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Ladies and Gentlemen it is a pleasure to be here with you in Sibiu today, and thank you to our Romanian Hosts for the invitation.

As was just referenced, as the UK Brexit Secretary you’d expect me to be talking about a certain subject – one perhaps you feel you’ve heard rather a lot about of late – indeed you may feel you have heard too much about of late.

But I want to look today beyond the domestic issues in terms of the parliamentary vote in the House of Commons, to look beyond the current negotiations between the main political parties.

Because Sibiu is an opportunity for us to consider the sustainable future relationship between the UK and the EU, for as the Political Declaration itself says, we need to take account of the unique context between us. This relationship has to be informed by the global challenges we share as fellow Europeans and that’s why the opportunity to have this discussion today is so important.

As a continent, we face threats to our security from hostile actors, and we know all too well about this in the UK from the recent events in Salisbury.

As a planet, the changing climate threatens our lands and livelihoods.

And as an economy, the weight of Europe compared to regions such as Asia continues to diminish.

These challenges we share are actually bigger than the issue of Brexit, they are more significant, more complex than the challenges we are looking at in the Brexit context. And they demand that we continue across Europe to work together in terms of our future relationship.

There is nothing new in terms of saying how do we meet these shared challenges.

Indeed I represent an area of the United Kingdom which was actually drained in the 17th century bt Dutch engineers. The landscape of the Cambridgeshire Fens was shaped by European expertise. The constituency neighbouring mine is actually called South Holland, because of that European interest.

Nor in representing Cambridgeshire do I need to expand on the extent to which Cambridge University as an academic institution and a world leader in academic research has been shared by European intellects and academia.

I agree with the European Commission in its contribution to Sibiu when it says that we live in an age of transitions, although I would add that this will not be the first summit where such a claim has been made.

We must look not just within Europe, at how those transitions are being shaped, but also beyond.

Population growth in Africa means 18 million Africans will enter the labour market every year but at present only 3.7 million jobs are created. So we can't debate within Europe the challenge of migration without understanding such impacts and the Commission document correctly identifies these sorts of issues. Likewise we cannot safeguard against the challenges on security without shared conversations on regions such as the Sahel, or the growth of ISIS West Africa, and the risk that poses. Areas where again the UK have expertise, where the UK has a lot to offer.

So the UK has a role in terms of security, it has a role in terms of finance, it has a role in terms of technical expertise that goes beyond Brexit, not least as the only European country currently that meets both its NATO 2% target and the UN development 0.7% target. Neither of these commitments are shaped or limited by Brexit.

The threats we face in this time of transition are real and they do indeed need a collective response, and that's very much why I'm here in Sibui today.

As the UK Prime Minister has said, "Europe's security is our security". Our commitment to this is fundamental and unconditional.

The UK will continue to work with and alongside EU Member States and other European nations in a range of fora;

Whether it's through the UN Security Council, NATO, the G7 or indeed smaller groups such as the Joint Expeditionary Force.

Through NATO, the UK will continue to prioritise strengthening the transatlantic relationship – and thus build a safer Europe.

But we also lead the Joint Expeditionary Force alongside eight European partner nations.

This arrangement has created a pool of high readiness-forces that can respond quickly in a crisis and provide a credible deterrent to our adversaries.

And we are learning from our partners in those areas where they are field leaders: such as Estonia with e-society and cyber security, Finland with it’s civil resilience, or Norway for Arctic and Cold Weather Training.

And we will continue to use whichever is the most effective means, whether multilateral, smaller groups or bilateral relationships to safeguard our European security.

We can already see evidence of this across the continent.

Take the British contribution to NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence – which sees over 900 of our personnel rotate on a continual basis alongside Danish, French, and host nation Estonian forces.

As part of the Air Policing of the Black Sea, we stationed British personnel and Typhoon aircraft at the Constanta air base in 2017 and 2018.

And we also participated in the Vigorous Warrior 2019 Exercise held last month here in Romania – the largest military medical exercise in its history.

We also face common evolving threats, whether it be terrorism, extremism, organised crime or cyberattacks.

Again, issues that transcend the matter of Brexit.

These individuals and groups do not respond to borders nor do they respond to the specifics of where a future relationship sits.

The best way to tackle these threats is together, through close cooperation.

And we have worked with the EU and other Member States to build on our resilience.

