

Press release: Lord Ahmad visits Serbia to promote Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict campaign

Lord Ahmad will brief key members of government, religious communities and civil society representatives on the UK's work in support of the PSVI, and will encourage Serbia's participation at the forthcoming international conference in London and support of the initiative.

His meetings will include bilateral engagements with Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, and Veljko Odalović, President of the Serbian Commission for Mission Persons.

Lord Ahmad will use a joint meeting with representatives of religious communities to discuss his role as Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence and the UK's commitment to tackling religious discrimination and promoting tolerance. This will be a valuable opportunity to exchange views on the status of religious rights and interfaith dialogue in Serbia.

Following an address to the Regional Military Medical Conference on the role of women in peacekeeping operations, the Minister will also meet with Snežana Stanojković, War Crimes Chief Prosecutor, to discuss the continuing search for justice for the victims of war crimes.

Ahead of the visit, Lord Ahmad said:

This is my first visit to Serbia and I am delighted to be here in my capacity as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict to discuss the important work of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, or PSVI, campaign and to hear of progress being made by Serbia and the wider region on "Missing Persons".

I look forward to discussing regional and bilateral issues with civil society representatives and Government Ministers and to deepening the UK's bilateral and societal cooperation with Serbia.

My message will be that we must acknowledge the role civil society and human rights defenders play in building more open, inclusive and democratic societies in Serbia and the Western Balkans, and the UK stands ready to support you fully to ensure a positive future for the region.

Further information

Press release: PM's meeting with the President of Afghanistan: 17 June 2019

Prime Minister Theresa May had a bilateral meeting with the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani.

Press release: PM's meeting with the President of Afghanistan: 17 June 2019

The Prime Minister hosted Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Downing Street today as part of his Guest of Government visit to the UK.

They discussed the upcoming Presidential elections in Afghanistan and agreed that these must be credible and transparent.

On regional stability, the Prime Minister welcomed the steps toward peace in Afghanistan that President Ghani has taken, as well as his talks with Prime Minister Khan of Pakistan. The Prime Minister reiterated the UK's support for these efforts.

They also discussed the UK's continued development assistance for Afghanistan, and the Prime Minister highlighted additional humanitarian support over the next five years to help Afghans in urgent need of food, water and medicine.

Press release: PM's meeting with the President of Colombia: 17 June 2019

Prime Minister Theresa May had a bilateral meeting with the President of Colombia, Iván Duque.

Press release: Northern healthcare firms target new opportunities in Africa

Businesses including Yorkshire's Sunflower Medical and Medasil were amongst 16 firms from the north that travelled to trade fair Africa Health 2019 in South Africa as part of a mission organised by DIT and Medilink UK, the UK's largest association of Life Sciences and Medical Technology companies.

This comes as a new analysis of HMRC data by DIT found that exports of UK medical equipment reached a record high of £1.8 billion in 2018, up by 6% on 2017.

The mission, which saw the delivery of a British pavilion at the exhibition, provided an unrivalled opportunity for the businesses to meet potential new buyers and learn more about overcoming barriers and breaking into new markets in Africa. The businesses were accompanied by life sciences sector specialists from DIT in the north of England.

Bradford's Sunflower Medical, which manufactures contemporary functional furniture for medical use, has experienced growing demand from several African markets over recent years, and has already supplied its medical furniture into Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Morocco and Nigeria.

Sunflower Medical's Export Sales Manager Paul Hampton believes there are still significant opportunities for expansion with new healthcare projects across the continent.

He said:

We're very conscious of the rapidly growing opportunities in African markets, which is why we made the decision to return to Africa Health this year. It's great that DIT and Medilink host these missions, as being on the ground at these events is invaluable to companies like ours".

This year's trip proved incredibly fruitful, with an encouraging quantity and quality of sales leads generated. Just over half of sales leads over the three days came from the South African market, with interest also coming from companies looking to represent Sunflower Medical in Kenya, Ghana and Malawi.

Leeds based Medasil, which has been making devices for a range of medical applications since 1974, was also in attendance on the mission.

Medasil's Christine Casey commented:

While Medasil doesn't currently export to African markets, we're keen to venture into new areas of opportunity, which is why we registered for the DIT mission to Africa Health.

We were hugely encouraged by what we saw, and we gained some valuable insights into the opportunities the continent holds. Our exhibit was received very positively and we have returned to the UK with genuine excitement about the opportunities for expansion into the African continent".

Strengthening the UK's partnership with African nations is a key element of the UK Government's vision for Global Britain.

Last year the Department for International Trade appointed its first HM Trade Commissioner for Africa, Emma Wade-Smith OBE, who is working closely with HM Ambassadors, High Commissioners and the wider diplomatic network to promote UK trade and prosperity in the region.

Commenting on the recent mission, HM Trade Commissioner for Africa, Emma Wade-Smith OBE said:

I'm delighted to see Northern Powerhouse businesses exploring the fast-growing opportunities that African markets have to offer.

I've seen for myself how the UK's expertise in the healthcare sector is the envy of many countries around the world. Coupled with our manufacturing heritage and leading innovation, I have every confidence that British businesses operating in this space will experience strong demand for their products and services over the years ahead.