

Press release: Government pledges to help improve access to UK markets for world's poorest countries post-Brexit

The Government will use Brexit to cement Britain's standing in the world and meet our commitments to the world's poorest by securing their existing duty-free access to UK markets and providing new opportunities to increase trade links.

The commitment means that around 48 countries across the globe, from Bangladesh to Sierra Leone, Haiti and Ethiopia will continue to benefit from duty-free exports into the UK on all goods other than arms and ammunition, known as 'everything but arms'.

On leaving the EU, the UK Government will also explore options to expand on relationships with developing countries such as Jamaica, Pakistan and Ghana – all of which currently benefit from a mixture of reduced or zero tariffs on the goods they export to the UK – as well as maintaining existing trading arrangements and avoiding costly tariffs.

The Government continues to deliver improved support to these countries by helping them break down the barriers to trade, supporting critical trade infrastructure like ports and roads, and building trade skills in those countries, so that they can take better advantage of trading opportunities.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said:

Our departure from the EU is an opportunity to step up to our commitments to the rest of the world, not step away from them.

Free and fair trade has been the greatest liberator of the world's poor, and today's announcement shows our commitment to helping developing countries grow their economies and reduce poverty through trade.

Behind the 'duty-free exports' are countless stories of people in developing countries working hard to provide for themselves and their families by exporting everyday goods such as cocoa, bananas and roses, resulting in lower prices and greater choice for consumers.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The UK is using its position as a great, global trading nation to seize opportunities to lift countries out of grinding poverty. This will generate the wealth, prosperity and investment needed to

create millions of jobs and help the world's poorest people stand on their own two feet.

Helping developing countries harness the formidable power of trade means we are not only creating trading partners of the future for UK businesses, but supporting jobs at home too. Building a more prosperous world and supporting our own long-term economic security is firmly in all our interests.

Around £20 billion a year of goods are shipped to the UK from these developing countries, accounting for around half of our clothing, a quarter of our coffee and other everyday goods such as cocoa, bananas and roses.

Without these trading arrangements, clothing, for example, from some of the poorest countries could face tariffs of over 10% – which could be passed on to UK consumers through higher prices at the till.

Access to the markets of developed countries also provides vital trading opportunities for the world's poorest people and creates jobs. For example, 2 million women work in Bangladesh's garment sector, which is a significant exporter of clothing to the UK. These opportunities help people to work their way out of poverty and build our trading partners of the future.

In 2015, the UK imported the following from developing countries:

- £19.2 billion of goods
- 79% (or £186 million) of all tea imports – enough for 34.9 billion cups of tea
- Over 22% of all the UK's coffee imports, valued at around £131 million. Both Indonesia and Vietnam exported more than £30 million into the UK, and Ethiopia exported over £15 million
- £7.8 billion in textiles – accounting for 45% of all the UK's textile and apparel imports
- Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam combined exported 34 million dresses – one dress for every woman in the UK.

None of these countries can defeat poverty without sustained economic growth – jobs and investment opportunities are vital to helping the world's poorest people stand on their own two feet. Without these jobs, a whole generation could be consigned to a future where opportunities are out of reach; potentially fuelling instability and mass migration, which could in turn have direct consequences for the UK.

Further information

The world's Least Developed Countries are calculated by the UN using criteria which is based on income criterion, the Human Assets Index and the Economic Vulnerability Index. [Further information can be found here.](#)

Under current EU arrangements, the UK offers Duty Free Quota Free access for Least Developed Countries on all goods which they are exporting to the UK,

other than arms and ammunition. For the next tier of developing countries, largely classed as lower middle income, the EU offers a mix of reductions on tariffs.

DFID's first [Economic Development Strategy](#), launched by Ms Patel earlier this year, sets out how private sector investment will help developing nations speed up their rate of economic growth, trade more and industrialise faster, and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty.

The UK is committed to ensuring that when companies source from developing countries, they do so in a way which protects the human rights of workers and their health and safety.

Case studies

Textiles, preferences and development

The UK imported £7.8 billion in textiles and apparel from countries which benefit from preferential access to UK markets in 2015, 45% of all the UK's textiles and apparel imports. Preferential trade arrangements not only created jobs for people in developing countries, but also benefitted customers and businesses in the UK by keeping prices lower and offering greater choice of goods.

The UK imported 34 million dresses from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam in 2015 – enough for one dress for every woman in the UK. Women in Bangladesh often lack opportunities to work outside the home. The growth of the ready-made garment industry is changing this.

Vast numbers of young Bangladeshi women are leaving their villages to work in garment factories where, in earlier generations, young women were rarely seen outside their homes. In Bangladesh, women make up the majority of workers in the ready-made garment sector as a whole, with around 2 million women currently working in this sector. Women in garment factories are pushing back the social limits on their life options by redefining the norms of female propriety.

The textile industry often has wider spill overs to industries other than textiles. For example, India's textiles sector uses 7% of India's agricultural products, chemical and computer related services sectors, whilst nearly 8% of the transport and storage output goes to the textile industry. Therefore one industry creates multiple demands in others.

