

# Oceans Apart? The UK & the Pacific: Partnerships & Shared Values

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Thank you for the invitation to address such an illustrious audience this evening. The New Zealand Institute of International Affairs plays a hugely valuable role in exposing and debating the international issues of our day. And it is a privilege to be addressing the Auckland branch for the first time, and on this topic – not least as Auckland is, very proudly, the biggest Pasifika city in the world.

My job this evening is to talk – no pressure – about the UK and the Pacific. Given that the Pacific spans almost a third of the globe, and is made up of a multiplicity of individual states and territories, each with their own culture, history, politics and beliefs, it is no small task.

So I'd like to start with a disclaimer: that while I will refer to "the Pacific" as a shorthand for the region, the UK absolutely recognises the sheer diversity and complexity of the region. The experience of Pitcairn and Pitcairners is completely different from those of the people of Papua New Guinea and Fiji. The outlook of a Tongan will differ from that of someone from Nouvelle Calédonie. So the UK's strong bilateral relationships with our Pacific partners form the bedrock of our role in this region. And I hope you will take my comments on "The Pacific" in that context, and in that spirit – just as I hope you will forgive my best attempt at Pacific attire. So: disclaimers over.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the UK and the Pacific sit on opposite sides of the globe – we are quite literally oceans apart.

At first glance, you would expect those oceans, the geographical distance, the differences in size and economy, to result in shallower relationships.

But in fact, the opposite is the case. While the distance is great, the connections are close. We have more in common than that which sets us apart. We are all island nations with long seafaring traditions. We have strong historical connections. We are nations built on the shared values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and good governance. We are – many of us – members of the Commonwealth.

And we all share a commitment to finding global solutions to global problems. To working with and through the Rules-Based International Order. And to working together to address the existential threat that is climate change, and to protect and preserve our oceans.

## **Pacific Uplift**

Let me talk first about the UK's Pacific Uplift.

Historical connections between UK and Pacific Islands are many and varied. Three Pacific Island nations are Realm countries (Tuvalu, PNG & Solomon Islands – in addition of course to Australia and New Zealand), nine are fellow members of the Commonwealth, and our connections – for good or ill – stem from Captain Cook's first voyage through the Pacific 250 years ago. This was one of the far-flung corners of the British Empire and – whatever we may think of the Empire and its legacy, and that is surely a topic for another speech – the ties that are left are strong. A shared language, shared legal system, and critical, modern day security connections: for example the hundreds of Fijian soldiers who serve with pride and distinction in the British Army. And then there are also the more unusual legacies – such as the fact that the Duke of Edinburgh is regarded as a living deity on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu.

So the UK has long been in and of the Pacific. But in the 2000s, we scaled down our presence. We remained present and engaged in Fiji, PNG and the Solomon Islands, and covered other Pacific countries from non-resident accreditations – as I currently cover Samoa. But we closed our High Commissions in Vanuatu and Tonga. And quite frankly we stepped back too much from our Pacific friends and partners.

We are now beginning to put that balance right. While New Zealand has its 'Pacific Reset' and Australia has its 'Step Up', for the last year the UK has been pursuing our 'Pacific Uplift' strategy. This will see us open three new High Commissions, in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu later this year. That is a doubling of our diplomatic presence in the region. We have also doubled our team in Fiji, with new roles on development, trade, oceans, regional organisations and programmes.

And I am delighted to say that our Deputy High Commissioner to Samoa, Rob Contractor, is already in role, and in Apia as I speak. He is double hatted: Deputy High Commissioner Samoa, and Deputy Consul General Auckland, with a particular remit to enhance our relationships with the Pasifika of New Zealand. As we increase our presence we are considering – and consulting on – where we should focus our increased engagement in the Pacific, in a way that most furthers the interests of our Pacific partners, speaks to our shared agendas, and complements rather than duplicates the work of other partners in the region: Australia and New Zealand, first and foremost, but others, too.

