

Prime Minister's speech at the Munich Security Conference: 19 February 2021

There is a habit of turning up at occasions such as these and announcing portentously that the West is locked in terminal decline, the Atlantic alliance is fractured, and NATO is in peril, and everything we hold dear risks being cast into oblivion.

And that industry of pessimism has thrived recently, perhaps even in Munich.

So without wishing for a moment to downplay the challenges and dangers we face, in the teeth of a global pandemic, let me respectfully suggest that the gloom has been overdone and we are turning a corner, and the countries we call the "West" are drawing together and combining their formidable strengths and expertise once again, immensely to everybody's benefit.

As you've seen and heard earlier, America is unreservedly back as leader of the free world and that is a fantastic thing.

And it's vital for our American friends to know that their allies on this side of the Atlantic are willing and able to share the risks and the burdens of addressing the world's toughest problems

That is why Global Britain is there and that is exactly what Global Britain is striving to achieve.

I'm delighted to report that I detected precisely that willingness among my fellow G7 leaders when I chaired a virtual meeting earlier today. The shared goals of the UK's presidency of the G7 are to help the world to build back better and build back greener after the pandemic and minimise the risk of a catastrophe like this happening again.

We all have lessons to learn from an experience that none of us would want to repeat.

At the last UN General Assembly, I proposed a five-point plan to protect the world against future pandemics and today the G7 agreed to explore a Treaty on Pandemic Preparedness, working through the World Health Organization, which would enshrine the actions that countries need to take to safeguard everyone against another Covid.

I intend to bring together my fellow leaders, scientists and international organisations for collective defence against the next pathogen, just as we unite against military threats.

The heroic endeavours of the world's scientists produced safe and effective vaccines against Covid in barely 300 days. In future we should aim to telescope that even more: by drawing together our resources, we should seek to develop vaccines against emerging diseases in 100 days.

Even in the early weeks of the pandemic, I hope that we in the UK resisted the temptations of a *sauf qui peut* approach and tried to keep the flame of global cooperation alive.

We helped to establish COVAX, the global alliance to bring Covid vaccines to developing countries, and today Britain ranks among COVAX's biggest donors, with the aim of supplying a billion doses to 92 nations, and we will also share the majority of any surplus from our domestic vaccination programme.

When Oxford University and AstraZeneca began their momentous effort against Covid, their express aim was to design a vaccine that would be cheap to obtain and easy to store, so that it could be speedily administered by every country.

Protecting ourselves also means tracking the virus's mutations, and nearly half of all the genome sequencing of possible Covid variants, anywhere in the world, has taken place in the UK.

Now we need to mobilise our shared expertise to create an early warning system for the next pathogen, enabled by a worldwide network of pandemic surveillance centres, and the UK intends work alongside the WHO and our friends to bring this about.

If anything good can possibly come from this tragedy, we have at least been given the chance to build a global recovery on new and green foundations, so that humanity can prosper without imperilling the planet.

To that end, as you've just been hearing from John Kerry, Britain will host COP-26 in Glasgow in November and I'm delighted that America under President Biden's leadership has rejoined the Paris Agreement.

The UK's aim will be to help to rally as many countries as possible behind the target of Net Zero by 2050.

We were the first industrialised nation to adopt this goal and we have made it legally binding and published our plan for a Green Industrial Revolution to show how we will get there, so I hope that other countries will follow the UK's example.

But we can only address global problems alongside our friends, and extend Britain's influence around the world, if the UK itself and our own citizens are safe, including from the terrorist threat we all face.

The starting point of our Integrated Review of foreign, defence and development policy – which will be published next month – is that the success of Global Britain depends on the security of our homeland and the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area.

If climate change and pandemics are silent and insidious threats, hostile states may seek to harm our people in direct and obvious ways, as the Russian state did with reckless abandon in Salisbury three years ago, only to collide with the immovable rock of trans-Atlantic solidarity, sanctions and coordinated diplomatic expulsions, an outstanding act of collective security,

for which I once again thank our friends.

If we are to assure our safety, our democracies need to strengthen their capabilities to meet the rigours of an ever more competitive world.

