

# Speech: DRC: The Ambassador's speech at the 2018 Queen's Birthday Party in Kinshasa

Welcome all to this the celebration of the birthday of our Queen, Elizabeth II.

This is a day of several celebrations. I wish a happy celebration of Eid al-Fitr to all our Muslim friends present. Eid Mubarak!

Today also marks the start of the FIFA World Cup and I congratulate my Russian colleague on his country's victory against the Saudi Arabian team this afternoon.

As you well know, the Leopards of the DRC will not be present in Russia. But we, the Lions of England, will be there on Monday next week, to avenge you against Tunisia. So I ask all Congolese present to support us!

Just like the World Cup, we have our sponsors this evening. I would like to thank them all: our Gold Sponsors – Vodacom and Randgold; our Silver Sponsors – Vlisco; and our Bronze Sponsors – Diageo and G4S. All these businesses have strong links with the UK and contribute considerably to the prosperity of the DRC. I would like you to join me in expressing our gratitude to them by our applause.

This year marks 129 years out of 180 years that we have celebrated having a female Head of State.

Queen Elizabeth is the most remarkable of leaders. During her long reign, she has seen the pendulum of history swing on many issues.

For example, the young like me can only remember dreadful English football teams. But after 65 years on the throne, the Queen can remember handing the World Cup to a world-beating England football team in 1966.

The pendulum swings and I am happy to predict that she will see us bring the World Cup home again in four weeks time.

More seriously, she has viewed the construction of the Berlin Wall and its falling. She has seen the creation of the EU, seen the UK vote to enter and, 45 years later, seen us vote to leave it.

She has endured through all these important moments of our lives. Some have suggested that celebrating her lengthy reign sets a bad precedent for others. Or even a justification for Presidents for life. However the reality is that she has diligently upheld the UK's constitutional arrangements: never stepping over the mark, always conscious of the limits and the responsibilities of her role, carrying out her duties tirelessly.

She has known 13 Prime Ministers, from Winston Churchill, to Theresa May. Each time our government has changed, she has overseen a peaceful and orderly

transfer of power. One of these Prime Ministers, Harold MacMillan, visited Africa in 1960. He spoke of the 'winds of change' that were sweeping through the African continent. He made clear that Britain would not stand in the way of its colonies seeking their independence.

58 years later, it seems a new wind of change is sweeping through Africa. Many nations are rapidly growing in prosperity. Alongside this growing prosperity there is much political change. Many nations are enjoying the benefits of peaceful political transitions. In the last 12 months we have seen peaceful transfers of power in South Africa, Botswana and Angola.

There is change in my own country, too. In 2016 the British people voted in a referendum to leave the European Union. So this is the last QBP that we shall host as a member state of the EU. The referendum was hard fought and the result, whilst clear, was close. Many families, including my own, were split. But politicians and civil servants in the UK are united in agreeing that it is imperative that we respect the will of people and implement their decision.

Our departure from the EU brings new opportunities in our relations with Africa. We will be reinforcing every Embassy in Africa as we look outwards as a Global Britain.

Once the United Kingdom has left the European Union, it is likely we will be free to sign new trade deals with African nations. It's our intention to maintain or increase market access for African nations. I look forward to seeing more Congolese products on the shelves of Tesco and Sainsburys. After Brexit, we'll continue our development policy and a foreign policy which supports the battle against poverty and instability. I'm very proud that the UK is the only country in the OECD that spends 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid and 2.0% on defence and security. As a consequence, across our bilateral and multilateral contributions, we spend over \$1.4m a day in DRC on securing its stability and in helping ordinary people's lives.

What our Department for International Development do here under the UKAid banner is remarkable. DRC is home one of DFID's largest development programmes in Africa. We are particularly proud to be the second largest donor to the humanitarian effort in DRC. Faced with recurrent humanitarian crises, we have provided food, shelter and security to 2.5m people between 2012 and 2017. We will support 3m more people over the next five years, helping to save thousands of lives, even before our recent efforts to support the response to Ebola.