So what is our focus? I don't want to pre-empt the results of those consultations. And in the new posts – Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu – it will be for the new High Commissioners and their teams to determine their priorities, within a wider regional context.

But I can say now that it is a given, a no brainer, a non-negotiable – however you want to put it – that our shared values, climate change and oceans will be at the heart of our agenda. So let me take each of those in order.

## **Our shared values**

So what are the shared values of the UK and the countries of the Pacific. I

would say the following: that we all believe in finding global solutions to global problems – and working with and through the Rules Based International Order.

We believe – as seafaring, trading nations – in freedom of navigation and secure shipping lanes, and in trade as a common good – as a driver of both prosperity and peace and stability.

We believe in democracy and the rule of law, good governance and human rights. And in the principle, enshrined at the UN, of equality amongst nations: that regardless of size or wealth, each country has an equal vote and an equal say on the world stage. That might is not right.

We believe in taking action to uphold the international rules – as we did collectively, in June last year, in reinforcing the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons at the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons – after chemical weapons were used in Salisbury, UK, and in Syria.

And we share a recognition that we live on a shared planet with finite, common resources that must be managed for the benefit of all: that we have a duty of kaitiakitanga, or guardianship, for our land and oceans.

The Commonwealth is a part of that Rules Based International Order, and is rooted in our shared values. As the current Commonwealth Chair in Office, the UK is focused in particular on increasing collaboration and cooperation on climate change, oceans, cyber security, and maximising intra-Commonwealth trade. The Commonwealth Trade Advantage – namely that trade between Commonwealth countries is about 19% cheaper than elsewhere – is relatively well known. But Commonwealth members are working hard to reduce non-tariff barriers between members – for example Vanuatu is leading the cooperation on “supply-side connectivity” across the Commonwealth membership with a focus on the agricultural sector – and the Commonwealth has also been actively supporting existing trade in the Pacific, not least through the Hub and Spokes II programme, which aims to help Fiji become a hub for trade and investment in the Pacific.

The Commonwealth is also active on human rights. With £1.8M UK funding, the Pacific Commonwealth Equalities Programme is working through the South Pacific Community to build capacity on human rights. And there have been smaller scale projects, too: in Samoa, for example, the Commonwealth Secretariat has supported the critical work of the National Ombudsman in documenting and communicating the problem of domestic violence.

Of course the UK’s work on values and human rights is not limited to work within the Commonwealth. This year we have launched a campaign, in partnership with Canada, to champion media freedom around the world – including in the Pacific. Media freedom plays an essential role in protecting all other human rights and freedoms. It is a vital foundation for any prosperous and healthy liberal democracy: in the UK, in the Pacific, and globally. To that end we are hosting a Global Conference for Media Freedom in London later this month.

## Climate Change

I want to turn now to the existential challenge that is climate change. If you save Tuvalu, so the saying goes, you save the world. Pacific Island Nations have contributed minimally to the emissions that are causing global temperatures to rise. But they are on the front line of its impacts, in terms of temperature and sea level rises, and extreme weather events. And they are also in the vanguard in terms of championing urgent action to tackle climate change.

The UK, by contrast, led the world to wealth through fossil fuels in the Industrial Revolution, and has contributed in no small way to greenhouse gas emissions to date. So it is imperative that the UK now leads the drive in the opposite direction, in weaning ourselves off fossil fuels domestically, and in championing climate action internationally.

So it is a no-brainer (to use the technical term) that tackling climate change is a central plank of the partnership between the UK and its partners in the Pacific.

Last month, the UK became the first major economy to legislate for Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. That means emissions from homes, transport, farming and industry will have to be avoided completely or – in the most difficult examples – offset. This was in response to advice from the UK's Committee on Climate Change, which said that if other countries followed the UK, we would have a 50-50 chance of staying below the recommended 1.5C temperature rise by 2100. (You will know that a 1.5C rise is considered the threshold for dangerous climate change.)

