

Speech: PM statement in Sweden: 9 April 2018

Thank you very much, Prime Minister, for hosting me at Rosenbad today. I'm very pleased to be back in Sweden.

The historic ties, shared values and cooperation between our countries I think makes ours a truly special partnership.

As you say, today we have talked about the attack in Salisbury, the threat Russia poses to our shared security, wider European and international security issues, as well as our bilateral relationship, and the progress we have been making towards a Brexit deal.

But I'd like to begin by reiterating Britain's condemnation of the truly barbaric chemical attack in Douma, Syria.

Saturday's horrific attack against the people of Douma, among them a number of innocent children, was utterly reprehensible.

We are working closely with our allies to establish urgently the detail of what happened. If confirmed, this represents further evidence of the Assad regime's appalling cruelty against its own people, and total disregard for its legal obligations not to use these weapons.

This heinous attack follows a wider pattern of reckless behaviour in which fundamental international norms on counter-proliferation and the use of chemical weapons have been wilfully violated.

Russia's vetoes at the UN have enabled the Assad regime to breach global rules, and removed mechanisms that allow us to investigate chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

So the international community must strengthen its resolve to deal with those responsible. Together with Sweden we have called an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council which will take place shortly.

And just as we must stand up against the use of chemical weapons in Syria and violations of the counter-proliferation agenda, so we must stand together in the wake of last month's nerve agent attack in Salisbury.

I'd like to thank you Prime Minister, for your solidarity, and for standing up for our shared values and our shared security.

Our case for Russian culpability is clear. No other country has a combination of the capability, the intent and the motive to carry out such an act.

Faced with the evidence, Russia provided no explanation, and even pointed the finger at Sweden in a preposterous effort to distract from the truth.

So these attempted murders represent another assault on our shared values and the international rules based system which upholds them.

Your swift condemnation of Russia was critical in helping reinforce western unity. The robust steps that you and others have taken in the past month demonstrate a clear recognition of the shared threat we face.

We have also discussed the bilateral security and defence relationship between our countries which remains strong, and our cooperation in this area continues to deepen as we look to bolster our European security and harden our defences in the face of the growing challenge from Russia, as well as wider threats to global security.

Sweden has contributed to international operations in Afghanistan and Libya, and your troops now play an active role alongside ours in UN peacekeeping operations and as part of the global coalition to defeat Daesh.

I welcome Sweden's decision to join the Joint Expeditionary Force, which has bolstered our ability to respond quickly together to emerging threats across the globe.

We also cooperate closely to fight terrorism. In recent years our nations have suffered callous attacks on our citizens by cowards who want to destroy our values and way of life. Indeed, Saturday marked one year on from a despicable act of terror here on the streets of Stockholm.

And as I said at the time, we will continue to stand together as we confront this shared threat.

Beyond security, our strong trade and investment relationship – which has grown between our countries over hundreds of years – continues to flourish.

There are a thousand Swedish companies in the UK and a similar number of British companies with a presence here in Sweden.

Our economic ties are one of the many reasons we are determined to maintain our close links with Sweden after Brexit. And today we have discussed the ambitious economic and security partnership we want to build.

We have also reflected on progress in the negotiations, and considered those elements that remain outstanding – including on issues relating to Northern Ireland.

Our shared interests will undoubtedly continue to align post-Brexit, and I have no intention of allowing our close and historic ties to weaken.

I want a future relationship of unprecedented breadth and depth with the EU, and with our European partners too.

And so I am absolutely committed to continuing to work with you in the years ahead, to build on our partnership and keep our people prosperous and safe.

Thank you.