And it is precisely for that reason, so that we can keep our people safe, by fulfilling our obligations to NATO and enhancing the UK's global influence, that is the reason I have decided to bolster our armed forces with the biggest increase in our defence budget since the Cold War.

The UK's defence spending will rise by £24 billion over the next four years, comfortably exceeding the NATO pledge to invest 2 percent of GDP, and ensuring that we retain the biggest defence budget in Europe and the second largest in NATO, after the United States.

We will focus our investment on the new technologies that will revolutionise warfare – artificial intelligence, unmanned aircraft, directed energy weapons and many others – so that we stand alongside our allies to deter any adversary and preserve the peace.

This year, the Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, will embark on her maiden deployment, sailing 20,000 nautical miles to the Indo-Pacific and back.

On her flight deck will be a squadron of F35 jets from the US Marine Corps; among her escorts will be an American destroyer, showing how the British and American armed forces can operate hand-in-glove – or plane-on-flightdeck – anywhere in the world.

But investing in new capabilities is not an end in itself. The purpose of the military instrument is to strengthen diplomacy and therefore maximise the chances of success.

We do not wish to live in a world of unchecked rivalry or decoupling or obstacles to sensible cooperation and global economic growth. Nor are we concerned solely with trade: I hope the UK has shown by our actions that we will defend our values as well as our interests.

In leaving the European Union we restored sovereign control over vital levers of foreign policy.

For the first time in nearly 50 years, we now have the power to impose independent national sanctions, allowing the UK to act swiftly and robustly. Our first decision was to create a Magnitsky regime designed to punish human rights offenders. The UK then became the first European country to sanction senior figures in Belarus after the stolen election. We have now imposed sanctions on over 50 human rights violators, including from Russia, Myanmar and Zimbabwe.

We have consistently spoken out against China's repression of the Uighur people in Xinjiang province – and we will continue to do so. We have introduced new measures to ensure that the supply chains of UK companies are not tainted by the violations in Xinjiang. After China broke a treaty and

imposed a repressive national security law on Hong Kong, the UK offered nearly 3 million of the territory's people a route to British citizenship. We acted quickly and willingly – with cross-party support at home – to keep faith with the people of Hong Kong.

Now that we have left the EU, Parliament has a greater say over foreign policy and this has only reinforced our national determination to be a Force for Good in the world.

Britain is working alongside France, Germany and the United States in a trans-Atlantic quad to address the most pressing security issues, including Iran.

And I sense a new resolve among our European friends and allies to come together and act again with unity and determination, and we witnessed that spirit after the attempted murder of Alexei Navalny, as he recovered in a hospital bed in Berlin.

While NATO was being written-off in some places, the supertanker of European defence spending was quietly beginning to turn, and while this delicate high seas manoeuvre is far from complete, and the vessel needs to alter course a good deal more, the fact is that NATO defence spending – excluding the United States – has risen by \$190 billion since the Wales summit in 2014.

When our allies on the eastern flank sought reassurance about their security, NATO responded by deploying a multinational force in Poland and the Baltic states and the UK was proud to make the biggest single contribution, leading the battlegroup in Estonia, showing that we mean it when we say that our commitment to European security is unconditional and immovable.

I believe that Europe increasingly recognises the necessity of joining our American friends to rediscover that far-sighted leadership and the spirit of adventure and trans-Atlantic unity, that made our two continents great in the first place.

A new world is rising up around us, patterns of trade and commerce are changing, the global centre of gravity is moving eastwards, the technological revolution proceeds with blistering speed. But none of us should fear or resent these changes.

Free societies are united by their faith in liberal democracy, the rule of law and free markets, which surely comprise the great trinity of human progress.

Free countries – many of them located far beyond the geographical “West”, by the way – possess a boundless and inherent ability to release the talents and enterprise of their people to master and adapt to change.

It is no coincidence that of the 10 most innovative nations in the world – as ranked by the Global Innovation Index in 2020 – all but one are liberal democracies.

There is no reason why our countries should not be stronger and safer in 2030

– or indeed 2050 – than today, provided we share the burdens, compete successfully and seek out friends and partners wherever they may be found. I have invited South Korea, and Australia and India to attend the next G7 summit as guests, alongside leading international organisations.

