

Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss speaking at the Velvet Revolution Ball

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress. I would like to start by thanking Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček for choosing London as the venue for this prestigious event marking the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution.

As a teenager in my parents' living room, I vividly remember watching communism collapse across Central and Eastern Europe. After more than 40 years, the dam finally cracked under the growing weight of expectation. A wave of liberation swept across the region, washing away this failed and discredited ideology.

I remember Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visiting Gdansk cheered on by 20,000 people hoping, praying that their nightmare was coming to an end. I remember the courageous young Germans astride the Berlin Wall – that ugly scar separating the free West and the oppressed East – as they tore it down brick by brick. I remember the students who bravely took to the streets of Prague just a few days later and sparked the Velvet Revolution.

I was fortunate enough to visit your beautiful capital in the 1990s, and was struck by the feeling of hope and optimism that welcomed me. I found it everywhere; on the football terraces and in the bars. Clearly, a huge weight had been lifted. And this peaceful transition of power is a testament to the Czech people. Of course, it was Mrs Thatcher, more than almost any other Western leader, who made the philosophical, moral and economic case for freedom. Her determination to face down communism is one of the reasons why she is so revered to this day in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the wake of the Velvet Revolution, one of the first things she did was to invite President Vaclav Havel to Downing Street. And six months later, on a return trip, she helped lay the foundations on which our two countries have built the strong economic and cultural links of which we are so proud today.

I am sure President Havel took great pleasure in opening the first Summer Shakespeare Festival at Prague Castle in 1990. He was a celebrated playwright himself; during the 1970s the Orange Tree Theatre in London put on a number of his fine works in a show of solidarity with this brave campaigner for justice and freedom. In the years since 1989, Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic has seized the opportunities afforded by that freedom.

Helped, I like to believe, by the British expertise we made available in the early 90s through the Know-How Fund, you accomplished a very rapid transformation and have built a formidable economy.

GDP has tripled in the past 20 years and is expected to top \$300 billion

(USD) by 2023.

Last year trade between our two countries reached nearly £10 billion (GBP).

Compare that to 20 years ago when the figure was less than £2 billion (GBP).

And the appetite in the UK for what the Czech Republic has to offer continues to go from strength to strength. From cutting edge vehicles like Skoda's Octavia, which can be found cruising in the fast lanes of our motorways; to your world-famous Pilsners, for which we Brits have developed a real thirst. Of course, one of the many things that we have in common is our love of a well-crafted beer. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that we are shipping nearly one million pints of our own ale to you each year!

The Czech people have made a huge contribution to Britain. From your brave pilots who helped repel the Luftwaffe during the dark days of the Battle of Britain; to the tens of thousands of Czechs who have made the UK their home and go to work every day in our offices, hospitals and schools. And not least the Czech cardiologists, who have been making a vital contribution to the work of Great Ormond Street Hospital since 1968.

You are our friends, our colleagues, our neighbours. We value your contribution and will continue to protect your rights after we leave the EU.

The UK will also continue to work to strengthen our relationship with the other three members of the Visegrad Four: Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. Because as freedom has spread to the East, as new players emerge on the world stage we need to remake the case for free trade and free enterprise.

It is more important than ever that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our friends and allies to defend our way of life. That is why our shared and strong commitment to NATO will remain vital in guaranteeing our collective security. And it is why we need a rules-based trading system at the World Trade Organisation.

As the UK prepares to retake its independent seat at the WTO, I'm committed to bringing down tariffs and boosting free trade, both of which have done so much to spread prosperity across the world. In an age of growing protectionism, countries like ours have a central role to play in making the case for freedom and free markets.

We simply cannot afford to take our freedom for granted. Your bitter experience between 1938 and 1989 has shown us that. But your progress over the last 30 years has also shown the world what people can do when the shackles of oppression are removed and they are given their fundamental right to live as free individuals.

These are lessons that we must never forget.

The spirit of the Velvet Revolution must live on in our hearts.

Government support for recovery from flooding



Since the first day of flooding on Friday, 8 November, the government is providing the following support to help the recovery of people, communities and businesses:

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) activated the emergency Bellwin scheme on the first day of the flooding. Under Bellwin, local authorities dealing with the flooding can apply to have 100% of their eligible costs, above a threshold, reimbursed by the government. This could be for items including rest centres, temporary accommodation and staff overtime.