A good example of that is in respect to the Europol Internet Referral Unit which was set up following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris.

It was strongly supported by the UK – with our own dedicated channel of communication between Europol and UK law enforcement.

And we are also working together on cybersecurity.

On a domestic level, the UK is bolstering our own cyber security capacity by investing £1.9 billion into our National Cyber Strategy.

And the UK was a key instigator in the creation of the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce founded at Europol in 2014.

By its nature, digital threats cross borders and so command a truly global response.

The UK, European institutions, industry, NATO, and third countries must band together to strengthen our global security capacity.

Likewise, another issue that is clear in the Commission’s documentation ahead of security has been the need to address the urgent challenge of climate change and that indeed requires changes of behaviour but also financial investment in new technology. This is a huge, shared challenge not just for the UK, not just for Europe, but for all countries. And one for which the EU, and the UK, rightly have big ambitions.

The UK, like so many European nations, is already changing its own behaviour – last week was the first week since the industrial revolution when the UK went a week without generating any coal power.

We have also recently banned the sale of products containing microbeads, committed to the creation of 40 new marine conservation areas in our seas, and most recently agreed to a target of zero net emissions by 2050.

On finance, the UK has committed £5.8 billion in International Climate Finance from 2016 to 2020, we’ve established the World’s first Green Investment Bank, and set the regulatory framework through the City of London to fund that investment through the global hub for green finance.

We will simply not deliver on the climate change challenge without sufficient pace through the global capital markets that London has to offer, and that combined with the expertise resident in London will allow the Paris Climate change objectives to be met much quicker in many member states.

Indeed, let me give you an example from my own region of the innovation within the UK on tackling climate change. Last year my own water company, in the Eastern region, became the first public utility company to issue a green bond, which is just one example of £19 billion in Green Finance Bonds issued by the City of London.

When it comes to tackling the global challenge of climate change – scale and pace matter. And so for that the global financial markets within the UK offer both.

My job title as was said at the start as Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, does not reveal what its real focus is, which is to help position the UK to meet its future challenges – and those challenges sit alongside and in common with those being addressed here in Sibiu.

We have always said we are not exiting Europe, but we share the same values, nor can we opt out of the challenges identified by the Commission leading up to this conference in terms of security, cyber and the environment.

Historically the UK has always been outward in its outlook.

More recently, when we were considering first joining the European Community there was a debate around the competing visions between a continent and the Commonwealth.

In more recent years some more established figures have been slow to accept that a new generation within UK politics wish to address the challenges of our age, the challenges we are looking at in this conference, like climate change, like economic growth, but to do so in ways that work with our neighbours whilst also offering scope for more flexibility and innovation.

We, the UK and the EU, face shared challenges, with shared values, but post Brexit will do so from a different starting point in which the UK is not part of the EU, but it remains a part of Europe.

Sibiu reinforces our shared analysis of the global challenges ahead. And I look forward to working with you as the UK continues to be an active partner in meeting those challenges head on.

[Speech: A different philosophy: why our thinking on flooding needs to change faster than the climate]

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency
Brunel University, 9 May 2019

[Speech: A different philosophy: why our thinking on flooding needs to change faster than the climate]

Thank you.

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Today is my birthday.

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Most years, I don't advertise this – certainly not in speeches.

Please don't misunderstand me – I love a celebration – but birthdays are also moments of quiet reflection… on the passage of time, and our place in it.

Instead, I'd much rather be celebrating something else.

Like the launch of an official strategy consultation.

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Today, we are consulting on a strategy that looks towards 2100.

In the grand scheme of things, the end of the century is not that far off, and yet it is also a lifetime away.

Two weeks ago, the inspirational activist Greta Thunberg spoke in Westminster about the need to address the planet's climate emergency. She said: "Humans are very adaptable".

2,500 years ago, the Chinese general and military strategist, Sun Tzu, wrote: "Adaptation means not clinging to fixed methods, but changing appropriately according to events, acting as is suitable."

The need to adapt may seem obvious, but history shows that people don't always manage it.

The effort of delivering the next harvest, of ensuring there is enough cash to get to the end of the month, or of simply surviving from day to day, means that societies have often failed to appreciate tectonic shifts in politics, economics, technology, and climate.

Today, we face such a monumental challenge again, but this time we can see it coming.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said there were just 12 years to hold global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

At the same time, the Governor of the Bank of England says "the tragedy of the horizon" is that the catastrophic impacts of climate change could happen just beyond the planning cycles of most banks.

