

Speech: Prime Minister's Press Statement in Tokyo

Thank you, Prime Minister Abe, for welcoming me to Kyoto and here to Tokyo.

The close cooperation between our two countries is particularly important at this critical juncture, with North Korean provocation presenting an unprecedented threat to international security.

I want to begin by expressing the UK's strong sense of solidarity with the Japanese people at this time.

The UK and Japan are natural partners. We share common interests as outward-looking, democratic, free-trading island nations with global reach.

We are committed to the rules-based international system, free and open international trade and the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

And today we have committed to elevating the UK-Japan partnership in a number of areas.

Security and Defence Cooperation

As two outward-facing countries with many shared priorities and shared challenges, Japan is a natural partner for us on defence and security issues. We are each other's closest security partners in Asia and Europe.

And today we have agreed a "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation" to enhance our collective response to threats to the international order and to global peace and security, through increased cooperation on defence, foreign policy, cyber security, and counter-terrorism.

Our defence cooperation is already particularly strong, with our Typhoon fighter jets exercising in Japan last year – the first time that a country other than the US has done so.

And we are now taking this even further with the deployment of HMS Argyll to the region in December 2018, and UK troops exercising jointly with their Japanese counterparts next year in Japan for the first time ever.

And we must also tackle new and emerging threats together, from counter-terrorism through to cyber security. And today we have agreed a new programme of cooperation to ensure a safe and secure Rugby World Cup and Olympic and Paralympic Games here in Japan.

We have highlighted our opposition to any actions on the South and East China Seas likely to increase tension. Stability in this region is of global concern and we encourage all parties to resolve their disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law.

Of course, I am here at a critical time. North Korea's missile launch this week was an outrageous provocation and an unacceptable threat to Japan's national security. We condemn North Korea in the strongest terms possible for this reckless act, which was a clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

In response to this illegal action, Prime Minister Abe and I have agreed to work together and with others in the international community to strengthen pressure against North Korea, including by increasing the pace of sanctions implementation and working towards the adoption of a new and effective resolution at the United Nations Security Council.

Trade and Investment Relationship

Japan is also a natural partner for the UK on the economy: in building a rules-based international system, and encouraging WTO reform to ensure a global economy that works for everyone.

Japan is the world's third largest economy and we benefit more from Japanese investment than any other country in the world apart from the US.

Japanese companies already invest more than £40 billion in the UK and over 1,000 Japanese companies including Honda, Hitachi, Fujitsu and Sony employ 140,000 people in the UK.

And we welcome the commitment from Japanese companies to a long-term presence in the UK. Nissan, Toyota and Softbank in particular have made commitments to the UK since the EU referendum, in a powerful vote of confidence in the long term strength of the UK economy.

I have had the opportunity to meet a number of major Japanese investors here in Tokyo, who have reiterated to me their belief in the strength of the UK economy and their commitment to a mutually beneficial partnership.

And Prime Minister Abe, it was good to hear you reaffirm your continued faith in the UK economy, including after Brexit, as we addressed business leaders earlier today.

As we announced earlier this month, our intention is that the UK will be free to sign new bilateral trade agreements with partners around the world in any interim Brexit period.

And we have agreed here today that we want to see a swift conclusion of the ambitious EU Japan Economic Partnership Agreement. Prime Minister Abe and I have agreed that as we exit the EU, we will work quickly to establish a new economic partnership between Japan and the UK based on the final terms of that agreement.

We will set up a new joint working group to examine how we can unblock remaining barriers to trade and take steps to build the closest, freest trading relationship between the UK and Japan after Brexit.

And we have agreed to build cooperation in industrial policy across science,

innovation, and energy, to ensure thriving and competitive economies.

Conclusion

So thank you, Shinzo.

My first visit to your country has been a memorable one. I have seen your rich traditional culture and the modern dynamism of Japan.

And our personal friendship reflects the deep friendship and bonds between our two countries.

This visit marks a great step forward not only in enriching our existing ties, but agreeing our shared vision of even deeper cooperation in the future.

And I know that we both believe these steps will not only increase our own security and prosperity, but also see us together playing a unique role as standard-bearers for the open, liberal, innovative and secure world order both our great nations rely upon.