The UK has led the way in reducing our domestic emissions, and in championing the low carbon economy. And this year we have gone almost three months without coal: finding our energy from renewable or other low-emission sources.

We are equally ambitious in terms of our international work to tackle climate change.

In December last year, the UK and New Zealand co-hosted a Wilton Park Forum on Climate Change and Resilience in the Pacific. The forum brought together leaders from the Pacific, development partners, civil society, academics and officials to consult on climate finance; the oceans / climate nexus; climate change and security; and climate change-related displacement and migration.

The UK is also putting its money where its mouth is. UK International Climate Finance expenditure in Pacific Island countries has amounted to approximately \$88 million since 2016. This has covered a range of areas including renewable energy and wastewater management, but has a particular focus on strengthening climate and risk resilience. We have also provided £9.6m of funding through the UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme for CommonSensing, an innovative international project in partnership with Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to support and build climate resilience and enhance decision-making through the use of satellite remote sensing technology.

And we have contributed £1.4M for the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions Hub to help Pacific countries implement their Paris Agreement commitments.

We take our global responsibilities seriously: as a member of the P5, the G8, as the fifth biggest economy in the world. The British Prime Minister – and we will find out in July who will take over from Prime Minister May – is the UN Secretary General's resilience champion, and will co-host the Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in September.

The UK is also bidding to host COP26, in 2020, in partnership with Italy. We are well placed to be committed, ambitious and effective hosts. And – if successful – we will deliver a robust agenda to support the mitigation and adaptation challenges facing Small Island Developing States.

## Oceans

My third and final theme is Oceans. It was not for nothing that early European explorers referred to the islands of Samoa as the Navigator Islands: it takes one to know one. We are all seafaring nations, by and of the sea. And when I was at the Conference of the Pacific Community two weeks ago, delegate after delegate – from the Prime Minister Puna of the Cook Islands, to Deputy Prime Minister Fiame of Samoa, to the Foreign Ministers of Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands – talked about how the oceans are central to their way of life, to their economy and wellbeing – and about the critical task of protecting those oceans now and in the future.

So what are we doing on Oceans? The UK provides over £90 million of funds to two Commonwealth oceans programmes that directly benefit the Pacific. The first is the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme, which supports 17 Commonwealth small island developing countries in the Pacific and Caribbean in identifying the potential of their marine economies in a sustainable, resilient, and integrated way. The intention here is to promote growth, innovation, jobs, and investment whilst safeguarding healthy seas and ecosystems.

The second is the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance, which is part of the Commonwealth Blue Charter action group and is jointly led by the UK and Vanuatu. The Alliance consists of a group of countries who pledged ambitious actions to reduce plastic pollution.

The Clean Oceans Alliance encourages members to commit to one of the following:

- Banning the sale and manufacture of microbeads in cosmetic and personal care products;
- Significantly reduce the number of single-use plastic carrier bags;
- Take steps to eliminate all avoidable single-use plastic waste.

Over 20 countries have pledged to this alliance so far. And as I sat at the table at the Pacific Community, country after country talked about their plans to ban or restrict the use of single use plastics. We all share the

same goals.

We also want to do all we can to harness thought leadership in the region. So it's good news for all of us that the University of the South Pacific won a new 5 year £1.6 million UK research grant and will partner with other world leading research centres in studying the urgent challenges facing our oceans.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in addition to being the British High Commissioner to New Zealand and Samoa, I am also the Governor of the Pitcairn Islands. Pitcairn is the smallest and most remote of the members of the Pacific Community. Situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, two days away by boat from the nearest other human settlement, it has just 50 inhabitants. But despite its size and isolation, it is deeply committed to playing its part in protecting our oceans, and has a Marine Protected area of 835,000km<sup>2</sup>.