So let's resist any temptation to bemoan the changes around us.

Let's build a coalition for openness and innovation, reaching beyond established alliances and the confines of geography, proud of our history, but free of any temptation to turn back the clock, and harnessing the genius of open societies to flourish in an era of renewed competition.

Let's respectfully dispel the air of pessimism that has sometimes attended our conferences.

America and Europe, side by side, have the ability to prove once again the innate advantages of free nations, and to succeed in forging our own destiny.

[UK donates equipment to Peru to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

News story

The donation of 60 ventilators and 40 monitors by the UK government will strengthen the care of patients with COVID-19 in Peru.



Ambassador Harrison, with the Prime Minister Violeta Bermúdez and the Minister of Health Óscar Ugarte, during the handing ceremony.

Today (19 February), the United Kingdom government donated 20 mechanical ventilators, 40 non-invasive ventilators and 40 monitors to the Ministry of Health of Peru to contribute to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The donation, valued at two million soles (520 thousand pounds sterling), was delivered by the British ambassador, Kate Harrison. She said:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a truly global challenge and we must come together to defeat it and help our countries to recover. I am therefore very pleased that the United Kingdom is able to donate this life saving equipment to the government of Peru. I hope it will help to ensure that fewer families suffer the loss of a loved one at the hands of this terrible virus. We will continue to do all we can to share expertise, resources and information with Peru as we face this shared challenge.

It is necessary to continue complying with safety measures in light of recent increases in cases in Peru. Let's continue with social distancing so that the contagion curve does not rise again

UK Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas, Wendy Morton, said:

International collaboration is key to beating COVID-19. That is why the UK is working in partnership with countries, including Peru, to bring the virus under control.

I am proud that the UK is providing the life-saving equipment Peru needs at this important time. Only by working together will we be successful in saving lives and ending the pandemic.

The implements for the care of patients with COVID-19 were delivered to the Ministry of Health, who will be in charge of their distribution to the different hospitals across Peru.

The governments of Peru and the United Kingdom have been in constant communication to join forces in the fight against COVID-19, and continue to strengthen the bilateral relationship and joint work between both countries on projects such as the reconstruction of the north of Peru, and commercial opportunities and investment.

This donation ratifies the UK's leading role in the global and scientific response to the COVID19 pandemic. The United Kingdom is also the main donor to the COVAX Facility, which seeks to ensure accessible vaccines to the countries of the world when it is finalised.

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[COP26 President Alok Sharma welcomes](#)

Nepal's positive action on climate change

- Alok Sharma's first visit to Nepal as COP26 President to see the effects of climate change on the Himalayan region
- He met with Nepal's Prime Minister Oli, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, other government Ministers and officials, community leaders and civil society
- Supporting women's voices in climate action ahead of COP26 was a key part of visit

The COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Nepal this week to observe the effects of global warming on mountainous communities first-hand and learn more about the country's ambitious work to tackle climate change.

During his two day visit, Mr Sharma met Nepalese Prime Minister KP Oli, President Devi Bhandari, government ministers, mountain communities and climate activists, including female climate leaders and young climate champions, to better understand the opportunities and challenges around making climate action happen in Nepal.

Mr Sharma congratulated Prime Minister KP Oli on Nepal's recent commitment to net zero by 2050— a crucial step in the global fight against climate change — and they discussed increasing climate ambition ahead of COP26.

President Bhandari and Mr Sharma spoke about the challenges Nepal faces as a highly climate vulnerable country and an extremely low emitter, and how the UK and Nepal can share their experiences to achieve net zero.

They also spoke about how the UK can help amplify women's voices on climate at the COP26 climate summit which will be held in Glasgow later this year.

The UK is already working with development partners to coordinate a \$7.4 billion Green Recovery Support package that will help Nepal build back greener from Covid-19. The package will help Nepal recover sustainably from the immediate impacts of the pandemic, by investing in clean energy, water and projects such as flood prevention, and tree planting, whilst mobilising support for sustainable job creation in agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President-Designate, said:

As COP26 President it's important to me that I was able to see first-hand the very real impacts of climate change including on the lives of mountain-based communities.

