

# Speech: Chancellor's speech at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018

Lord Mayor, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our visitors to London, for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018.

The biggest meeting of Heads of Government, of any kind, that the UK has ever hosted.

From the Pacific Islands, to the British Isles, from the Caribbean to Central Africa, the Commonwealth is a community which spans the reach of global geography.

And the entire breadth of the economic spectrum.

A community united in its vast diversity, by a common heritage, and shared values of democracy and human rights.

Tomorrow, I will chair a roundtable of heads of government and senior business leaders to reflect on key themes of this year's summit.

From boosting intra-Commonwealth trade, spreading inclusive growth, and how we can build upon our 'Commonwealth Advantage'.

That is, using our common language, institutions, trade ties, legal systems and values, for the common good of all our citizens.

Because the fact is that together we have the capacity to do enormous good, and spread significant prosperity.

We, the Commonwealth, represent a third of the global population.

Half of the world's top 20 emerging cities.

And 60% of our population is under the age of 30.

And the common-wealth is just that.

Our commonalities mean as members we trade 20% more.

Generate 10% more foreign direct investment.

And enjoy costs of trade around 19% lower by comparison with non-Commonwealth relationships.

And over seven decades we have used these deep ties to help newly independent countries develop their national institutions, make economic progress, and

share common experiences with one another.

But we cannot simply sit back and admire our achievements and past successes.

We must look forward, and the Commonwealth must reform and change in an ever-changing world.

We must continue to make the case for free trade as the best way to promote higher living standards amongst all of our citizens.

And particularly we must look for opportunities to liberalise trade in services.

We must ensure that our growth is inclusive.

And at this Summit we have committed to increase opportunities for women to trade internationally.

And to look at ways that we can tackle youth unemployment.

And that it is sustainable.

And we must prepare to embrace the changes of the technological revolution which is gathering pace around us.

And ensure our economies, and our citizens, are ready to seize the opportunities that that revolution will bring.

For example from FinTech – which has the potential to change the way in which our people and our businesses access financial services.

Whether its cashless transactions between friends.

Or sending remittances to family in other countries.

I recently signed a FinTech Bridge between the UK and Australia.

And we are exploring similar opportunities between the UK and India.

And I hope we can encourage more of these agreements between Commonwealth countries in the years ahead.

Because by working together in the Commonwealth we can be a force for good and for progress around the world.

We can work together on the challenges that we face.

Across the Commonwealth.

Recognising our common values and needs.

To grow our trade links.

Unleash the talents of our populations.

And strive to improve the lives of our 2.4 billion citizens, wherever in the world they live.

We live in a time of extraordinary global change.

The future offers incredible new opportunities, as well as immense new challenges to overcome.

Our countries have dealt with the challenges of the past together.

Now, as a Commonwealth of Nations, we shall win the future together.

Thank you all for being here – and I wish you a productive and inspiring week.

Thank you.

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## [Speech: Supporting a UN-led political solution in Yemen](#)

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President. Welcome to the new Special Envoy. Thank you for your briefing Martin. Thank you to Mark Lowcock for his assessment and welcome to our Yemeni colleagues.

It's a desperate situation, Mr President, and it is clear, as the Special Envoy set out, it can only be resolved ultimately through a political solution. I think we all agree on that. I think what the Under-Secretary-General said about the humanitarian consequences and particularly eight million people being close to starvation and one million people at risk of cholera and similar illnesses is absolutely shocking and that ought to be a spur to action for the Council. I think the international community must do whatever we can to enable the Special Envoy to develop his plan at the pace that he has just outlined to us. And I just want to say I really welcome the clarity and the elements of that plan that he set out. I hope we can, as an international community, pool all our influence and urge the parties to engage in good faith with the UN process. Although the conflict has some quite desperate humanitarian consequences, this is a solvable conflict.

I think the Under-Secretary-General said if we had swift and joint action, Mr President, then we can make some very good progress. So I think that's absolutely where we should put our efforts. And as a Council, I hope that we can encourage people to grant full and unhindered access to Yemen for the Special Envoy, for his team, for the humanitarian actors. And in that respect, the meetings that the Envoy laid out in the region, including in Sana'a with senior Houthi leaders are extremely welcome.

I'd like if I may just to highlight a couple of areas for specific immediate action.

The Under-Secretary-General mentioned financial pledges and I agree the scale of the generosity from Saudi Arabia and the UAE and Kuwait are all quite remarkable. We ourselves as the United Kingdom have provided a quarter of a billion dollars for this year and next. I think we all know that money alone won't be enough. We do need to do more to get commercial supplies in. I was concerned about the foreign exchange problem, Mr President, because in Yemen a lot of the food and supplies that go in need to come from commercial sources. Humanitarian assistance can't manage the scale required. Commercial shipping needs to be able to go in and this is vital to water and sanitation systems. So I do hope we can all find ways to urge collaboration on that.

I think the second point is around access to Houthi controlled areas where we see very many severely malnourished children. We had a Presidential Statement in March that highlighted the importance of vaccination campaigns as the Under-Secretary General said.

And then I think thirdly, I just want to echo the call about paying non-military public workers. Families don't have the means to buy food. They don't have the means to buy medicine and half of the health facilities have closed, so this is all contributing to a more desperate situation in Yemen than needs to be objectively the case.

I also would now like to turn to regional stability. The impact on regional stability of this conflict is growing and it's dangerous. It puts Saudi Arabia at risk. It puts Saudi citizens at risk. The continued Houthi missile attacks including the use of ballistic missiles at civilian targets in Saudi Arabia attract our outright condemnation. Deliberate targeting of civilian areas is abhorrent. It is against international law, against international humanitarian law. We call on all parties involved in the conflict to abide by their international humanitarian law obligations. And as the Under-Secretary General set out, this is still not being done to a sufficient degree.