But Henderson Island, one of the three uninhabited Pitcairn Islands, has the dubious accolade of having the highest density of plastic pollution anywhere in the world. So last month we sent a scientific expedition to Henderson Island, focused on clearing up the plastic, studying it and its impact on the environment, setting up cameras to monitor plastic pollution build up and impact, and highlighting the plight of plastic pollution to the wider world. The pictures are truly shocking. But we hope that both the science – and the images – will help galvanize cultural change in how we consume and manage plastic waste.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and Gentlemen we are living in interesting times. The tectonic plates of geopolitics are shifting under our feet – here in the Pacific as indeed they are elsewhere. There is a growing consensus – though not yet universal – of the existential challenge of climate change, and the pollution of our seas. But we are in the foothills of efforts to tackle those challenges. Economic, climate and political resilience are more important than ever – and nowhere more than in the Small Island Developing States of the Pacific.

So that is why the UK is increasing its presence and engagement in the region. We want to bring our power, influence and expertise to bear, and we want to work in partnership with our friends in the Pacific, on the basis of our shared values, as we all seek – urgently – to protect and preserve this beautiful world that we live in.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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**[Penny Mordaunt sets out plan to](#)**

## empower UK women

- Women & Equalities Minister today sets out plans to financially empower women from school to retirement
- Measures will include a review of enforcement of equal pay legislation and improved information for parents around family friendly entitlements
- New chair and remit for the Women's Business Council will also be announced, working with sectors to tackle their gender pay gaps

Despite generally doing better in education, women are more than three times more likely to work part time – with less chance of seeing their wages grow, tend to work in lower paid industries and jobs, and have lower private pensions wealth.

Speaking to stakeholders this morning, the Minister for Women and Equalities will say:

"I want everyone in our country to be able to thrive in life. That means being able to be in control of the choices you make and have the opportunities you have to seize. We must be honest that many women do not have those choices or opportunities, and as a consequence are not able to be as financially resilient or independent".

"This inequality is faced at every stage of a woman's life – from how she is treated in the classroom, to the caring roles she often takes on, and the lack of savings or pension she accumulates. This road map is intended to define and guide how we tackle the barriers women face as they journey through life.

"I'm confident today's announcement will be the first step in a long-term commitment by this government to empower everyone in this country, helping them truly reach their full potential, from birth to retirement."

The decisions made at every stage of a woman's life – from the subjects she studies at school, to taking time out of work to care for relatives – accumulate over time and impact on her financial independence when she retires.

67% of girls aged 11-21 think that women do not have the same chances as men. 60% of boys aged 15-16 thought their best subject was a STEM subject, compared to only 33% of girls. However, in reality, girls tend to outperform boys in STEM subjects at GCSE. We will pilot different approaches to education about gender roles, spending £2 million so children will learn about different careers at primary school age and invest in programmes to increase participation in STEM subjects.

When they begin their working lives, it is important that both men and women are supported to balance their job and their home life. The government will therefore look at how we can continue to better support organisations in delivering family friendly policies, through the largest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation.

The government recognises that carers play a vital role – 60% [2.7 million] of the estimated 4.5 million total informal carers are women. This government made a manifesto commitment to consult on a new right to carers' leave, as enjoyed in many other countries.

If a couple splits, we want to ensure women don't struggle when they retire. Sadly, 42% of marriages end in divorce, but only 36% of asset sharing agreements include sharing of pensions – this means women lose out on financial security later in life. Government will be updating the online divorce process to ensure couples are aware of the benefits of pension sharing.

Chartered Management Institute CEO, Ann Francke, said:

"Gender inequality is a complex issue with many causes rooted throughout education, society, culture and the workplace. The Government's Gender Equality Roadmap acknowledges this; and breaks down the problem into its many component parts, aiming to offer practical solutions and success measures for each.

"It's ambitious, comprehensive and collaborative. Well-executed it is a potential game changer and an excellent source of practical insight, policies and advice to help all UK organisations go further, faster to achieve gender balance."