People here are incredibly resilient but it is an injustice that one of the lowest carbon emitters in the region is being hit in this way.

There is clearly a strong understanding of the urgent need for climate action among women and young people here, and I was glad to hear that sentiment echoed by the Government of Nepal.

Globally we must do more to support those on the frontline of climate change. Seeing the British Gurkha projects in action shows how we can improve lives if we work together.

Nepal negotiates with the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group and has been asked by its Chair, Bhutan, to represent the interests of the Hindu Kush Himalaya's at COP26.

The Himalaya supply 1.6 billion people with fresh water and Nepal alone supplies 400 million.

Annual warming in the Himalayan region is twice the global average and glaciers are retreating by up to 60 metres per year. Mr Sharma saw this when he visited the region and spoke with mountain communities about the impacts of climate change on the Himalaya and retreating glaciers.

Access to water is a pressing issue for some Himalayan communities and Mr Sharma met with people who are building resilience against the effects of climate change with the help of a project run by British Gurkha Nepal.

Minister Sharma also met the British Embassy's Mountains and Climate Change Champion, ex-British Gurkha Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja who is supporting the British Embassy's year long #ActionIsPossible campaign.

The British Ambassador to Nepal, Her Excellency Nicola Pollitt, said:

I am delighted that the COP President Sharma was able to visit Nepal and see first-hand the severe impacts of climate change on the mountains, on biodiversity, on communities and the region. As COP President, he is uniquely placed to deliver clear messages on the need for climate action in the Himalaya to the rest of the world.

Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja, British Embassy Kathmandu's Mountains and Climate Change Champion, said:

I've seen the impact of climate change in the mountains. On K2 as well as on Nepal's mountains. On Manaslu, my team and I were able to boil snow for drinking water in 2012. In 2020, there was no snow to boil. We had to carry water all the way up. If we work together, action is possible.

Ends .

Notes to editors:

1. COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Nepal on 17-18 February 2021.
 2. The COP26 summit will take place on 1-12 November 2021 in Glasgow and will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
 3. The UK is committed to working with all countries and joining forces with civil society, companies and people on the frontline of climate change to inspire climate action ahead of COP26.
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Ending hostilities and averting famine in Yemen

Remarks by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the Security Council briefing on Yemen

My thanks to Special Envoy Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock, and Ambassador King for their briefings.

For Yemen, 2021 started much as 2020 left off: an intractable conflict with what threatens to be the worst famine in decades. But as we have heard, there is an opportunity. Increased US engagement on Yemen, including the reversal of designation, is a welcome milestone. And we fully support UN efforts to broker a deal that ends hostilities, eases economic restrictions, and leads to a comprehensive political process.

However, the Houthis have responded to this push for peace by escalating their attacks against Saudi Arabia and by launching a new offensive on Marib – a city where one million Yemenis have sought refuge.

It will take the collective efforts of this Council to persuade the Houthis to cease this offensive. This conflict will not end without a comprehensive deal involving all of Yemen's key political groups, including the Houthis. In this regard, I welcome the supportive statements that Martin Griffiths received during his recent visits to Tehran and Riyadh, and hope that the Houthis will now receive Martin in Sana'a to discuss the way forward.

While the war rages, as we've heard, millions of Yemenis risk starvation. To prevent famine, the international community and Yemen's key partners must step up at the Pledging Conference on 1 March – or, as Mark said, before that. History – and the Yemeni people – will not look kindly on us if we fail.

UNSC Resolution 2417 makes clear that humanitarian access must not be impeded. In addition, Government of Yemen restrictions on fuel imports are sharply increasing prices, as we've heard, threatening the delivery of basic

services, and the lives of Yemenis. Significant external financial assistance to the Central Bank of Yemen is also urgently needed.

Finally, further Houthi delays to the UN mission to assess the SAFER oil tanker are unacceptable. With another vessel potentially identified, I hope the UN can outline in greater detail what more they need from the Houthis for this mission to deploy.

