

Press release: Joint UK-Pakistan Statement on trade

Pakistan and the UK enjoy a shared history and a shared future. At this pivotal moment, marking 70 years of diplomatic relations, we reconfirm our ambition to build shared prosperity between our two countries.

We will do this through our trade policies, and through links between businesses in both countries. Currently, the UK supports Pakistan through the EU's trade preference scheme GSP+. This arrangement encourages economic growth and sustainable development in Pakistan. It also helps business and consumers in Britain.

As the UK leaves the EU, we recognise the need to ensure a smooth transition in our trading arrangements. The UK's firm intention is to maintain these preferences on a bilateral basis, with the generous access to UK markets that it brings. Alongside that, whilst the UK is still a member of the EU, the UK will continue to support Pakistan to benefit from the EU's GSP+ scheme, whilst in return Pakistan pledges to continue to make progress to improve human rights, labour rights, environment and good governance in line with the commitments made as part of the GSP+ scheme. The UK will also help Pakistan break down barriers to trade, and to use the opportunities this brings to create jobs and reduce poverty.

With more than 200 million consumers, Pakistan is an exciting market for British business. To support UK companies exporting to Pakistan and for Pakistani buyers of UK goods and services, the UK export credit agency, UK Export Finance (UKEF), support is to more than double to up to £400 million, meaning an additional £200 million to help UK exporters win, fulfill and get paid for export contracts, and Pakistan's buyers access finance to source high-quality UK goods and services.

Both governments are ambitious, to see more British trade and investment in Pakistan, as well as Pakistani businesses exporting to and operating in the UK. From textiles to pharmaceuticals, engineering and sporting goods, to finance, legal or business services, Pakistan has huge potential in the global economy. We are committed to work with businesses in both countries to strengthen these ties into the future.

For updates on the British High Commission's 70th Anniversary of UK – Pakistan relations and for more information on the Chevening Programme, please follow our social media channels:

Press release: Waste criminals dump £750,000 clean-up bill on landowners

Criminals who illegally dump thousands of tonnes of baled waste have cost land and property owners in the North East an estimated £750,000 in the last year, according to the Environment Agency.

The figure, which relates to the cost of removing waste dumped in fields and empty commercial properties lawfully, could be even higher if land is contaminated or insurance premiums rise as a result. Dumped waste is also a major fire risk.

In a bid to stop waste criminals in their tracks, the Environment Agency is reaching out to property and land owners, commercial property agents, trade associations and local authorities. Their aim is to warn of the dangers posed by waste criminals and advise them, their clients and their members how they can better protect themselves.

Jamie Fletcher, Area Environment Manager, from the Environment Agency said:

Waste criminals operate throughout the country, offering to remove waste cheaply and then dumping it in fields or empty warehouses. They tend to move to new areas as enforcement agencies become wise to their activities. We know it's only a matter of time before they target us again so we're sending out a strong message: Waste criminals are not welcome here and we're doing everything in our power to deter and catch them.

We can't do it alone. We work closely with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity. And we're encouraging everyone to do their bit: for property and land owners to be vigilant and better protect themselves and for all businesses, organisations and individuals to manage their waste responsibly, preventing it from getting into criminal hands in the first place.

Land and property owners are advised to:

- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure.
- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective and new tenants. Land and property owners have a responsibility to ensure anyone leasing their land/property complies with regulations. They may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on land or property without the relevant permissions and could leave them liable to prosecution
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour.



Advice for businesses

There are around 4,000 commercial properties across the North East thought to be empty, which are owned by up to 1,500 businesses and organisations, including fund management companies and local authorities.

The Environment Agency is also advising businesses and organisations of their responsibility to ensure their waste is managed appropriately. Anyone who produces, stores and manages waste is obligated to ensure waste does not cause harm to human health or pollution to the environment under waste under Duty of Care legislation.

Waste crime diverts as much as £1 billion per annum from legitimate business and the treasury. Since April 2011 the Environment Agency has invested £65.2 million nationally to address it. Its specialist crime unit uses intelligence to track and prosecute organised crime gangs involved in illegal waste activity and to ensure any necessary action is taken against them.

The Environment Agency also works with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity and to put in place contingency plans to reduce the risk from a small number of abandoned sites at risk of fire.

Anyone who sees waste crime taking place is advised not to approach as these people can be dangerous. Report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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News story: PM statement on Saudi women gaining right to drive

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

As a long standing friend of Saudi Arabia I welcome the Kingdom taking this important step towards gender equality. The empowerment of women around the world is not only an issue I care deeply about, it is also key to nations' economic development. The UK will continue to work in close partnership with Saudi Arabia as it builds on this progress and delivers its ambitious programme of reform, Vision 2030.

Speech: “Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Afghanistan

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you Special Representative Yamamoto for your briefing today. At the outset I want to express my gratitude, and that of my government, for the work that you and your team are doing in extremely challenging circumstances. I thank you too Foreign Minister Rabbani for your intervention today.

As you have both made clear, we simply cannot afford to lose sight of Afghanistan. Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges. And the human cost, after years of fighting, years of violence, only continues to grow.

So our work is not done. And it is clear that UNAMA still has a vital part to play. But just as Afghanistan today is not the same as it was 10 years ago, it is right that UNAMA changes too to fit the current realities on the ground. So we welcome the review into how the mission can best support Afghanistan in a way that aligns with the government's own priorities.

We share much of the analysis in the review, with its focus on streamlining the work of the Mission towards a targeted set of outcomes. The report contains a number of recommendations that should strengthen its work – the key thing now is implementation.

We will continue our close work with UNAMA on donor coordination, rule of law, anti-corruption and support for human rights, especially women's rights. We welcome recognition of the importance of the national civilian presence offered by UNAMA's network of field offices and the UK strongly supports a continued national presence. These offices are an important symbol to local communities. They will also have a role to play in delivering successful elections in 2018 and 2019, and can make a contribution to underpinning local peace negotiations in the future.

The report sets out three strategic priorities, corresponding to support for political stability, peace, and economic and social development. We believe that putting greater focus on support for an Afghan-led peace process is the right way forward.

Only by establishing a credible peace process can Afghanistan move forward. We all have a role to play in that, including the UN. We very much hope therefore that members of this Council can agree to adjust the mandate of UNAMA in order to incorporate these recommendations. This would ensure that

UNAMA is better able to focus on the critical task of supporting the peace process. We look forward to discussing this with Council members in the weeks ahead.

Mr President,

Before concluding I want to say a word on the outcome of the US South Asia strategy review.

The UK and US are close partners in Afghanistan, so we welcome the US's long term commitment to the people and government there. Despite the challenges, which we have heard a lot about today, we agree that it is important that we continue to provide support on issues such as security, development and governance. This is crucial to building a stable Afghan state and reducing the terrorist threat to us all.

It's in all our interests that Afghanistan becomes safer and more prosperous: that's why we announced our own troop increase back in June and confirmed development support of up to a billion dollars to 2020.

We also welcome the restated commitment that – ultimately – the only way to a political settlement will be through negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taleban. This is why we encourage you, Foreign Minister Rabbani and your colleagues in government to take this opportunity to reach out to the Taleban to establish a credible peace process.

We owe it to the people of Afghanistan who have suffered so much during decades of violence, to do all that can be done to institute a peace process. It will be beholden on all of us, within this Council and in the UN system more broadly, and of course the government of Afghanistan to support such a peace process.

Thank you.