

Press release: The Future of ASEAN-UK Cooperation, Post-Brexit: Minister Field

Speaking to academics and think-tanks in attendance Minister Field said:

Good morning and thank you to Chatham House and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs for hosting this expert gathering. I know a great deal of time and effort has gone into arranging it, and it could not have been better timed.

The UK is making greater efforts than ever to broaden our international horizons and deepen our global partnerships, preparing the way for a new approach once we have left the EU.

Strengthening our relationship with the ASEAN community is a really important part of that, so I am delighted to have the chance to hear your thoughts on how we might go about it.

There is an excellent range of topics on your agenda today. Over the next 15 minutes or so I should like to touch on just some of them, to offer some food for thought.

UK-ASEAN

Since being appointed as Minister for Asia and the Pacific almost 18 months ago I have made it my personal mission to visit as many countries of the region as humanly possible, and to engage, face to face, with my ministerial counterparts.

Within the first or so I achieved my key ambition of visiting all ten members of ASEAN at least once.

This is already my second visit to Singapore, and over the course of two frantic weeks in August, I visited Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

In Jakarta I set out our 'All of Asia' policy, through which we are engaging actively with all countries in the region, working with them to promote regional security, to build prosperity, and to strengthen the values which underpin the links between our people.

Today I hope that we can substantively build on this work – as I say, taking the opportunity to discuss and explore together the ways in which the UK can remain the strongest of partners to ASEAN – maintaining and strengthening our common areas of interest – after we leave the EU.

Our vision is of a genuine deep, comprehensive partnership – one that builds up our already excellent cooperation right across the board. I will say more about that in a moment.

It is really up to all of us – the UK and all the ASEAN community – to decide how we go about it.

I would like us to be really ambitious – to see where the UK-ASEAN relationship is now, to imagine how it might look in the future and to chart a course towards that goal.

Education

Let's start with education – for the university academics among you, surely a subject close to your hearts.

I'm sure you don't need me to tell you how open ASEAN as a whole is to education opportunities of all kinds.

I am pleased to say that UK institutions and qualifications seem particularly popular: more than 42,000 students from the region attended UK universities in 2016/17.

That includes some 8,000 Singaporeans and 17,000 Malaysians.

In fact Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand all rank in the top 10 countries from outside the EU for sending students to the UK.

However, more and more of your young people do not even need to leave home to get UK qualifications.

Approximately 130,000 young people are pursuing UK certified higher education courses right here in the region.

Respected British universities such as Nottingham, Newcastle, Herriot Watt and Coventry are all expanding their partnerships here.

I saw evidence of this first-hand in Vientiane earlier this year, when I had the pleasure of opening a new International Education Center at Panyathip School, hosting not one, but three UK institutions: Nottingham University, the Wimbledon School of English, and the Royal Academy of Dance.

It showed that our links are not just at tertiary level education – more and more schools across the ASEAN region are now teaching the British international school curriculum.

Education is a significant part of our relationship with ASEAN and I can see it really taking off over the coming years.

Research and Innovation

The same goes for research and innovation – where the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' offers huge opportunities for collaboration.

Some of you may be familiar with the work that has flowed from our Newton Fund for science and innovation, which has been running since 2014.

The UK is investing £735 million in the Fund worldwide through to 2021, with matched funding from partner countries. In ASEAN we are partnering with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, and these partnerships are delivering results.

They have already produced some outstanding research on sustainable rice production and food security, and we are working together to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities, improve forecasting of extreme weather, and tackle common diseases.

The range of our collaboration is truly out of this world. Through our Space Agency we are supporting research into the use of satellite technology to help our partners tackle problems ranging from illegal fishing in Indonesia to early warning of dengue outbreaks in Vietnam, and reducing illegal logging in Malaysia.

It may sound like science-fiction, but together with Singapore we are now firmly pushing the frontiers of 'science fact', with a £10 million joint initiative to build and fly a satellite quantum key distribution test-bed.

I won't try to explain in detail what that is, I can't claim to match Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau's knowledge of quantum theory .

However I can say that it is a significant commitment to cyber technology and will open up a global market estimated to be worth more than £11 billion over the next ten years.

Research and innovation is already an integral part of the UK-ASEAN relationship and this latest project demonstrates just how far-reaching the opportunities could be in the future.

Trade and Investment

Trade is another area where I see huge scope for cooperation and two-way growth – and for using our departure from the EU as an opportunity for us all to redesign and strengthen our existing relationships.

It is something that our Prime Minister Theresa May was keen to emphasise at the recent Asia Europe Meeting in Brussels, which I also attended.

Take our investment in Singapore for instance.

Over 4,000 British companies have a presence here, employing over 50,000 people.

