

Foreign Secretary visits South East Asia to boost trade and defence links

The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, arrived in Hanoi today (Monday 21 June) ahead of a three-day visit with high-level meetings in Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore focussing on trade, defence and security.

Tomorrow the UK will formally launch accession negotiations with CPTPP nations (Tuesday 22 June), helping Britain further engage with some of the world's biggest economies. CPTPP members currently have a combined GDP of £9 trillion, a value which is expected to grow rapidly in the next few years.

This is Dominic Raab's fifth visit to South East Asia since becoming Foreign Secretary, demonstrating the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific, as set out in the UK's Integrated Review.

The visit also comes at a time of growing defence and security cooperation with the region, as the UK's Carrier Strike Group led by the HMS Queen Elizabeth, makes its maiden visit to the region.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

The UK is committed to strengthening our friendship across the Indo-Pacific.

We are demonstrating this through our commitment to join CPTPP, partner with ASEAN and invest more energy, time and effort in our bilateral relations in the region.

While in Vietnam, the Foreign Secretary will deliver opening remarks at the 5th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) on the UK's ambitions for its Indo-Pacific tilt to an audience of representatives from more than 50 countries. He will meet Vietnamese leaders, including President Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh and Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son to discuss the implementation of the UK-Vietnam Strategic Partnership Agreement, in addition to subjects such as global health security, climate change and combatting serious organised crime.

Dominic Raab will then travel to Cambodia to meet Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn to set out our ambition for the UK bid for 'ASEAN Dialogue Partnership' status ahead of Cambodia taking up the chair of ASEAN. This status would give the UK the closest form of relationship with ASEAN. This will be the first Foreign Secretary visit to Cambodia since the British Embassy was reopened 30 years ago.

The visit will finish in Singapore, with a meeting with Prime Minister Lee

Hsien Loong to discuss geo-political security and climate change, as well as the international response to Covid. The Foreign Secretary will also meet Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and address British and Singaporean business leaders from across Asia Pacific, highlighting the economic and strategic benefits of CPTPP and the UK's wider trade and foreign policy priorities for the region.

Delivering the stable and prosperous nation the people of South Sudan deserve

Many thanks indeed, Mr President, and can I begin by joining others in thanking SRSF Fink Haysom for his briefing. Thank you for the honest analysis and reflections and also for setting out the very action-oriented plan for the mission going forward. It's clear from what you said that there are some encouraging signs on the political level, but still really significant challenges at the security, governance and development and humanitarian level.

And also our thanks also to Mr Rajab Mohandis for his briefing. As he was speaking, it seemed to me that the solution to many of the challenges in South Sudan lie in the title of his organisation, the Organisation for Responsive Governance.

And finally, also very good to see you, Ambassador Malwal here today. I hope you can carry the messages you hear back to Juba.

As many have observed, it's almost ten years since the world's newest nation was born and it's good that we join as a Council to mark this important milestone.

The Peace Agreement that we've discussed again today ended five years of subsequent war, and we commend the compromises shown in agreeing the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. It's an important peace agreement and it's good to hear of some of the steps being taken on its implementation.

But it's also very clear to all of us, reading the report and hearing today, that so much remains to be done. Because the stark reality is that South Sudan remains one of the world's least developed countries, with its short history dominated by violence, by corruption and subsequent suffering. Progress implementing the peace process has been too slow and too limited. And there are many reasons for this, but it's clear, as we listened again today, that one of the reasons is an absence of political will, and the political will necessary to deliver.

Because we know that there are billions of dollars in oil revenues, but despite this, the economy over the period has contracted significantly. We also know that natural resources, those very oil dollars, are being exploited and public funds diverted. And this is leaving next to no money available to invest in public infrastructure or services, as Mr Mohandis set out so clearly in his statement.

Mr President, we should also acknowledge that there is a significant humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, and many more people are in need of humanitarian assistance than at any time since South Sudan's independence. The great tragedy of this is of course that it is largely man-made and largely preventable.

We call on the Government of South Sudan today to take responsibility and act in genuine partnership with the donor community to address this crisis because development assistance is only part of the solution. The government must themselves tackle corruption, drive economic reform and respect the Status of Forces Agreement.

With sixty per cent of the population facing acute food insecurity, obstructions against aid workers are unacceptable, as is the killing of humanitarian workers.

We urge the South Sudanese authorities to take action to guarantee the safety of those delivering life-saving assistance and to hold perpetrators to account. And if they fail to do so, we need to consider new sanctions listings.

We welcome that this Council recently renewed the arms embargo, sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts' mandate. We encourage the Government to take forward tasks on the arms embargo benchmarks, including the establishment of the Necessary Unified Force with a genuinely unified command.

In closing, Mr President, let me reiterate the call for South Sudan's leaders to use this milestone, this decade anniversary, to reflect on the future they want for their country, and build on their commitment to working together for the benefit of all, for the benefit of the people, that they're of course there to serve. Because we know what needs to happen – that all of it requires the Government of South Sudan to take ownership. And I have to say that I won't go through a list because my Kenyan colleague set out much better than me on behalf of the A3+1, the actions that we need to see. So I won't reiterate them, but I will say that what we need is a renewed effort from the Government of South Sudan, with support from the international community, and that this can change South Sudan's course. We can ensure the next decade delivers the stability and prosperous nation its people deserve. Let's seize this opportunity.

Thank you, Mr President.

Surge testing to be deployed in Leeds

Press release

NHS Test and Trace – in partnership with the local authority – is deploying additional testing and genomic sequencing in targeted areas in Leeds.



Surge testing will commence tomorrow (Tuesday 22 June) in Headingley and Hyde Park and Little London and Woodhouse wards following a rise in confirmed cases of the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. All the confirmed cases have been instructed to self-isolate and their contacts have been identified.

Everyone who lives or works in these areas, especially those between the ages of 18 and 24, are strongly encouraged to take a coronavirus (COVID-19) polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, whether they are showing symptoms or not, and to come forward for a vaccine. Cases in both areas are particularly high among this age group, who are mostly unvaccinated.

Enhanced contact tracing will be used for individuals testing positive with a variant of concern (VOC). This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period to determine the route of transmission.

By using PCR testing, positive results are sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify COVID-19 cases with a VOC and then prevent their spread.

If you have symptoms, you should [book a free test online](#) or by calling 119. You can then go to a testing site or have a kit sent to your home. If you have no symptoms, you should visit your local authority's website. See [Leeds.gov.uk](#) for more information.

People in this area should continue to make use of free twice-weekly rapid tests, commonly known as lateral flow devices, alongside the PCR test as part of surge testing.

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