

# Speech: I care about tech because I care about people

This place has always looked to the future. Charles Darwin, Edward Jenner, Alexander Fleming: all fellows of this great institution, all coming together to “share knowledge” to “benefit society”.

I’d like to thank another great fellow – Dr Eric Topol – for the amazing work he, and his team, have done to benefit the NHS.

They’ve looked to the future. They’ve looked at genomics, digital medicines, AI and robotics. They’ve looked at the potential of new technology to save lives and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing.

And they’ve looked at how tech can help staff, make their lives easier, and what we need to do to help our NHS workforce prepare for a digital future.

The [Topol Review](#) is a forensically thorough analysis of what we need to do and how we should do it. But I’d like to take a moment to focus on the why.

Why do I care about getting the right tech in the NHS? Why should we all care about getting the right tech in the NHS?

It’s not about having the latest gizmos. It’s because the right technology saves lives. Every major technological leap, from penicillin, to vaccination, to MRI, has meant more lives saved.

I’m confident that our children and grandchildren will look back at genomics, AI and robotics in the same way. They’ll be the ones asking us why, if we fail to seize this opportunity.

As Dr Topol says, we’re 10 years behind in some fields. If we just made better use of today’s tech, we could save more people.

So I care about tech because I care about people. I care about our NHS staff and our NHS patients. And I care about getting this right. Because I know the consequences when we don’t.

There’s something that Dr Umesh Prabhu said that has stayed with me. It’s the reason why he devoted his career to becoming an NHS medical director and an expert in patient safety.

When he was a consultant, he made a mistake. There were 2 babies with the same name on his ward. His junior doctor picked up the wrong case notes and when Dr Prabhu was brought the wrong x-ray, he discharged the wrong baby.

Two days later that baby boy was admitted to another hospital with severe brain damage. The baby’s step-father had stamped on his skull. X-rays showed the baby had multiple rib fractures, some of which were old.

As you can imagine, Dr Prabhu was devastated. Here was a man who cared deeply about his patients, who had made helping people his life's mission.

That tragedy had a profound effect on him. He vowed to change the system, to put in place safety protocols and ways of working that would mean a simple mix-up couldn't lead to such devastating consequences again.

Thankfully, thanks to his efforts, much has changed in the NHS since that happened. But it hasn't changed enough.

Dr Prabhu says human beings make 5 to 7 mistakes every day. Everybody makes mistakes. Doctors and nurses will make mistakes, despite their best efforts and intentions.

That's why, for me, getting the right tech – tech that works, tech that helps our medical staff, that makes their lives easier, that reduces the chance of human error leading to human tragedy – is so important.

I care passionately about giving our medical staff the right tools to do their jobs. I understand their frustration at systems that make their jobs more difficult. I get how a tough day becomes even tougher because something won't work like it's supposed to.

Digital tech has the potential to transform our health service in the future, but the right tech, right now, will improve lives, and save lives. So the work must begin now.

We're going to have a chief information officer or a chief clinical information officer on the board of every local NHS organisation within the next 3 years.

Getting the right leadership, people who understand tech, who have tech skills themselves, involved in management decisions is vital to getting the right mindset in place. It's the first step to training up staff, building up digital capability in hospitals and GP surgeries.

So I'm delighted to launch the Topol programme for digital healthcare fellowships. This programme will give clinicians the skills to make a practical difference to their local NHS organisations and start them on a career path to become CCIOs and CIOs. That way, those leaders can help train and prepare our workforce for a digital future.

And here I'd like to quote from the report: "There is a need to raise awareness of genomics and digital literacy among the health and social care workforce. This requires development of the skills, attitudes and behaviours that individuals require to become digitally competent and confident."

So, the Prime Minister and I have asked Baroness Dido Harding to take forward a 'workplace implementation plan'. She will build on the recommendations in the Topol Review:

- all healthcare professionals should receive core training in genomic

literacy to help them understand the basis, benefits and ethical considerations involved

- we need to create a career pathway from undergraduate to specialist, a digitally enabled health system with a culture of continuous learning, and we need to support the educators, and the development of the whole workforce

Of course, we want the NHS to be world leaders in digital healthcare, so we need to attract the brightest and the best into our health service, we need to increase the number of clinicians, scientists, technologists and specialists.

But if we want to see transformative change in the NHS, then we need to embed digital skills into every level, and every part of it.

