

PM remarks at the CHOGM press conference: 24 June 2022

It is an extraordinary and moving experience to be here in Rwanda today. A country that experienced some of the worst horrors of the 20th century in recent memory, and now finds itself with a thriving social and economic life and near-universal primary education.

Today, Rwanda is hosting leaders representing two-thirds of the world's population, stretching from the remotest islands of the Pacific to the southern tip of Africa.

Rwanda was never a British colony – it joined the Commonwealth of its own volition in 2009, recognising the benefits that come from being part of a progressive alliance representing two thirds of the world's population and some of its fastest-growing economies.

As many British Prime Ministers before me – and of course both her Majesty the Queen and the Prince of Wales – have recognised, there are few forums more quietly important for our nation's peace, prosperity and global influence.

We benefit from the incredible Commonwealth advantage – the 'fertilizer' I talked about yesterday – of shared language and institutions, which opens doors and cuts the costs of doing business.

We want to seize those opportunities, and that's why I announced this week major new British investments in green infrastructure projects, as well as trade schemes designed to break down the barriers to doing business.

This is where the UK is positioning ourselves post-Brexit, in close alliance with our European neighbours but also deepening our ties with old friends in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

More trade, more commerce brings prosperity and stability to other countries, but it also cuts costs for British consumers and opens opportunities for UK businesses – jobs and growth at home.

Unfortunately, that global prosperity and stability is being threatened by Vladimir Putin's unprovoked assault on Ukraine.

Many of the countries represented here in Kigali today find themselves bearing the brunt of Putin's folly, their populations brought closer to poverty by spiralling food and energy costs.

I know of course, and deeply appreciate, that many families and businesses in the UK have been hit hard as well by the rising cost of living.

That is why in our country the Chancellor has introduced an unprecedented package of financial support to support the most vulnerable households.

But we should also recognise the challenges around the world.

The UN estimates that an additional 48 million people will be pushed into acute hunger this year – that is, to the point of starvation – caused by climate change and post-pandemic supply shortages but also by the war in Ukraine.

I spoke to President Zelenskyy last week in Kyiv last week about how we can unblock Russia's blockade of Ukraine's grain exports.

But today we are also announcing a new £372 million package of UK aid.

That funding will support the UN's emergency response in the hardest-hit countries, as well as providing cutting-edge science partnerships to look at drought-resistant crops and new agricultural techniques.

And as I go tomorrow night to the G7 in Germany we will also commit to looking at what more richer countries can do to bring down global commodity prices and increase food supplies to get the world economy back on track and stick up for the freedoms in which we all believe.

Thank you very much.