But, the finance sector isn't the only one failing to adapt fast enough.

If we don't all act now, our generation's legacy will not be great music, art, or architecture…

It will be that we allowed our children to fall from the ark.

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However, if we want to live in a resilient nation…

If we want to live in what Professor Dieter Helm calls "a green and prosperous land"…

Then we all have a role to play.

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Last week, the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, said:

> The situation we face is an emergency. It is a crisis, it is a threat that all of us have to unite to meet.

At the launch of the Met Office’s UK Climate Projections in November, last year, he said:

> as the risk of flooding and coastal erosion increases, we need a new long-term approach.

And talking about the Environment Agency’s flood strategy and the Government’s plans for a long term policy statement he said:

> I believe these should explore new philosophies around flood and coast management.

Today, as the government launches a call for evidence building on our draft strategy – that is exactly what we aim to do.

Just as there have always been floods and droughts, the map of England has never been static.

Rivers and the coastline have always been changing, and this has always brought risks.

Climate change is currently accelerating, and multiplying, these risks.

The UN says there were over 300 weather-related disasters each year around the world from 2005 to 2015, almost twice the number from 1985-1994.

Here in England, on December 5 2015, a record 341.4 millimetres of rain fell in 24 hours at Honister Pass in the Lake District.

That’s more than the length of a school ruler – in just one day.

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17,600 UK properties were flooded and several bridges collapsed in Storms Desmond and Eva.

The collapse of Tadcaster Bridge meant residents needed a 10 mile round trip to get from one side of town to the other.

61,000 people lost power in the Lancaster area.

The economic damage was estimated at about £1.6 billion.

No one has, or will, ever be able to stop flooding or coastal erosion altogether, but this country has come a long way since 1953, when an East Coast storm surge killed over 300 people.

In 2013, we experienced a much stronger surge than 1953 and yet there were no fatalities, because our warnings, evacuation procedures, and flood defences are much better.

In recent decades, we have greatly improved flood and coastal erosion risk management as a result of great efforts by successive governments, the Environment Agency, local authorities, Internal Drainage Boards, and local communities themselves.

Added to this, the government's 6 year, £2.6 billion programme gave flood and coastal protection a shot in the arm, and means that the Environment Agency is on course to better protect a further 300,000 homes by 2021.

Today, we must continue to build on that progress, and guard against complacency.

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The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 says "The Environment Agency must develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England".

The draft strategy we present today – created with 90 partner organisations, including DEFRA – gives the country the opportunity to help choose the best path forward.

The Defra Minister Lord Gardiner, wrote in the government's National Adaptation Programme, that: "while we continue to play a leading role in international efforts to keep global temperature rises well below 2°C… our resilience will only be robust if we prepare for worse climate change scenarios."

Our eventual aim is for the Secretary of State and Parliament to approve a strategy that will make the nation more resilient whether we face a temperature rise of 2°C or 4°C.

To do that we need to blend long term ambitions with short term practical steps.

We have set out what we consider should be implemented in the next two spending reviews – all in a direction steered by our ambitions for the change needed to 2100.

The strategy follows three key themes:

- Climate resilient places
- Growth and infrastructure and,
- A nation of climate champions.

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First, climate resilient places.

The insurance industry initiative ClimateWise – run from the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership – says losses on UK mortgages could double if global temperatures increase by 2°C and triple if warming hits 4°C.

Climate change and population growth in England means properties built in the floodplain will double over the next 50 years, so sustained investment is needed to prevent flood damage increasing significantly.

Our Long Term Investment Scenarios estimate this will require an average of £1 billion per year in traditional flood and coastal defences.

This is money well spent, the National Audit Office says for every £1 spent on protecting communities, around £9 in property damages and wider impacts is avoided.

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If £1 billion sounds like a lot, consider this:

The annual average UK infrastructure investment for the years 2018/19 to 2021 is expected to be £63bn.

If it weren't for flood and coastal infrastructure, the January 2017 tidal surge alone could have caused £37bn in economic damages.

We suggest that £1bn, from public and private sources, is a sensible precaution.

We need to move away from talking about flood "defence".

We cannot win a war against water.

We cannot expect to build our way out of future climate risks with infinitely high walls and barriers.

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I believe there should be consistent standards for flood and coastal resilience in England.