Tea and coffee exports supporting jobs in developing economies

Promoting agricultural exports from developing economies supports DFID's agricultural programme which by 2018 could help over 900,000 people to earn better livings from agriculture.

In 2015, 79% of tea in the UK came from beneficiary countries of trade preferences (£186 million). £129 million of this came from African economies – £111 million from Kenya. In total the UK imported 103,000 tonnes of tea

from beneficiary economies; enough for 34.9 billion cups of tea.

In 2015 countries which benefit from preferential access to the UK imported over 22% of all the UK coffee imports. These countries imported nearly £131 million worth of coffee into the UK in 2015. Both Indonesia and Vietnam imported more than £30 million into the UK and Ethiopia imported over £15 million.

Bananas

The UK imports 6% of the world's dried and fresh banana exports, and we eat around six billion bananas every year. Countries such as the Dominican Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Ghana are an important source of this trade to the UK, contributing to 30% of total banana imports.

DFID is a committed Fairtrade partner and is providing £18 million over six years to help Fairtrade International have a greater impact in their work and make the global Fairtrade system stronger.

The Fairtrade Foundation highlight that one in three bananas bought in the UK is Fairtrade. Fairtrade plays an important role in helping to improve the lives of poor people, such as by ensuring farmers receive fair prices for their products, workers receive better wages to help them support their families and agricultural practices are made more sustainable.

The UK imported over 105,000 tonnes of bananas from Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015. The amount of bananas the UK imports from Sub-Saharan beneficiary economies has almost doubled since the start of the millennium.

[Press release: Statement from the Secretary of State regarding the cladding testing failure rate](#)

Ever since the appalling tragedy at Grenfell Tower on Wednesday 14 June, the government has been working very closely with local authorities, housing associations, and the private sector to ensure the safety of high-rise buildings.

We provided [advice to all social landlords on 22 June about interim safety measures](#) that should be taken immediately where it has been determined that a building has Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding that is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the current Building Regulations. This guidance was recommended by an independent panel of experts and includes advice on the 3 emerging findings from the Metropolitan Police investigation into Grenfell Tower.

A combustibility testing programme for ACM cladding is running around the clock at the Building Research Establishment (BRE). This is able to test 100 samples a day – and if needed, yet further laboratory capacity could be provided.

So far the cladding from 34 high-rise buildings, in 17 local authority areas, has failed the combustibility test. All landlords and fire and rescue services for those local authorities have been alerted to the results and we are in touch with all 17 areas to support and monitor follow-up action. The landlords for all the affected buildings are taking action to inform tenants and implement the interim safety measures needed. Areas affected include the city of Manchester, Camden, Plymouth, Hounslow, Portsmouth, Barnet and Brent.

The fact that all samples so far have failed the tests underlines the value of the testing programme we have set up with the Building Research Establishment to get samples checked properly in the laboratories.

It is therefore very important for local authorities and housing associations to continue to submit such samples as a matter of urgency.

In the meantime, local authorities are contacting fire and rescue services in their area to conduct fire safety inspections of these tower blocks to inform them on what remedial works might be required.

We expect that authorities and landlords are very sensibly giving the highest priority to buildings with which they have most concern. But we should not be in the position where buildings have such cladding on them. How this occurred – and preventing this from happening again – is likely to be a key question for the public inquiry.

We are now rapidly identifying buildings of concern: samples are being tested very quickly; fire inspectors are checking the safety of the buildings as a whole; and we have issued interim safety guidance to help action that is being taken by local authorities, landlords, and fire and rescue services to mitigate risk and start addressing any defects that have been found.

It is important to stress that cladding itself is not dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used. Also, a failure in testing of the cladding does not necessarily mean that a building will have to be evacuated; the decision by Camden Council to evacuate 4 of the 5 towers on the Chalcots Estate was because the failed testing of the external cladding was compounded by multiple other fire safety failures which the fire inspection team found within the buildings.

Obviously, those residents in Camden who had to be asked to leave their homes at such short notice have had a distressing experience; I have to express deep admiration for the calm and stoicism with which so many have handled this.

I understand that the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, and now the evacuation in Camden, will be particularly worrying for those living in high-rise towers. However, fire safety standards are in place in buildings across this country

and landlords are obliged by law to meet them – in both private rented and social housing. Individuals are no more likely to experience a fire now than before, but everyone should remain vigilant to the risk.

It is the responsibility of the landlords and freeholders to advise their residents what to do in the event of a fire in the building, based on the findings of their risk assessment. We are making sure that authorities and landlords have all the latest advice and support available as quickly as possible.

Press release: Foreign Secretary's message for Eid

I wish a happy and peaceful Eid to all Muslims in the UK and across the world as they gather with their families to celebrate and mark the end of Ramadan. British Muslims make a vital contribution to all aspects of our society and have helped to shape the vibrant and successful democracy that we have in the UK today.