We must invest in training up the existing workforce. Staff must have the opportunity to learn about digital technologies and develop the necessary skills. They must have ongoing training.

The government is putting a record £20.5 billion a year into the NHS – the longest and largest cash settlement in its history.

It's a once-in-a-generation opportunity. To seize that opportunity and build a better, more sustainable health service for the future, we must ensure our NHS workforce have the right tech and the right tech skills.

Because, thirdly, and finally, I'd like to bring it back to why – why we're here today.

That's not a metaphysical question – I'm afraid I can't answer that one for you – but why I'm here today is because I want us to harness the power of digital technology, to shape it as a force for good, because I want to help the NHS cut costs and save lives.

When we talk about the importance of data management and inter-operability, most of the public won't know what we mean.

This is what I mean: right now, Tesco has more sophisticated and more efficient systems than the NHS. They know who you are through loyalty cards, where you shop through store IDs, and what you buy through the items scanned at the checkout.

That wealth of information means they can run their operations with just-in-time deliveries and market their goods to shoppers with personalised discount vouchers.

In the NHS, we don't have anything like that. We don't use common identifiers to identify patients, we don't know which hospitals a patient has been to, we don't know which medicines have been put into them. We don't even know what we already know!

Of course, there are security and privacy concerns over sensitive medical data and that data has to be managed carefully and with consent. But the NHS is missing out on valuable information. Information that could make NHS services more efficient and safer.

A world in which a hospital can't pull up a patient's GP record to see the reason for stopping and starting medications is downright dangerous. True inter-operability means having the right systems and the right standards.

We have learned the lessons of the past. We don't need the same system across the NHS, but we need the same standards so machines can talk to each other and data can be exchanged.

Six acute NHS trusts have taken up 'Scan for Safety', a standard methodology using standardised naming conventions and proven technology to identify and monitor patients, and track products and places.

I want to see this taken up by the entire acute sector. As the review says, we can have the most advanced tech, but we won't see the benefits unless we have real inter-operability. So staff have to make scanning a routine part of their working day.

It takes seconds, but saves hours. If adopted across the NHS, the time saved would equate to almost 400 extra nurses.

As Dr Topol says in the report: "Wherever possible, the adoption of new technologies should enable staff to gain more time to care, promoting deeper interaction with patients".

Because, ultimately, this is about people. It's about doctors like Dr Prabhu. It's about babies like that little boy.

For tech to succeed, for tech to fulfil its potential and deliver on its promise, then human beings are absolutely critical to making it happen. We need a culture change as much as we need a technological change.

So, let's work together towards a digital future that works for people, that puts people first, that helps the NHS do the job it is there to do, ensures the NHS is always there, for all of us, for generations to come.

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## **Speech: Lord Ahmad Opening Speech at the Governing Council of the Community of Democracies**

Distinguished Guests. Ladies and Gentlemen. I welcome you all here formally.

I was just saying to the Secretary General that I have had a rather interesting start to my morning – when we talk of Human Rights and Democracy and the rule of law, I had a fascinating insight this morning, and quite privileged to do so, in the company of Henry Kissinger – so that is my reason why I am slightly late; the Foreign Secretary, together with a few other Ministers today hosted Henry Kissinger and it was a fascinating insight into his own life, but also his world view on where we are today.

The issue of democracy and human rights is very close to my heart, as someone who is also Minister for the United Nations and the family of the Commonwealth 53. It is something that defines a nation, it defines how we are, it defines our interaction on the world stage.

Since the United Kingdom joined the Community in 2016, we have played an increasingly active role. The focus of our time as chair over the past 6 months has been to maximise the organisations practical impact; the need for that is clear: when we cast our eyes around the world today, there are far too many countries where it is not just a democratic deficit, but where democracy does not exist. Institutions are weak, at best constrained and those that are operational, we find quite often are being eroded – the rule of law is not being applied or indeed is struggling to take root.

That is why, once we have concluded our procedural business this morning, we will hold sessions designed to share know-how and understanding on how we can support democracy in both Mali and in the Maldives, followed by sessions on strengthening democratic participation and media freedoms – both of which are vital to the functioning of a successful democracy.

One thing I have always been mindful of as I travel around the world is that we have got to be very careful, that this is not a question of pointing fingers or a blame game – to say, look at us, aren't we a great democracy; we have press freedom, we have religious freedoms, so on and so forth and you do not, that can never be the approach.