To explore and develop such standards, the Environment Agency wants to work with partners to develop a national suite of tools that can be used in combination to deliver resilience for communities.

This could include traditional defences, natural flood management, ensuring new development is safe from flood risk, adapting property (more of which in a moment), and giving communities control, and choices, about how they respond and adapt to a range of climate futures.

To do this, government, the Environment Agency and risk management authorities will need to be agile to growth projections, investment opportunities, changes to local environments, and the latest climate science.

The government demonstrated agility following the IPCC report last year, when it commissioned the Committee on Climate Change to look at how to reach net zero.

The Committee says the UK can reach net zero emissions by 2050 by setting an ambitious new target. The report has been welcomed by government.

Our second theme is growth and infrastructure.

We must ensure that all new development is not only resilient to flooding, but contributes to environmental net gain.

More should be done to encourage property owners to build back better and in better places after a flood, rather than just recreating what was there before.

This could involve home improvements, such as raised electrics, hard flooring, and flood doors.

We will work with government, insurers and financial institutions to review how to bring about this change by 2025.

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In some places, the scale of the threat may be so significant that recovery will not always be the best long term solution.

In these instances, we will help communities to move out of harm’s way.

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Presently, two thirds of properties in England are served by infrastructure networks in flood risk areas.

For every person who suffers flooding, around 16 others are affected by a loss of services such as transport and power.

We suggest that between now and 2050, all publicly funded infrastructure should aim to be resilient to flooding and coastal change.

Our long term ambition should be to support local economic regeneration and sustainable growth through investments in new flooding and coastal change projects. This can unlock opportunities for housing and businesses in places where repeat flooding has damaged local economies.

There are many examples of this already happening around the country. In Selly Park in Birmingham a new flood alleviation scheme has created new development land, and protected over a hundred homes.

Our third theme is: A nation of climate champions.

Only a third of people who live in flood risk areas believe their properties are at risk.

We need to build a nation of climate champions who understand their risk, are responsible for it, and know how to act on it.

We need to inspire people to take action before flooding hits. We will do this by educating young people about the risks through the school curriculum, by helping people to understand what action to take, and which services they can expect from public bodies.

We have a world class flood forecasting service that provides people, businesses, and the emergency services with information to help them prepare for a flood.

If you haven't already, please sign up to our free flood warnings and find out why PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE is the slogan for our flood campaign. It is information that could literally save your life.

As a Category 1 responder with staff living and working in communities all over England, the Environment Agency is an international leader in managing flood emergency situations.

People experience flooding in different ways, but it can have profound effects on mental health and well-being long after the water has subsided. Distress is a common reaction.

Most people's need for support is met by those close to them. Good social support can protect against the negative psychosocial impacts of being flooded.

We aim to continue to better join up the organisations involved in providing incident response, and recovery, to provide a consistent, and coordinated, service.

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Collaboration and partnership is essential because climate impacts – however undesirable – bring knowledge and expertise.

By sharing this, we can build networks around the world.

Don't be put off by President Trump's promise to withdraw from the Paris Agreement – look at how the rest of the world has reacted to that decision, including many States and cities in the U.S.

Just last week the Mayor of Washington D.C. announced plans to retrofit or remove all of its flood-prone buildings by 2050, in the face of climate change.

I'm not naïve about international agreements and treaties. Much, much more needs to be done, but we have seen progress.

We should not dismiss that out of hand.

I know there are many who are sceptical of climate adaptation, but it is not a competing agenda to reducing carbon emissions.

No one wants to live in an energy efficient house that could be washed away in a flood.

We need to do both.

That’s why the Environment Agency’s new contract arrangements for the delivery of Flood and Coastal Risk Management schemes ensure our partners are using, and innovating, low carbon solutions for construction projects.

This works towards the government’s commitment to reduce carbon emissions 80% by 2050.

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In the autumn, I became the UK Commissioner to the Global Commission on Adaptation.

Led by Ban Ki-moon, Bill Gates, and Kristalina Georgieva, CEO of the World Bank, it will present an agenda for scaling up adaptation around the world ahead of the UN climate summit in September.

Also at the UN’s climate summit in September, the UK government will lead on climate resilience.

They want to deliver:

- A systemic shift in the way the public and private sectors think about investment and,

- Better capacity to manage climate shocks around the world. This includes better targeting of investments and building human and physical capacity to cope with current and future climate risks.