We are not just a humanitarian donor. We work across the whole country to help guarantee services in the fields of health, water, sanitation and education. We also support the private sector, notably in the markets for coffee, cocoa and renewable energy. If you have the time, don't hesitate to pass by 'Elan's' stand here in the garden. Between now and 2020 we will aid more than a million poor people to gain a proper living through supporting entrepreneurs and small producers. Respectful of the sovereignty of Congo, we also have programmes supporting the democratic process here in DRC, including

the current elections.

Let me be entirely clear: the UK does not support any political party in Congo or any potential candidate in the different votes. It belongs to the Congolese people to give their choice in line with their constitution in a manner that is fair, equitable and credible: and that thereafter their choice be respected by all Congolese. We salute the progress realised to date in the electoral process by all the different political actors, including the electoral commission. We stand ready to offer help should it be required – including through our positive response to analyse the ‘voting machines’ that CENI hopes to use. Sometimes, independent technical advice can help bring confidence and consensus.

Since its publication, the published timetable has followed its course, despite some challenges. We therefore look forward to 19 January next year when President Kabila will be the first President in Congo’s history to peacefully hand power to a democratically elected successor. It will be one of the President’s historical legacies. Alas, some dreams for 2018 may not come true. We diplomats have to be realistic and manage expectations. Just like the Congolese must wait till Qatar 2022 to qualify again for the FIFA World Cup, so I think it will take until 2022 before England’s football team lift the Jules Rimet trophy again.

In my dreams it is Congo’s new President (he or she) who will be there at the end of the tournament, applauding the DRC Leopards in their first ever World Cup final, even though they were defeated by their friendly adversaries, the Lions of England.

Before I ask Madam Mabunda to raise a glass to her Majesty the Queen and the British people, I would ask you to join me in raising a toast to the President and the People of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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## **[Notice: Ford Transit pick up: vehicle seizure notice](#)**

Read the notice to find out how to claim the seized vehicle.

The claim period ends on 7 July 2018.

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## **[News story: Natural England’s chair](#)**

# announces retirement

Natural England's chair Andrew Sells has announced his intention to retire in January 2019.

Andrew Sells has held the position of Natural England chair since January 2014 and during his tenure the organisation has demonstrated its vital role in promoting conservation and protecting biodiversity.

## **Natural England's chair Andrew Sells said:**

It has been a huge privilege and pleasure to serve as the chair of Natural England and, thanks to the highly capable and committed staff, the organisation has changed for the better.

During my tenure, we have tried to work much more with people to achieve shared outcomes and moved closer to the people we work with through a devolved area structure; we have radically reformed our licensing activities; we have published our Conservation Strategy and have been instrumental in shaping the Government's 25 year Plan for the Environment; we have advised on 90 Marine Conservation Zones and we have made long strides towards completing a path around England's coast.

I would also like to thank the Secretary of State for leading the Government's commitment to improve the environment within a generation; and James Cross, our chief executive, for his drive, determination and tireless hard work to reform our organisation.

## **Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:**

Natural England plays a vital role in safeguarding our natural environment as well as enabling people to access and enjoy it. Andrew Sells' energy and commitment have been exceptional and I am very grateful for all that he has delivered as chair.

## **Natural England's chief executive James Cross said:**

I want to thank Andrew for all his hard work leading Natural England's dedicated staff and volunteers across the country. Natural England's great achievements over recent years are testament to Andrew's driving passion for reforming Natural England and protecting our environment.

The recruitment process for the new chair will commence shortly.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Natural England chair Andrew Sells' letter to Environment Secretary Michael Gove

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to let you know in good time that I intend to retire as chair of Natural England in January 2019 when I will have completed 5 years in the role. I have always believed that 5 years in any such job is long enough and I discussed this timing with the Appointments team at No.10 last summer. Also, as I approach yet another significant birthday it seems right to move on to new challenges as there are other things I wish to do in my life.

May I take the opportunity to say what a huge privilege, and pleasure, it has been to serve as Chair of Natural England. I have nothing but admiration for our highly capable and committed staff, and I have also been fortunate to have the constant support of a high calibre board. I am also grateful for the support I have had from Defra colleagues.