Chief Operating Officer of FDM Group, Sheila Flavell, said:

"It's inspiring to see a cross-government initiative designed to address gender inequality in the workplace. This proactive approach is critical for tackling issues such as pay gap discrepancies, unconscious discrimination and the barriers which all too often prevent people from getting ahead in their careers. It's vital that these issues are addressed to ensure men and women can progress without missing out, whilst juggling a busy career and home life."

A refreshed Women's Business Council (WBC) will also launch as part of today's announcement, with a new chair, Fiona Dawson, the Global President of Mars Food, Drinks and Multisales. The WBC will focus on tackling individual sectors to ensure they are closing their gender pay gaps and that female staff have the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

New Chair of the Women's Business Council, Fiona Dawson, said:

"I am delighted to take over as Chair of the WBC, building on the terrific work led by Dame Cilla during her tenure.

"The plan announced by the government today gives us a fantastic opportunity to renew the fight for women's equality, and it will be my immediate priority to ensure that our partners are doing everything in their power to help women progress in the workplace."

ENDS



Notes to editors:

- The Government Equalities Office is also undertaking a piece of work with key representative bodies, business leaders and the thriving third sector to ensure continued activity to address the barriers outlined in the roadmap and to bring women's voices into the heart of policy making.

Statistics:

- Girls are slightly more likely to get a top grade in maths GCSE, but boys are over 50% more likely to take maths at A Level.
- On average women enter the labour market with higher qualifications than men – but earn less per hour from the start.
- By the time their first child is 12, mothers' average hourly wages are a third below fathers'.
- Women live longer, but women aged 55 to 64 are almost 20% less likely to have a private pension, and those who do have almost 40% less wealth in their pension.

To ensure women are safe in the workplace, government is also taking forward measures to tackle sexual harassment – shortly launching a consultation to ensure legislation is up to scratch. This will include strengthening and clarifying the laws on third party harassment, exploring whether protections need to be extended to interns and volunteers, and examining whether the three month time limit for workplace discrimination and harassment cases needs to be extended.

Sitting alongside the plan, an annual Gender Equality Monitor will bring together metrics from across government to monitor important gender equality issues in the UK and help hold all parties, including government, to account. An interactive tool to make the data more accessible will be launched next year.

The Government will be announcing further progress on implementing its Good Work Plan this summer, including providing support to working families and vulnerable workers. The Good Work Plan comes as the latest response to the independent Taylor Review of impact modern working practices (2017). The review found that the strength of the UK's labour market is built on flexibility but that a clearer focus was needed on quality of work as well as the quantity of jobs.

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## [Seatruck Pace report published](#)

Our report on a fatal accident on the ro-ro vessel Seatruck Pace when a crewman fell through a vehicle ramp hatch on 17 December 2018, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened and the subsequent actions: [read more](#).

## **Press enquiries**

Press enquiries during office hours 01932 440015

Press enquiries out of hours 020 7944 4292

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## **PM's speech at the Pride reception: 2 July 2019**

Welcome, everyone.

This is the third Pride reception that I have had the pleasure of hosting.

And it is always a highpoint of the summer.

A chance to celebrate the contribution that LGBT people of all backgrounds make to our national life.

To look back with pride on everything that generations of campaigners have achieved.

And to look forward to a future where the bigotry and discrimination that LGBT people still face can be made a thing of the past.

During this year's Pride season, we remember two important anniversaries.

50 years since the Stonewall Riots in New York – the catalyst for the modern LGBT rights movement.

And thirty years since a group of people here in the UK, inspired by those events in 1969, founded Stonewall – today Europe's biggest LGBT rights charity.

I am delighted to welcome Ruth Hunt and all the guests from Stonewall here today – thirty people nominated by Stonewall to celebrate their thirty years of ground-breaking activism in the cause of human rights.

Stonewall has four inspiring missions: empowering individuals to be their authentic selves; transforming institutions to create inclusive and accepting cultures; changing hearts and minds so LGBT people can participate fully in society; and changing and protecting laws so that equality is achieved, maintained and defended.

