exeter University send thousands of tiny worms to live on board the space station for several days to help understand spaceflight-induced muscle decline. The third, being developed by University of Strathclyde with support from QinetiQ space, is due to fly in October 2022 and will study how complex fluids behave in microgravity.

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## [UK Government doubles funding for Devolved Administrations to tackle Covid](#)

News story

The UK Government has today doubled the amount of additional funding available for the governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to tackle Covid.



The Devolved Administrations can now spend an additional £860 million, increased from the initial £430 million announced earlier this week.

The Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has confirmed this increased funding following discussions with the Devolved Administrations. This will continue to ensure the Devolved Administrations can take the Covid precautions they feel are necessary to keep people safe.

The additional amounts now being provided to each government on top of their Autumn Budget 2021 funding are:

- Scottish Government – £440 million
- Welsh Government – £270 million
- Northern Ireland Executive – £150 million

These amounts will continue to be kept under review

These are additional amounts on top of the combined £77.6 billion confirmed for this year at the Autumn Budget 2021. It means that the Devolved Administrations have the certainty they requested to spend additional funding now rather than waiting for Supplementary Estimates in the new year.

**Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:**

Following discussions with the Devolved Administrations, we are now doubling the additional funding available.

We will continue to listen to and work with the Devolved Administrations in the face of this serious health crisis to ensure we're getting the booster to people all over the UK and that people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are supported.

**Further information:**

- Any changes to departments' funding are confirmed at the end of the financial year through the Supplementary Estimates process. This process usually concludes in January/February before being voted on in Parliament. At this point the UK Government also confirms any changes to the devolved administrations' funding. The process we have put in the

place this week is giving the Devolved Administrations early certainty to spend additional funding rather than having to wait for the new year.

- The UK Government continues to speak with the Devolved Administrations regularly, including COBRA meetings chaired by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, and calls with the Prime Minister.
- If the amount of funding provided up front to each Devolved Administration is more than the Barnett consequential confirmed at Supplementary Estimates then the difference will be repaid in 2022-23, or over the Spending Review period if necessary. If the Barnett consequential is higher than the amount provided up front, the Devolved Administrations will keep the extra funding.
- This funding comes from the UK Reserve.

Published 20 December 2021

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## [2022 Youth Mobility Scheme for Japanese nationals](#)

As of last summer there are now a total of 1,500 places available each year to Japanese nationals as part of the UK's [Youth Mobility Scheme](#).

There are two ballots each year. 800 places will be up for grabs in the first ballot in January 2022, with an additional 700 places being made available in a second ballot in July. If your application is successful you will be able to live, work and study in the UK for up to 2 years.

### **How to apply**

If you would like to apply for the scheme you should send one email per applicant to: [Japan.yms2022@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Japan.yms2022@fcdo.gov.uk) between midday (12pm) on Monday 17 January 2022 to midday on Wednesday 19 January 2022 (Tokyo time).

The header or subject line of your email must contain your name, date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) and passport number as shown in your passport.

This must be written in English only.

For example: SUZUKI Miyu – 31/03/2000 – Passport123456789.

The main body of your email should include the following information, written



in English:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Passport Number
- Mobile phone number

The email account will only be open for 48 hours and all emails received within this timeframe will be sent an automated reply confirming receipt.

Once the ballot closes 800 applicants will be chosen at random by UKVI. If you have been successful a second email will be sent to you by 28 January to confirm acceptance and provide further instructions on how to make an appointment, along with documentary evidence required to apply for your entry clearance.

Please note successful applicants must prepare online applications and online credit card payments no later than 28 February 2022. Failure to submit your payment online by this date will automatically remove your name from the list and your allocation will be retracted. After you have paid online you have 90 days to book your appointment at the Visa Application Centre (VAC) and submit your paperwork for consideration.

If you are a Japanese national living overseas you can also apply following the instructions above, and if you are chosen to apply you will be able to do so in your country/territory of residence. Applications cannot be submitted for the Youth Mobility Scheme in the UK.

If you're unsuccessful you will receive an email within two weeks of the ballot closing and no further action is required. You'll be able to re-apply for the ballot when it reopens in July 2022, if you meet the [eligibility requirements](#).

Further information about the scheme [can be found on gov.uk](#) and any enquiries relating to the application process, online application forms and questions in general should be directed to the [UKVI International Enquiry Line](#).