Indeed, on a bit of self reflection, our own journey in the United Kingdom to get to where we are today, has not been an easy one. One only needs to cast one's mind back 100 years ago, women did not have the right to vote. The struggle that women had to go through to get that basic right and democratic right.

So this is not one, as I say, about blaming others, but how through sharing experiences of our own journeys in our respective countries we can help strengthen those vital pillars of democracy, the rule of law, the importance of governments and institutions around the world.

Therefore, I am delighted that we will be hearing later from the Foreign Minister of the Maldives, His Excellency Mr Abdulla Shahid, and from His Excellency the Ambassador of Mali to the United Kingdom. I welcome you both here today. Your countries face various hurdles in their democratic journeys, and I hope we can collectively, from our own experiences, we can help you overcome them.

In Mali, a key component of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation offered greater autonomy to the regions. This process of devolution is still in progress. From our own experience, in the United Kingdom. I would always say that devolution is important, regional governance is important, but also defining what devolution actually means is also equally important. Devolution takes different forms as well – no one type fits all. This afternoon we will look at how devolution works in the UK, in order to stimulate a broader discussion, which I hope will show the benefits to democracy of bringing decision-making closer to those it affects the most. Political participation in the second item on our agenda this afternoon, will be a key focus in our discussions.

Engaging all people in democratic processes and decision-making is a challenge for us all. Certainly here in the UK there are still too many people not engaged in, or disillusioned by politics.

A personal reflection, if I may, I remember my time in local government – there quite often the biggest challenge was not just about winning, which is important for any democrat as you want to be the first past the post, but it was about participation. On average, the participation in local elections in the United Kingdom, at best in the high thirties. Now thirty-odd percent, means that two thirds of your local electorate are disengaged or not interested. They are not interested in local governments and therein lies a great challenge, and I hope our discussions later on will shed light on how we can improve that.

Last year we held our first National Democracy Week to encourage participation from the most under-represented in the country. When I talk about the under-represented, we need to ask the question; why? Why are people not participating? It is very easy as a politician, or those in government to say it is about disillusionment – but there are often real reasons why people are not participating and we need to bridge the gap.

Therefore, I am delighted that my colleague, the Chloe Smith MP, the Minister for the Constitution, will be joining us this afternoon to discuss this issue in detail. I will also be interested to hear your thoughts and experiences of political participation in your respective countries.

A note of apology, right from the outset, some of you may have noticed we have a few things happening in the British parliament today and who knows for the next few days – so if my attendance or that of my colleagues is somewhat intermittent, it is because we have various bells ringing in both the House of Commons and House of Lords, requiring us to be in attendance. But that is an important part of democracy – making sure your representatives go and vote.

So, turning back to our agenda, if we truly want citizens to engage with democracy and democratic processes, we have to ensure some vital components of that democratic process are in place. First of all safety – when we again look around the world, the safety and security of citizens casting their votes for their representatives is paramount and therefore that is an essential part of ensuring a vibrant democracy. It needs to be open, there

needs to be free space to express contrary opinion and to challenge. There needs to be an opportunity for those who come from minority perspectives to also, not only feel they have a right to expression but to be fully integrated into the norms of society in the country. And for all of those minority views to be represented, so they can be heard.

The final issue we are going to explore today is media freedom. On that particular issue, our Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has made media freedom his priority focus for 2019.

If we reflect on history, if we reflect on current situations around the world, where freedom of expression is unduly restricted, either in the real world or online, there follows that democracy is damaged, accountability is constrained or restricted, and rule of law is weakened.

We hope there will be opportunities to work with you in the run up to the international conference on media freedom we are hosting later this year, where we intend to shine a spotlight on media freedom, and to galvanise a consensus behind the need to protect journalists.

I was in the United Nations, attending the Security Council last week, and one of things I did, whilst I was there, was convene a round table of the media who is often questioning us – Ministers who are attending the UN on important issues of international affairs – and I asked those representatives of the media as to what they felt were the major challenges and what more could governments do to ensure the kind of media freedom we all need to see.

The need for action is clear. Quite often it is asked where is the evidence? And the evidence, the stark evidence is right there in front of us. 80 journalists killed in 2018, almost 350 are in prison, and 60 journalists are currently held hostage.

Therefore I hope that discussions today lead to a Call for Action on the important issue of media freedom from all Governing Council members present.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that as part of our continuing commitment to this important organisation, to the Community of Democracies, the UK is pledging £60,000 to the Community's fact-finding missions, including the mission, which is planned to Mali.