These are noble causes and your success in pursuing them has made our country, and our world, a better place.

The last three decades have indeed been years of progress.

Years when the hearts and minds of the British people have been changed – have been opened.

Today we are a more accepting, more respectful, and more loving society when it comes to questions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The fact that in 2019 the second in line to the throne speaks openly about how relaxed and comfortable he would be if one of his children were to come out to him is a sign of just how far we have come.

It sends a powerful message right around the world.

Because as everyone here knows, the job is not done.

In many countries, LGBT people still face legal persecution, social stigma, violence and discrimination.

A few weeks ago the United Kingdom took over as co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition – the first intergovernmental network devoted to promoting and protecting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people around the world.

Next year we will host an international LGBT rights conference here in London to address the key issues we need to tackle to achieve global equality.

And while the UK is regularly ranked as one of the most LGBT-friendly countries in the world, we know that we still have a long way to go.

We now have a much clearer picture of the challenges, thanks to the National Survey which the Government conducted in 2017.

It drew a huge response and it has provided a wealth of information.

Last year we launched our LGBT Action Plan in response – a comprehensive, cross-government plan to improve the lives of LGBT people.

It makes 75 commitments which the government will meet over the next four years.

And in the last 12 months we have made a strong start, with a third of the commitments already achieved.

We have appointed the first ever National Adviser on LGBT health in the NHS, Dr Michael Brady [and I am very pleased has joined us joined us here today].

We have created a new LGBT Advisory Panel to advise government on everything from ending conversion therapy to tackling hate crime.

And we have expanded our programme to tackle homophobic, biphobic and

transphobic bullying.

I want to commend Penny Mordaunt, Baroness Williams and Vicky Atkins for leading that effort – and for all the work they and their officials at the GEO do to champion equality.

We have seen just how necessary that work is.

I was shocked to see the image of a young couple brutally attacked on a London bus last month.

I am very pleased that Melania and Chris are here with us today.

As Chris said of her experience: 'It was scary, but this is not a novel situation.'

The hostility and hate experienced by LGBT people, especially trans people, in our society is real – and it is something we must all stand against.

The Government has refreshed our Hate Crime Action Plan and the Law Commission will be conducting a review of existing hate crime legislation, to see if it needs to be strengthened.

But the law by itself cannot change attitudes.

That's why we have developed other policies that I think have a huge part to play in breaking down this ignorance and hatred.

Last week we published the final guidance on Relationships Education for schools in England.

Under the new policy, every child will leave school having been taught in an age-appropriate way about the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender identity.

It is a chance to establish right from the start that difference is to be respected, diversity to be valued – and I believe it is a huge step forward.

This will probably be one of the last times I make a speech in this garden.

And I am very pleased that one of my final events here should be the Pride reception.

Like a lot of people of my generation, my heart and mind has changed on some of the issues that Stonewall has spent 30 years campaigning on.

It was during David Cameron's leadership that my political party fully embraced LGBT equality.

I was proud to be the shadow Minister who published the Conservative Party's first Contract for Equalities.

I was proud as Home Secretary to sponsor and vote for the Same Sex Marriage Bill.

When I become Prime Minister, I was determined to use this platform to be an ally to LGBT people.

That's why I spoke out at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to condemn homophobic laws that still criminalise gay people and call for change.

It is why I pressed ahead with the consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act, work that remains unfinished, but which must be completed so we can get a system that works for trans people and commands broad confidence.

And it is why we have put in place that inclusive relationships education for schools – so every child can be taught to accept and respect difference.

I am confident that whoever succeeds me as Prime Minister will share my absolute commitment to equality for LGBT people.

I know that Stonewall and many of the other groups represented here today will carry on working with government – and challenging us too – to make sure we get the best outcomes.

And finally my message to all of you is this: I will only be your Prime Minister for a few more weeks, but I will be your ally for the rest of my life.

Thank you very much.

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