But I also want to stress that it really is a national security threat to Saudi Arabia and this in turn is driving renewed conflict on the ground. So it is vital and I hope the Council can help with this that all Member States fully implement the arms embargo that the Council has laid down.

In particular the UN Panel of Experts has concluded that missiles and related to material of Iranian origin has been introduced into Yemen after the imposition of the targeted to arms embargo. That in turn means Iran is in non-compliance with Security Council Resolution 2216. So we strongly urge Iran to desist from destabilizing activity and we encourage all Member States to use whatever influence they have to ensure that the supply of missiles fueling the conflict inside Yemen stops.

Mr President, I really do want to stress something the Special Envoy said about this being possible to make progress. We have within our grasp the ability to really do something to help bring this conflict to an end. I think that's a very important contribution that the Council can make for regional

and international peace and security at a time when we see so many problems on so many other issues. So I would like to conclude, Mr President, by urging all members of the Council really to put our shoulders to the wheel, to support the UN, and try and bring peace to Yemen.

Thank you.

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## **News story: UK and Canada call for international support for Rohingya crisis**

On the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland hosted a roundtable on one of the most pressing global issues, the Rohingya crisis.

The event provided an opportunity for Commonwealth countries to stand in solidarity with Bangladesh which is hosting more than 671,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled Burma since August 2017. In addition to the two hosts, Foreign Ministers from Australia, New Zealand and Bangladesh were also in attendance.

Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson said:

The plight of the Rohingya will not be forgotten. As a Commonwealth community we need to ensure there is a strong response to the urgent request for humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh. Lives depend on it.

The UK is proud to be one of the largest bilateral donors to the crisis, with £59 million committed so far, but alongside our financial contribution it is right that we use events such as the Commonwealth Summit to ensure that attention does not fade away from the almost 1 million refugees living in Bangladesh.

We want these people to be able to return home. But as UNHCR have said, the conditions in Rakhine are not conducive to safe returns. The Burmese authorities need to demonstrate that they are serious about the safety and security of the Rohingya. A credible independent investigation into reported atrocities is an important step in this process.

Foreign Minister, Chrystia Freeland added:

We stand with our partners in the Commonwealth to remind the international community of the urgent need to assist the Rohingya in both Myanmar and Bangladesh. We commend Bangladesh and host communities for opening their arms to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya seeking refuge, and for the delivery of life-saving assistance. Bangladesh deserves our gratitude and continued support.

Canada will continue to provide gender-responsive humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations in Myanmar and Bangladesh, building on the \$45.9 million provided since the beginning of 2017 and maintaining its role as a lead donor to the humanitarian response. We will also take a number of immediate actions in response to the final report of Canada's Special Envoy to Myanmar, the Honourable Bob Rae.

The international community, including key Commonwealth Nations, must rally and reaffirm their support to ensure that the basic needs of those affected by this crisis are met. We also need to work together to hold perpetrators of violence to account, and actively coordinate our efforts to further promote diversity, inclusiveness, justice and equity for all, and support all efforts towards building lasting peace and reconciliation in Myanmar.

The group discussed the role of the UN in resolving the crisis including much needed access for UNHCR to Rakhine state in advance of any returns process and the upcoming UN Security Council Visit to the region. There was a general agreement that any returns must be safe, voluntary, sustainable, and dignified, and monitored by the UNHCR on both sides of the border. Attendees also discussed accountability options and the need for a credible independent investigation into mounting reports of atrocities.

## **Further information**

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## **[Press release: PM meeting with President of Cyprus: 17 April 2018](#)**

The Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with President Nicos Anastasiades of Cyprus earlier today.

The President updated the Prime Minister on recent discussions on achieving a settlement in Cyprus. The Prime Minister emphasised our strong support for a comprehensive settlement and said the UK stood ready to play its part.

The Prime Minister thanked President Anastasiades for their backing in the

European Council for the strong statement on the recent Salisbury attacks and for their ongoing support as the UK works with its allies to reinforce our collective security.

They agreed on the need to maintain the close relationship on defence and security and the Prime Minister said she looked forward to strengthening this through greater co-operation across a range of activities, including military training and search and rescue.

The Prime Minister thanked President Anastasiades for Cyprus' engagement in the Brexit talks so far and said she was keen to maintain and enhance the strong relationship between the two countries as we leave the European Union.

They agreed on the importance of reaching an agreement on the legal framework for our Sovereign Base Areas following our exit from the European Union to avoid any negative impact on Cypriots living and working on the bases.

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## [News story: PM meets South African President Cyril Ramaphosa](#)

The Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting earlier today with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Prime Minister said she was pleased to welcome Mr Ramaphosa to the UK on his first visit as President, noting that the relationship between the UK and South Africa is strong and deep, both bilaterally and as a key Commonwealth partner.

They discussed the potential for reinvigorating and revitalising the partnership between the UK and South Africa, and the Prime Minister noted that the UK stood ready to support South Africa's transformation and national development plan. They agreed that tackling youth unemployment and social inequality was a key priority.

They agreed an ambition to build on our strong bilateral trade and investment relationship, including as we leave the European Union. The Prime Minister noted that the UK is already the largest investor in South Africa, and that we are firm supporters of the President's drive to attract even more investment to the country.

They agreed £50 million new UK funding across the next four years to help South Africa improve its business environment to make it more attractive to investors including in the UK, and ultimately lift some of the poorest people in South Africa out of poverty by creating jobs and opportunities. The funding will be used to help identify and dismantle barriers to trade within Africa and beyond, creating a wealth of opportunities for UK business over

the coming years.