I would like to think that Natural England has changed for the better during my tenure: we have tried to work much more with people to achieve shared outcomes and moved closer to the people we work with through a devolved area structure; we are radically reforming our licensing activities; we have published our Conservation Strategy and have been instrumental in shaping the Government's 25 year Plan for the Environment (from first draft to last, quite literally); we have advised on 90 Marine Conservation Zones (unseen and unsung work but hugely important); we have made long strides towards completing a path around England's coast, and much more besides, although of course much remains to be done.

On a personal note, may I also say what a pleasure it was been to work with you as Secretary of State. If I may say so, from the day of your appointment the Department has felt like a different place; your hugely welcome commitment to the environment and to the work of Natural England is much appreciated. Indeed, the fact that the Prime Minister herself launched the Government's 25-year Plan for the Environment is testament to the Government's commitment to leave the environment in a better condition for the next generations. As we seek to reverse decades of decline I am encouraged that the Government's commitment to 'Net Gain' and Natural Capital (both policies urged by Natural England) have the potential to be transformative.

I will of course be happy to help in any way I can to ensure a smooth transition to my successor.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to our outstanding Chief Executive, James Cross: many of the reforms we have introduced would have not have come to fruition without his drive and determination and I am most grateful to him and his senior team for their tireless hard work.

With every good wish,

Yours always,

Andrew Sells

## **Environment Secretary Michael Gove's response to Natural England chair Andrew Sells**

We shall be very sorry to lose you as part of the Defra group leadership, and I am very grateful for all that Natural England has delivered under your chairmanship. As you rightly record, both on land and at sea, NE has played a vital role in safeguarding our natural environment and enabling people to access and enjoy it.

This has been a period when Natural England has undergone huge changes and delivered major new projects, including the England coastal path, and your energy and commitment has been exceptional.

I am very grateful for your thoughtfulness in giving us notice of your retirement, to enable a smooth succession.

I have asked my office to work with yours on the timing of the public announcement of your plans and we'll initiate the process of recruiting for your successor shortly so that we can have someone in post by January.

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## [News story: Doctors and nurses to be taken out of Tier 2 visa cap](#)

As part of a long-term government plan for the NHS, more details of which will be set out in due course, doctors and nurses are to be excluded from the cap on skilled worker visas.

The move will mean there will be no restriction on the numbers of doctors and nurses who can be employed through the Tier 2 visa route – giving the ability to recruit more international doctors and nurses to provide outstanding patient care when required.

The Tier 2 visa route, which has had an annual cap of 20,700 since 2011, has in recent months seen the number of applications exceed the monthly allocation of available places.

This has been driven, in large part, by demand from the NHS, which accounts for around 40% of all Tier 2 places.

The change will be outlined in the Immigration Rules laid before Parliament today.

As well as providing a boost to the NHS, it will also free up hundreds of additional places a month within the cap for other highly skilled occupations, such as engineers, IT professionals and teachers.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I recognise the pressures faced by the NHS and other sectors in recent months. Doctors and nurses play a vital role in society and at this time we need more in the UK. That is why I have reviewed our skilled worker visa route.

This is about finding a solution to increased demand and to support our essential national services.

The exclusion of doctors and nurses from the cap comes as the Secretary of

State for Health and Social Care puts in place long-term measures to increase the supply of domestic doctors – including increasing the number of training places.

Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Overseas staff have been a vital part of our NHS since its creation 70 years ago. Today's news sends a clear message to nurses and doctors from around the world that the NHS welcomes and values their skills and dedication. It's fantastic that patients will now benefit from the care of thousands more talented staff.

This builds on steps we have already taken to make sure the NHS has the staff it needs for the future – boosting training places for home-grown doctors and nurses by 25 per cent and giving over a million NHS employees a well-deserved pay rise.

The Tier 2 cap forms part of the government's approach to controlling net migration. It relates to certificates of sponsorship which are applied for by UK employers looking to bring in non-EU skilled workers.

Before December 2017, the cap, which was set on the advice of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), had only been reached on one occasion. However, it has been reached every month since last December.

When the cap is reached, places are scored using a points-based system, with top priority given to jobs on the shortage occupation list. The shortage occupation list already includes a number of medical professions and no role that is part of this list has ever been refused.