The UK is the second largest European investor in Singapore, and sixth largest overall.

There is a similarly positive picture across the ASEAN region.

In 2017, trade between the UK and the region was worth over £36.5 billion.

The UK remains ASEAN's second largest source of investment, and we invest three times as much as Germany or France in wider Southeast Asia.

UK goods exports to ASEAN grew by 19.9% between 2016 and 2017. Our overall exports were more than double those to India.

More than ever, we are urging and supporting UK companies to take advantage of opportunities overseas, and we are attracting inward investment into the UK too – not least for UK Smart Cities projects and align ourselves with the ASEAN Smart Cities Network.

We are also helping countries of the region to make themselves more attractive to foreign investment – using our Prosperity Fund programmes to cut red-tape, tackle corruption and promote a fair business environment. From within the EU we have been a cheerleader for its Free Trade Agreements with Singapore and Vietnam.

We are determined to ensure that these trade benefits are transitioned into bilateral arrangements immediately after we leave.

Alongside our bilateral agreements, we are also exploring accession to the CPTPP and ways to further develop trade and investment between us. We are doing all this with one goal in mind, to strengthen our partnership economically, diplomatically and politically with ASEAN.

Challenges

Alongside all these areas of positive collaboration, we recognise that there are also challenges.

I make no bones about our concern over the direction some countries are taking on democratic values or human rights. The 'war on drugs' in the Philippines and the recent flawed elections in Cambodia are two such causes of concern.

The despicable treatment of the Rohingya community by the Burmese military also remains high on the agenda of the UK and indeed many other nations the world over, not least here in South East Asia.

We do not hide our views on these subjects or row back from our firm commitment to uphold a rules-based international system, upon which prosperity, security and freedom for us all depends.

We continue to encourage others to remain equally committed, and my colleagues and I continue to press for positive change. We will continue to do so after we leave the EU.

Security

Of course many of the challenges we face are shared, and they are challenges that we shall face together, because the UK is committed to the security of this region.

We demonstrate that commitment in a number of ways – including our permanent military presence in Brunei, our participation in the Five Power Defence

Arrangements and the deployment of Royal Navy ships to the region – three this year alone.

All of them have participated in joint exercises – a key part of our support for the development and integration of the region's defence capabilities and our commitment to help address future security challenges.

Even in the defence sphere, our education links shine through. In the last five years, just under one hundred officers from ASEAN member states have graduated from UK defence establishments.

Today, the active Service Chiefs in four ASEAN countries studied in Britain.

It is not all ships, planes and people in uniform though. Our security cooperation is much broader than this, and cyber is a key element of it.

As you may know, Singapore, as the Chair of ASEAN, is spearheading an initiative to strengthen the cyberspace capabilities of all ASEAN states.

I am delighted that they have invited us to take part – we will be the only non-Dialogue Partner involved.

Counter Terrorism is another important element of our security collaboration.

We have established a regional Counter-Terrorism Unit to enhance the links between agencies and governments.

We have done extensive work in this area with Indonesia. We were a critical part of the JCLEC process that led to hundreds of arrests – by Indonesian officers drawing on skills learned from the UK.

Conclusion

I hope that I have given you a good idea of the breadth and depth of the UK's engagement in ASEAN.

Not only that – I hope you have also got a sense of our ambition for our future relationship.

I have seen first-hand what it is like now, and I know there is a huge appetite from both sides to maintain and strengthen this precious relationship after we leave the EU.

I believe we can afford to think ambitiously and I hope today's discussions allow you to do that.

I wish you a productive day and I look forward to hearing how you have got on when I come back this evening!

Thank you.

Press release: Wales' creative industries to benefit from major new research investment

The screen and broadcast industries in Cardiff are set to receive significant funding

Press release: Wales' creative industries to benefit from major new research investment

- The Creative Industries Clusters Programme, a key deliverable in the Industrial Strategy's Creative Industries Sector Deal, brings together creative hubs across the UK with researchers and businesses to boost their world-leading status
- Sony UK Technology Centre, BBC Cymru and S4C are some of the partners involved in the research

Wales' thriving screen and broadcast industries are to join forces with researchers and organisations to explore new ways of boosting jobs and growth.

The Clwstwr Creadigol project, led by Cardiff University, is looking to transform the screen and broadcast industries in the Cardiff region by helping them to innovate and compete, aimed at responding to changing technologies such as the emergence of 5G mobile infrastructure and changing patterns of consumption.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

The screen and broadcast industries in South Wales are massive success stories for the whole of the UK, creating skilled jobs and business opportunities across the country.

The creative industries in Wales currently contributes over £1 billion a year to the UK's economy, and through our modern Industrial Strategy we are investing to enable the sector to keep on growing and bringing the benefits to all corners of the United Kingdom.

