

Speech: PM press conference with Italian Prime Minister Gentiloni: 9 February 2017

It is a great pleasure to be able to welcome Prime Minister Gentiloni to Downing Street. Just as I chose to visit Italy shortly after coming into office, Prime Minister Gentiloni has made the UK one of his first trips – and I think that underlines the importance that we both place on the long-standing relationship between our 2 countries.

As I have said before, Britain is leaving the European Union – but we are not leaving Europe – and a global Britain that stands tall in the world, will be a Britain that remains a good friend and ally to Italy and to all our European partners.

So we have had important discussions today on the future of our bilateral relationship as the UK leaves the EU; and on a number of areas at the heart of Italy's Presidency of the G7. And we have agreed to establish a regular bilateral summit between the UK and Italy.

First, the UK remains committed to triggering Article 50 by the end of March and last night we moved a step closer with the successful passage of the Bill in the Commons. As I have said, the priority for the UK in the negotiations ahead will be to seek a new, comprehensive, bold and ambitious free trade agreement with the European Union today we talked about the importance we both place on our trade.

The UK is Italy's seventh largest export market for goods, worth over 22 billion euros a year, and we do vital business in agriculture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and defence. For example, already this year the UK government has signed a £271 million deal with Leonardo Helicopters to provide maintenance for our Wildcat helicopters, protecting hundreds of skilled jobs in Yeovil.

And together with other free trade deals we intend to do, I am determined that a global Britain will be a great champion of free trade in a way that can only be good for British and Italian businesses and jobs.

A global Britain will also be a leading partner in addressing the wider challenges that Prime Minister Gentiloni and his government have put at the heart of [Italy's G7 presidency](#) this year; including making the global economy work for everyone, finding better solutions to managing the huge population movements we are seeing, and keeping up the pressure on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine.

Italy has been engaged in a long debate about how the benefits of prosperity can be shared by more people. And we are having a similar debate in Britain, where we have embarked on an ambitious programme of economic and social

reform to spread wealth and opportunity more fairly across our country. And I hope that this year's G7 can help us go further in working with all our international partners to shape a global economy that truly works for everyone.

That same co-operation is vital for our security too. And just as we do in Afghanistan and at the forefront of the international coalition against Daesh, Britain and Italy will continue to work together for the security of all our citizens. And global Britain will continue to play a leading role in Europe's security through the NATO alliance.

We will also continue to work together in tackling the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. Italy has become the main arrival point for illegal migration into Europe, with over 180,000 people arriving in 2016. But this is not just a problem for Italy, it is a problem for us all. And we need to work together to find better solutions to the huge population movements we are seeing, so refugees don't have to risk their lives on dangerous journeys and so we control the unmanageable economic migration that is neither working for migrants nor for our own populations.

We both strongly support the comprehensive and co-ordinated approach agreed at the [EU Summit in Malta](#) last week. This includes seeking an inclusive political settlement to stabilise Libya which will not only help to tackle migration flows but also counter terrorism. And I welcome the agreement that was signed between the Italian and Libyan governments last week on migration and on strengthening border security.

Britain and Italy will continue to work together closely and I hope that through Italy's G7 presidency we can shape a new approach to managing mass population movements that is in the interests of all those involved. We must also do everything possible to protect men, women and children from trafficking, sexual violence and labour exploitation. And I am grateful that Italy has put modern slavery on the G7 agenda for the first time and hope that we can enhance the joint working between our law enforcement agencies to cultivate a new radical, global and co-ordinated approach to defeat this vile crime that runs counter to our deepest values.

Finally, on the situation in eastern Ukraine, I emphasised the UK's continuing concern over Russia's aggressive and destabilising actions and the drastic deterioration in the humanitarian situation that we have seen recently. And it is vital that the international community continues to exert pressure and that we continue to maintain sanctions on Russia until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented.

I want to thank you Prime Minister for your visit and for the constructive conversations we have had.

I believe that today we have laid the foundations for continuing the strong and successful relationship between our 2 countries – and I look forward to working with you, Prime Minister, on your G7 agenda and on the UN Security Council this year, and on shaping a new partnership between Britain and the EU that is in the interests of us all.