The government has activated the [Flood Recovery Framework](#)

Meaning that for all lower tier or unitary local authority areas which have 25 or more flooded households:

- MHCLG has committed funding to give all eligible households and businesses affected by the recent severe flooding immediate relief on their Council Tax and Business Rates for at least the next three months. This would mean a home owner in a Band D property in Doncaster, for example could see a saving of over £400 over three months.
- MHCLG is providing a Community Recovery Grant to local councils – equivalent to £500 per eligible household – to help communities and vulnerable people in areas severely affected by the flooding with their immediate recovery.

Also, as part of the framework; The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is also providing funding for a Business Recovery Grant which will provide up to £2,500 per eligible small and medium-sized businesses which have suffered severe impacts from the floods that cannot be

recovered from insurance.

MHCLG has also deployed Recovery Liaison Officers to the most intensely affected local authorities who will work closely with all councils and Local Resilience Forums.

The government set up the cross-Whitehall Flood Recovery Taskforce, attended by Ministers and representatives from local councils to ensure their voices are heard. The taskforce will meet daily to provide local areas with bespoke support and guidance.

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[Universal Periodic Review 34th session: Minister for Human Rights statement](#)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process, involving a peer review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states. It is an important tool of the Human Rights Council aimed at sharing best practice. The UK strongly supports the UPR, having spoken at every session and about every country since the process began. This session saw the review of 14 countries, namely, [Angola](#), [Bolivia](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Egypt](#), [El Salvador](#), [Fiji](#), [The Gambia](#), [Iran](#), [Iraq](#), [Italy](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Madagascar](#), [San Marino](#), and [Slovenia](#).

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

The UK Government continued its approach to the third cycle of the UPR, using it as a tool to drive forward cooperation in the global fight against modern slavery, and making recommendations to every country undergoing review aimed at improving governmental responses to these crimes. Recommendations were wide-ranging and incorporated input from a number of anti-slavery NGOs, calling for improved support for victims, greater legislative proscription of these crimes, and engagement with businesses to tackle the risks of modern slavery in supply chains.

We continued to advocate for ratification of the Protocol of 2014 to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, as part of the 50 for Freedom campaign, which complements existing international instruments and provides specific guidance on measures for eliminating all forms of forced labour. We recognise that if the international community is going to make significant inroads into the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, and the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, we must urgently

galvanise coordinated global action. We continue to push for implementation of the commitments contained in the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, which was launched at the UN General Assembly in 2017 and has since received 90 endorsements.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Freedom of religion or belief continues to be a priority for the United Kingdom, underlined by my appointment as the first Special Envoy for FoRB, and the subsequent appointment of Rehman Chishti to this role. We remain deeply concerned by the scale and severity of violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief around the world and have raised the issue in a number of reviews.

Although the UK already does a lot to stand up for the millions of people around the world who are denied the right to have and practise a religion, belief, or no belief at all, according to their conscience, we know there is always more we can do. That is why, last year, we commissioned an independent Review into the support that the Foreign Office provides to persecuted Christians around the world. Work is already underway to implement its recommendations, which will not just support Christians, but members of other persecuted faith and belief communities too. I hope our Review encourages other Governments – even those where human rights are well established and upheld by the law – to explore what more they can do to support some of the most vulnerable people around the world.

UN Treaty Body elections

Since the 27th session of the UPR, we have made the recommendation to ‘adopt an open, merit-based selection process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections’ to a considerable number of states. These expert bodies are a central part of the UN human rights system, charged with monitoring the implementation of human rights conventions in states which have signed up to them. The UK continues to advocate strengthening the quality, independence and diversity in Treaty Body membership.

Bolivia

On Bolivia, I recognise progress since their 2014 review and welcome their support to the Call of Action to End Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour. I also note the new law passed in 2016, allowing transgender citizens to request having their name, gender and photo changed on official documents to reflect their identity. However, I am concerned by the substantial shortcomings in the conduct of the presidential and legislative elections in October this year and as such, the UK called on the Government to guarantee political rights in Bolivia. Furthermore, I urge the Government to increase efforts to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking and provide adequate support for victims. Finally, I urge the Government to ensure anti-discrimination legislation is fully enforced.

Egypt

I welcome Egypt's progress to address violence against women, including adopting a national strategy for women's empowerment. I hope the NGO law will enable civil society organisations to operate more freely. However, I remain deeply concerned by restrictions on human rights defenders, including arrests, travel bans, asset freezes, and restrictions on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association. I call on the Government to release those detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression, including all journalists, activists and human rights defenders, and unblock news and social media websites. I also call on Egypt to implement recommendations from the UN Committee Against Torture.