Our shared values and belief in freedom and liberty across all religions is what makes the UK so special and it is more important than ever that we remember that in light of the recent tragedies our country has experienced.

My thoughts are with those who, because of their circumstances, may be unable to celebrate Eid al-Fitr this year. We continue to work with our friends and partners for peace across the Muslim world, and in particular for an end to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. To them we offer our thoughts and prayers.

Eid Mubarak to all.

Press release: Eid al-Fitr 2017: Theresa May's message

I send my warmest good wishes to Muslims here in the United Kingdom, and right around the world, who are celebrating the festival of Eid al-Fitr.

For more than three million British Muslims, who make a huge and valued contribution to our national life, Eid is a truly special time.

Coming after the prayer and deep reflection of the holy month of Ramadan, Eid

is a joyous occasion, to be celebrated with family and friends.

In the UK, we rightly take pride in being an open and diverse multi-ethnic and multi-faith democracy.

Over the last month, many British Muslims have shared with neighbours of all faiths and of none the holy practices of Ramadan – from doing charitable work to help in the local community, to coming together to break fast at the end of the day.

This spirit of fellowship and service lies at the heart of every great faith, and it is something around which we can all unite.

Sadly this month has also seen some dark and tragic events, including the truly appalling attack outside the Finsbury Park mosque.

It was the second terrorist attack on the streets of our capital city this month, and it was every bit as sickening as those which came before it.

Attacks like that seek to drive us apart, and our response to them must be to stand even closer together, united, to affirm that hatred and evil will never succeed.

So in that spirit of unity – and on behalf of the whole British people – let me wish you a happy a peaceful celebration.

Eid Mubarak.

[News story: A record Armed Forces Day celebrated across the country](#)

A record 300 plus events including parades, military displays and community fetes are taking place right across the country to say thank you to the Armed Forces community for the outstanding work they do; Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen and women, both Regulars and Reservists are being recognised alongside the wider defence family such as Cadets and veterans past and present.

Today the National Event was held in Liverpool attended by His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex representing The Queen and the Royal Family.

Prime Minister Theresa May, who attended the event, said:

Our world-leading Armed Forces work day and night to defend our country and our way of life, both at home and abroad.

In the aftermath of the Manchester attack, military personnel

played a vital role on UK streets, providing visible reassurance to our communities. And further afield they continue to take the fight to Daesh in Iraq and Syria, helping to drive the terrorists back and give ordinary people in those countries the chance to rebuild their lives.

I am proud to have attended the Armed Forces Day celebrations in the great city of Liverpool this year, joining thousands of people in expressing our gratitude to the men and women who do so much to preserve our freedom.

Other guests in Liverpool included Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger, Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson, hundreds of Service personnel, Cadets, veterans and thousands of members of the general public.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Today is a valuable opportunity to give something back to the Armed Forces community, which works so hard to keep us safe each and every day.

We have much to thank them for. In the last few years alone, our Armed Forces have fought Daesh terrorism, rescued thousands of migrants in the Mediterranean and helped protect us here at home.

I commend Liverpool for a spectacular event and thank organisers across the country for their efforts to mark Armed Forces Day.

The National Event began at 11am, with gun salutes heralding the start of the parade from St George's Hall, accompanied by a flypast from an RAF Typhoon and ending with a flypast from the Red Arrows. The military villages then opened and visitors enjoyed an afternoon of exciting displays along the Pier Head including planes, helicopters, diving tanks, inflatable boats, tanks, a field hospital, simulators and marching bands. The Royal Navy's type-23 frigate HMS Iron Duke has been docked in the city for the celebrations.

Later in Liverpool there were due to be flypasts by a Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Gun runs, Dragon boat racing and spectacular closing performance of Beat Retreat.

Liverpool's Assistant Mayor and Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Events, Councillor Wendy Simon, said:

What an incredible event! It truly is a day of celebration, and from the start it has been a sea of colour and sound – a fantastic spectacle for everyone. It was wonderful to see serving personnel,

side by side with cadets and veterans marching through Liverpool, cheered on by the crowds lining the streets.

This city has risen the occasion and I'm delighted to say we are giving the armed forces the 'thank you' they deserve.

As well as the national event in Liverpool, significant events have been organised across the country including in Caerphilly, Plymouth, Bangor (Northern Ireland) and Edinburgh. A number of smaller events from fetes to film screenings will take place, some of which will be held as far afield as the Falkland Islands and Cyprus.

UK Armed Forces are currently involved in over 20 operations in more than 25 countries, from South Sudan to Iraq. But many of those back at home will be in attendance at events across the country.

Also present will be many veterans that make-up the estimated 2.56 million Armed Forces veteran community living in the UK. Young Cadets will be present too; together the Sea, Army, and Air cadets have almost 100,000 members, many of which will be at events up and down the country.

UK businesses have showed their support too. The Royal Mail is postmarking Saturday's mail with "Armed Forces Day 24 June 2017", supermarket chain Morrisons is offering free drinks to Service Personnel and Toby Carvery are offering a free meal.