Led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council within UKRI, the £80 million Creative Industries Clusters Programme comprises nine creative clusters across the UK and a new Policy and Evidence Centre, led by Nesta in partnership with 13 universities. The programme will bring together world-class research talent with companies and organisations, including household names such as Aardman, Burberry and Sony, in a first-of-its kind research and development investment.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

Britain's creative industries are an economic and cultural powerhouse and the Creative Clusters will ensure they continue to thrive in regions across the country.

These partnerships between business, academia and industry will encourage the use of future technology to develop new products and experiences, and boost employment opportunities across the breadth of the UK.

This investment, through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund and industry, offers support to Wales' globally important creative industries, which are already worth over £1 billion to the UK economy, and supports 63,000 jobs. The aim of the Clusters programme is to create jobs and drive the creation of companies, products and experiences that can be marketed around the world.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Wales is a creative nation, and the creative industries provide valuable jobs and opportunities for thousands of people across the country.

This UK Government investment cements South Wales' place as a global leader in the screen and broadcast industries. Taken together with the benefits that will arise from the abolition of the Severn tolls, this funding will also provide added impetus to work collaboratively with the burgeoning creative sector in the South West of England, boosting the regional economy and enabling our businesses to promote their excellent work around the world.

Professor Andrew Thompson, Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, said:

Combining world-class arts and humanities researchers with our globally renowned creative industries will underpin growth in this vibrant and rapidly expanding sector within the UK economy.

These pioneering partnerships between industry and universities are providing a huge vote of confidence for a sector that is vital to

the future prosperity of the UK.

A new Policy and Evidence Centre has also been established that will address gaps in the evidence base on the national economic strength of the UK's creative industries. Led by global innovation foundation Nesta, it will develop independent evidence that will inform decision-making across the creative industries and underpin future policy decisions.

ENDS

Press release: Foreign Secretary: building blocks for Yemen solution are in view

Jeremy Hunt has returned from meetings in Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the situation in Yemen.

Press release: Foreign Secretary: building blocks for Yemen solution are in view

- serious consideration is being given to a set of political ideas and confidence-building measures that would allow for the start of political talks in Sweden by the end of November
- coalition agrees to Houthi medical evacuation, with agreed conditions; this is a major development given that this was a prior block to talks
- UK to continue to discussions with partners on how Security Council can support political process and lead to improvements on the humanitarian situation

Following the visit of Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the Saudi-led Coalition have agreed to the evacuation of wounded Houthis from Yemen, one of the key stumbling blocks to the UN Geneva talks in September.

Subject to final reassurances, Coalition forces will now permit the UN to oversee a Houthi medical evacuation, including up to 50 wounded fighters, to

Oman, ahead of another proposed round of peace talks in Sweden later this month.

The Foreign Secretary's trip to the Middle East, during which he met with the senior leadership of the Saudi, UAE and Yemeni governments, and spoke with the Foreign Minister of Oman, helped improve understanding on steps that would lead to a cessation of hostilities.

The Foreign Secretary had constructive discussions on pathways to achieve de-escalation and reduce tensions, and was clear that both sides would need to play their part in confidence-building measures.

Meanwhile the UK will continue discussions with partners on how the UN Security Council can support the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths' on the political process and improving the humanitarian situation. This will include discussions on the draft UN Security Council Resolution on Yemen ahead of a Security Council briefing on the issue on 16 November.

The Foreign Secretary also used meetings with Saudi Arabia's rulers to push for real accountability against those responsible for the brutal murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, pointing out both the strong international condemnation and the need for evidence that such an act could never happen again.

In the days preceding the visit, the Foreign Secretary spoke with his US, German and French counterparts in order to deliver a coordinated response to the challenges facing the region.

Speaking following his visit Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt said:

The world's worst humanitarian crisis is not a natural disaster. It is the man-made situation in Yemen. I have just been in Saudi Arabia and the UAE because there is a window of opportunity to tackle it.

75% of the population in Yemen require humanitarian assistance and 8.4 million are at risk of starvation. We have to act.

Diplomacy and negotiation remain the only path to ending the conflict and I am encouraged that Saudi Arabia and the UAE have shown their support for the UN peace process, led by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

In my meetings we have made progress in removing the largest stumbling block to previous proposed rounds of peace talks, and set out a credible path to a de-escalation of military activity.

I will continue talking to partners about the best way for the Security Council to support the UN Special Envoy's efforts on the political process and improve the humanitarian situation. We await Martin Griffiths' important briefing to the Security Council on 16 November.

Overall, I leave the region encouraged by these signs of progress, and I am determined to do what it takes to convert this into a lasting peace for the people of Yemen.

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