

Press release: PM pledges ongoing UK support for building stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans

Prime Minister Theresa May will underline the UK's unconditional commitment to maintaining Europe's security and upholding European values on her visit to Macedonia today (17 May 2018) – the first visit to the Western Balkans by a serving UK Prime Minister for almost 20 years.

The PM will begin the day in Sofia at the EU's Western Balkans Summit, where she will restate the UK's desire to work with European allies to promote greater stability, security and prosperity across the region.

Travelling on to Macedonia, Theresa May will be the first British Prime Minister to set foot in the Western Balkans since Tony Blair visited in 1999. Here she will meet with Prime Minister Zaev to discuss the programme of reforms his government is undertaking to strengthen democracy, uphold the rule of law, and reach out to its neighbours, as well as progress on negotiations with Greece on the Name Issue.

On International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, the Prime Minister will also meet with LGBT activists to discuss their experiences and the shifting culture in Macedonia.

The Prime Minister will end her trip by speaking at a reception in Parliament, which will be attended by politicians, officials, military personnel and future leaders from across Macedonian society.

Prime Minister, Theresa May said:

This year, as we mark the 25th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Macedonia and the UK, the ties between our countries are stronger than ever.

Next year the UK is leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe – and we will continue to work with our allies to protect our collective security and champion the European values that so many in Macedonia and the wider Western Balkans share.

I'm looking forward to hearing from Prime Minister Zaev and others about the progress the country is making towards a more progressive, prosperous and democratic Macedonia.

At the EU's Western Balkans summit in Sofia, the 28 leaders in the EU and the 6 leaders in the Western Balkans will discuss the next steps in helping the Western Balkans continue on its path to stability, free from conflict and malign influence, and able to tackle its own problems.

The UK will host a Western Balkans Summit on 10 July in London, focussing on strengthening regional security cooperation; increasing economic stability; and fostering greater political cooperation. This will be the fifth annual Summit as part of the Berlin Process that Chancellor Merkel launched in 2014.