Iran

Turning to Iran, I appreciate their engagement with the UPR process. However, I remain deeply concerned by discrimination against persons belonging to minority religious groups, particularly the Baha'is and Christians. I am concerned by Iran's failure to uphold international legal obligations, and its arbitrary detention of citizens and dual nationals arrested on unclear charges, denied due process and subject to mistreatment. I call on Iran to demonstrate immediately that all detainees in prison are neither tortured nor subjected to cruel or inhumane treatment or punishment and call for Iran to ensure that trials are impartial and fair and that compassion may be shown so families may be reunited without further delay.

Iraq

On Iraq, I recognise the serious challenges that the country has faced since its 2014 review as it recovers from Daesh. I commend Government efforts to rehabilitate women survivors following Daesh atrocities, and welcome progress on the domestic violence bill. However, I am deeply concerned by the scale of violence from security forces in recent protests, and reports of media intimidation and suppression. Freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association must be protected. Furthermore, I call on the Government to reform their legislation to ensure justice and support for survivors of sexual violence and accountability of perpetrators.

I urge all countries under review during this session to give full and serious consideration to the UK recommendations. I encourage them not only to accept them, but also to implement all the recommendations in a timely and comprehensive manner. I look forward to the formal UPR adoption at the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council in March 2020.

Further Information

Gary Stempel galardonado por Su Majestad la Reina Isabel II

El Embajador Británico en Panamá, Damion Potter, ofreció una recepción en su residencia en honor a Gary Stempel por recibir el MBE (Most Excellent Order of the British Empire /Orden del Imperio Británico) por su servicio a la juventud y al deporte en Panamá, y para celebrar las importantes relaciones y los lazos de hermandad entre el Reino Unido y Panamá. Entre los invitados estaban familiares, amigos y muchos reconocidos jugadores de fútbol de la selección panameña con quien Stempel ha trabajado durante su trayectoria deportiva en Panamá. Además, se contó la presencia de asociaciones deportivas, empresas, diputados y prensa.

El director técnico, Gary Stempel brindó un discurso de agradecimiento a todos los presentes y comentó que: “este es el honor más grande que he recibido a nivel profesional. Estoy agradecido con Su Majestad la Reina Isabel II, el apoyo de mi familia, amigos, compañeros con los que he trabajado y los que me han acompañado durante todos mis logros”. Stempel también agregó en sus palabras “como entrenador me siento orgulloso y satisfecho de todos los futbolistas con los que he trabajado porque han luchado por cumplir sus sueños, más cuando se está en un ambiente de riesgo social. Ese es uno de mis mayores logros”

El Embajador de Su Majestad en Panamá, Damion Potter dijo “felicitaciones a Gary Stempel por haber recibido tan merecido reconocimiento de manos de Su Majestad la Reina Isabel II, gracias a su compromiso y servicios a la juventud y el deporte en Panamá”. “Stempel ha tenido éxito en muchos países de la región, pero su legado más duradero es la influencia que ha tenido en las asociaciones deportivas de Panamá y en la acción social con los programas dirigidos a la juventud en riesgo. Este galardón demuestra los lazos que tiene el Reino Unido y Panamá en el fútbol y la importancia del deporte en la juventud”- agregó el Embajador Potter.

NOTA AL EDITOR

En junio 2019, se dio a conocer que el entrenador británico-panameño, Gary Stempel, se encontraba en la Lista de Honores de Su Majestad la Reina Isabel II para recibir un galardón por sus servicios a la juventud y deporte en Panamá. En octubre, Stempel viajó a Buckingham Palace en Londres para recibir a manos de Su Majestad el MBE.

MBE (Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) significa miembro de la orden más excelente del imperio británico y se da para celebrar los logros de vida y el servicio excepcional a la comunidad. Los recipientes de la prestigiosa Excelentísima Orden del Imperio Británico son galardonados por sus contribuciones, años de sacrificio y trabajo a las artes y ciencias, contribuciones de caridad y el servicio público.

UKAEA recruiting for new Directors



Culham Science Centre – headquarters of UKAEA

UKAEA is advertising four senior positions for people to play major roles in its drive to deliver on fusion's enormous potential for carbon-free electricity.

- UKAEA is seeking a Programme Director for [STEP \(Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production\)](#) – a new £220 million five-year initiative to design a fusion powerplant. STEP aims to demonstrate the technical and commercial viability of fusion. This unique opportunity requires a director with the ability to manage large programmes and handle ambiguity and uncertainty to realise this first-of-a-kind world-leading ambition.
- Secondly, UKAEA's unprecedented growth has created a unique opportunity for three new director posts to lead the fusion research programme, manage operations of world-class fusion facilities and drive benefits in adjacent sectors.

The deadline for applications is 16 December 2019. For further details of these roles and to apply, [please follow this link to the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy website](#).

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