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Through this strategy today, the Environment Agency is setting world leading ambition, and showing that we can walk the walk at home.

We want this country to be recognised as a world leader in managing flooding and coastal change.

And, we want to nurture talent in the UK’s world leading universities – like Brunel.

Mark Carney was right to warn about the “the tragedy of the horizons”.

The whole financial sector has a central role to play in avoiding catastrophic climate change.

The government has highlighted market failures in investments and funding as a key barrier to the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

But, it needs to be said that such market failures are not only bad for the environment, they are a missed opportunity for UK plc.

Low-carbon, flood resilient planning and development in the right places will deliver long term returns for investors. They will also develop skills, technology, and expertise in the national economy – and create jobs.

The government will soon publish its first ever Green Finance Strategy, setting out the steps they are taking to attract investment into a clean, and resilient, economy.

And, the Chancellor’s recent commitment to the Helsinki Principles as part of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action is important – because it is a step forward to see finance ministers recognising climate risks and committing to using fiscal policy to promote global action on climate change.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said we have 12 years to hold global warming to 1.5°C.

Today, on my birthday, I am 12 years away from the State Pension age.

I have been hugely inspired by the young climate strikers this year, but I don’t think everyone has yet realised that the climate impacts they – and the Environment Agency – are talking about, will affect my generation too.

Climate change is not a morality tale set in the dystopian future, it’s already here.

I am committed to spending the critical 12 years ahead working on this emergency.

As Greta Thunberg said: “Humans are very adaptable: we can still fix this.”

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We can still fix this.

But, if not us, then who?

And, if not now, when?

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Thank you very much.

News story: Ending low pay top of Chancellor’s agenda in meeting with unions and industry

The talks are part of the government’s ongoing engagement with some of the UK’s biggest trade bodies and unions on the future of the National Living Wage.

Representatives from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Federation of Small Business (FSB), Unison and other industry and union bodies will join the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Greg Clark, for talks hosted by the Chancellor. Top of the agenda will be how the lowest paid continue to see their wages increase.

The introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016 gave the lowest earners the fastest pay rise in decades. In April 2019 it was increased again, meaning a full-time worker on the National Living Wage is set to earn around £690 more over the coming year.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

> Last month we increased the National Living Wage, giving a pay rise to 1.8 million people. By 2020 the National Living Wage will be set at 60% of median earnings. But now we want to go further, with the ultimate ambition to end low wages altogether. I’m meeting the leaders of the major trade bodies and unions to discuss how to go further on tackling low pay, while also protecting the jobs of the lowest paid.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

> We are committed to ending low pay and making sure that UK workers get paid fairly for the work they do.
>
> Our minimum wage rates are among the highest in the world and today’s roundtable is an example of how, through our modern Industrial Strategy, we are working closely with businesses and unions to boost the earning power of people across the country.

Later this year the government will announce a new remit for the Low Pay Commission – the independent body that advises government about the National Living Wage and the National Minimum Wage – for 2020 onwards. Today’s meeting, which includes the Low Pay Commission, is just one of many conversations that the government is planning to have with employers and unions over the coming months on this issue.

In the Spring Statement, the Chancellor also announced that world-leading academic, Professor Arindrajit Dube, will lead a review of the impact of minimum wages internationally, providing evidence for future government changes.

Further information

National Living Wage changes since introduction

Date NLW rate applied from	NLW rate (age 25+)
April 2016 (introduction)	£7.20
April 2017	£7.50
April 2018	£7.83
April 2019	£8.21

- The National Living Wage (NLW) for workers aged 25+ came into effect in April 2016. Its introduction delivered the fastest pay rise for the lowest earners in 20 years.
- On 1 April 2019 it increased by 4.9% to £8.21 an hour.
- This represents an increase to a full-time minimum wage worker's annual earnings of over £690, equivalent to a total increase in annual earnings of over £2750 since April 2016.
- Young people and apprentices also saw above inflation increases in the National Minimum Wage rates.
- Over 2.1 million people are expected to benefit from April's increases to the National Living and Minimum Wage rates.
- A higher proportion of women than men are expected to benefit from the increases in the NMW/NLW rates.
- Supported by the NLW, the lowest paid (full-time workers at the fifth percentile) have seen their wages grow by 8% above inflation between April 2015 and April 2018.