

Speech: PM speech to the UK-Qatar Business and Investment Forum

I am delighted to be able to join you here in Birmingham for this prestigious conference which comes on the eve of one of the most significant moments that the United Kingdom has faced for many years.

Tomorrow we begin the negotiations to secure a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union.

As we do so, I am determined that we should also seize this historic opportunity to get out into the world and to shape an even bigger role for a global Britain.

This means not just building new alliances, but going even further in working with old friends who have stood alongside us for centuries.

That is the spirit in which I welcome you all here today.

When I had the privilege of addressing the Gulf Co-operation Council in December, I said that the relationship between the United Kingdom and our allies in the Gulf is not just of great historic value – but also fundamental to our shared future.

It is fundamental to our shared security because Gulf security is our security, and together we face the same global threats from terrorism and extremism, [as we saw again so tragically in London](#) just last week.

And it is fundamental to our shared prosperity – for Gulf prosperity is our prosperity – and by growing our trade and investment we can create new jobs and new opportunities for all our people.

So I am delighted to welcome His Excellency Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah – with whom I have worked on security co-operation for many years – and to see him here today with one of the broadest and most senior delegations that Qatar has sent anywhere in the world, including several Qatari ministers, leaders of industry and the Qatari Investment Authority.

The strength and seniority of the delegations here from both the UK and Qatar are a testament to the importance we both place on our bilateral relationship and the scale of our shared ambition to develop it.

Already the United Kingdom is Qatar's number 1 destination for foreign direct investment, with investments worth over £35 billion ranging from the iconic Shard to new housing in the Olympic Village in East London.

And Qatar is already the third largest market for UK exports across the Middle East and North Africa, with over 600 UK companies already benefitting from the opportunity to support your growing infrastructure and provide goods and services to your people.

But this week I hope that we can go further, by laying the foundations for a bold new chapter in this partnership between our nations.

Last night we signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding to support Qatar's 2030 National Vision.

This will deepen the co-operation between our governments and our businesses across a wide range of vital areas including education and healthcare, science, research and innovation, tourism and culture, transport, energy, financial services and the development of small businesses.

We will also deepen our co-operation on defence, where I hope the UK can be Qatar's partner of choice; on cyber, where the UK will support Qatar to shore up its cyber defences; and on sport, where the UK will continue to share our expertise on managing major events as part of our support for Qatar as it prepares for the 2022 World Cup.

And as we support Qatar with British expertise, so today I am delighted that Qatar is pledging major new investment which will play a significant role in shaping a brighter future for Britain too.

For my [Plan for Britain](#) is not just a plan to leave the EU, but a plan to build a stronger economy and a fairer society, underpinned by genuine economic and social reform to make Britain a country that works for everyone, not just a privileged few.

And a critical part of this plan is developing a [modern industrial strategy](#) that can help secure my vision of a high-skilled, high-paid Britain where opportunity is spread across every community, not just the most prosperous areas like London and the South East.

Qatar's new investment today will help to make this a reality by providing new support for regeneration projects outside London, here in Birmingham and in other regions across the country.

It is a bold statement of continued confidence in the British economy from long-term investors committed to prosperity in every part of our United Kingdom.

So I look forward to sitting down with Qatari investors this afternoon to discuss some of the many attractive commercial opportunities that a global Britain has to offer.

These include those opportunities arising from our own long-term investment in infrastructure – such as High Speed 2, which will be transformative for this region and in turn create many exciting, new opportunities for investment in all the parts of the country that it travels through.

These investments will play an important role in helping us to shape the forces of globalisation so that everyone shares in the benefits of economic growth.

They will also provide the foundation from which we can take our trade and

investment to the next level. So I am delighted that we are also establishing a new Joint Economic and Trade Committee. And as I said at the [Gulf Co-operation Council in December](#), I hope we can pave the way for an ambitious trade arrangement for when the UK has left the EU, including exploring whether we can forge a new trade arrangement for the whole of the Gulf area.

As a global Britain, I am determined that we will be the most committed and most passionate advocate of free trade in the world – and I look forward to continuing these vital discussions on growing our trade and investment as part of hosting the Gulf Co-operation Council in London later this year.

So thank you once again for your support today, for your investments in our country and for the continued partnership that we are building together.

Through this enduring commitment between our countries and our peoples, let us meet the shared challenges to our security; grasp the shared opportunities for our prosperity; and build a brighter future for the United Kingdom and Qatar, today and for generations to come.