Business support scheme to boost UK space industry has lift off

The up to 10-week Business Accelerator programme, delivered in partnership with business growth experts from Entrepreneurial Spark and The University of Strathclyde, offers free virtual sessions to help companies with their sights set on space to make progress.

Businesses that may not have previously considered the opportunities presented by the space industry can also benefit. Pre-launch activity already involves a nationwide targeting of relevant businesses to alert them to the possibilities for growth.

The scheme, getting under way in early March, aims to find entrepreneurs from a wide range of sectors to strengthen the UK's space industry infrastructure.

Space has transformed into one of the UK's fastest growing sectors, trebling in size since 2010. The UK space industry now employs close to 42,000 people across the country and generates an income of nearly £15 billion every year – and the government, via the UK Space Agency, wants to accelerate that growth.

Catherine Mealing-Jones, Director of Growth at The UK Space Agency, said:

The space sector is ripe with opportunity, and as the UK recovers from the Covid pandemic this new support programme will bring in diverse ideas and talent to realise that growth opportunity.

A practical approach to how to develop a business, combined with access to experts who can guide success are hallmarks of the programme. This is coupled with an holistic focus on supporting truly sustainable businesses to ensure that the space sector can provide new long-term secure employment right around the country.

Key to this approach is bringing innovators together in existing and new clusters of space-related activity, thereby gathering critical mass which will also benefit adjacent parts of the economy. The relationship with universities is also key and

provides a pathway for students into the sector and for vibrant knowledge exchange for business”.

The UK is already a world leader in space science, in producing small satellites, and utilising space data; and as part of the government’s strategy of achieving 10% of the global space market share by 2030. SMEs in this sector are growing by 30% per annum and there is a real opportunity to get more businesses involved in exploring how space technology can enable their growth.

Sectors targeted include

- manufacturing
- engineering
- robotics
- computer and data science
- autonomous vehicles (self-driving cars)

Businesses of any size can take part. These include those that are:

1. In the space sector already and looking to grow
2. Using space technology as part of their business
3. Open to exploring expansion into the space sector – these may include conservation, archaeology, sustainability, economics, finance, law and lifestyle and health.

Under the scheme, two strands of support are available:

Business Horizons is a series of eight one-off events. The events are one hour each, with a “rich series of orbital activities”. The first event is set for Monday, 8 March.

Leo (which stands for Low Earth Orbit, named after the orbit satellites use to travel the Earth) is a 10-week programme designed to inject pace, with entrepreneurs emerging with momentum and a clear strategy for 90 days of targeted activity to help them make progress in the UK space programme.

Companies of any size are welcome to take part.

Scotland is particularly strong within the UK’s space sector. The Scottish space industry also punches well above its weight and is home to almost a fifth of the total jobs in the UK sector, valued at £880 million in 2017-18.

Sarah Burns, Space Cluster Development Manager of The University of Strathclyde said:

Scotland’s space sector has seen impressive growth over the past years and this business support programme is a great example of how universities play an important role in this growth and the business eco-system. By translating research and innovative ideas into the business and commercial worlds, and as a ‘Place of Useful

Learning', the University of Strathclyde is well-placed to support businesses wishing to explore space as a business opportunity. This programme allows us to engage with the amazing start-ups and businesses that are becoming interested in the opportunities that the space sector can enable in their respective sectors, all of which supports the growth of what is an exciting and rapidly expanding UK space sector.

Mike Stephens, CEO of Entrepreneurial Spark, added:

Space is a truly exciting industry right now, with ground-breaking developments happening all the time. SMEs in this sector are growing by 30% per annum and there is a real opportunity to get more businesses involved in exploring how space technology can enable growth for them. Entrepreneurs have a massive role to play in generating an inclusive economic recovery, and mobilising them in Space sector has the potential deliver this across the whole of the UK. You may not even realise you are using space technology in your business, and the opportunities that are open to you as a result. This is a world-class programme of free support, delivered virtually reaching every corner of the UK. Now is the time for action and our partnership is there to support space entrepreneurs every step of the way.

To find out more about the UK Space Agency's Business Accelerator programme, entrepreneurs and company directors should visit [this link](#).