I wish you all a productive morning and I look forward to joining you together with Chloe later this afternoon. And ultimately, we all have the shared objective and the shared vision to strengthen democracy, to strengthen media freedoms, to strengthen the rule of law and to ensure all citizens of the world have a voice.

Thank you very much.

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# News story: Home Secretary announces further action to target youth violence

Chairing the latest Serious Violence Taskforce, Sajid Javid set out details of a new youth advocates programme that will see respected members of communities, such as sport coaches and youth workers, receive specialist training in order to have safe conversations with young people and provide them positive alternatives to carrying a knife.

He also announced the next stage of the #knifefree advertising campaign which features real life stories of youth who have turned away from a life of crime thanks to a mentor in their community.

Home Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

Intervening early in the lives of vulnerable youngsters is key in combating the rise of serious violence.

It's therefore vital that we communicate with them directly through the people in their communities who they respect and listen to.

That's why the grassroots advocates programme and our #knifefree campaign are integral to the work we are doing to stop this bloodshed.

The new youth advocates programme is running in London and Manchester and provides local role models expert training on skills such as safeguarding, diffusing conflict and substance misuse, this will help them spot warning signs and give guidance on how to cope in challenging situations.

The youth advocates in London, who work in key community focal points such as boxing clubs, youth centres and schools, have already started to receive specific training. The programme in Manchester will start in the next few weeks.

To support the advocates conversations with young people, new #knifefree adverts will run in key London and Manchester areas. These will tell the real stories of young people portrayed by actors of why and how they stopped carrying knives – inspiring others to live knife free.

Members of the taskforce were also shown a preview of the new #knifefree video. They were also updated on a new collaboration with youth channel SBTV which saw four YouTube videos go live on Sunday. The videos were filmed across the UK and show music artists speaking to young people from their area about why and how they are both knife free.

These use popular music artists, such as Bugzy Malone, who has almost 1 million Instagram followers, to amplify the #knifefree campaign and directly reach young people and inspire them to live knife free.

The #knifefree media campaign – which aims to educate 10-21 year olds on the dangers of carrying knives – is one of the 61 commitments in the Serious Violence Strategy which stresses the importance of early intervention to tackle the root causes of violent crime and provide young people with the skills and resilience to lead productive lives free from violence.

The strategy sets out the importance of a multi-agency approach to tackling serious violence which involves a range of partners and agencies. Building on this, on 2 October the Home Secretary announced further measures including a new £200 million youth endowment fund, an independent review of drug misuse and a consultation on a new legal duty to underpin a multi-agency preventative or ‘public health’ approach to tackling serious violence.

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## **Press release: UK and Switzerland sign trade continuity agreement**

A trade continuity agreement will see British businesses and consumers benefiting from continued trade with Switzerland after we leave the European Union.

The Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade, The Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP, signed the UK-Switzerland agreement in Bern today (Monday 11th February) with Swiss Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin.

The news has been welcomed by business groups including the British Swiss Chamber of Commerce (BSCC) who say it will help to support jobs and ensure businesses can keep trading without disruption.

The agreement simplifies trade and allows businesses to continue trading freely, without any additional tariffs. It continues the elimination of duties on the vast majority of goods traded between the UK and Switzerland.

Trading on these preferential terms rather than on World Trade Organization terms will deliver significant savings and help to safeguard British jobs.

This will help to further strengthen the trading relationship between the UK and Switzerland, which was worth £32.1 billion in 2017.

The British vehicles sector could avoid up to £8 million a year in tariff charges on their exports that would apply if the agreement wasn't in place, while aluminium exporters could avoid up to £4 million and precious stones

and metals exporters could also avoid up to £4 million.

Consumers in the UK will continue to benefit from more choice and lower prices on goods imported from Switzerland, such as clocks, watches, and pharmaceutical products.

International Trade Secretary, The Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP said:

Switzerland is one of the most valuable trading partners that we are seeking continuity for, accounting for more than £32 billion worth of trade a year.

This is of huge economic importance to UK businesses so I'm delighted to be here in Bern today, ensuring continuity for 15,000 British exporters. Not only will this help to support jobs throughout the UK but it will also be a solid foundation for us to build an even stronger trading relationship with Switzerland as we leave the EU.

Swiss Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin said:

I am very pleased to have signed this agreement today. It ensures continuity in our trade relations after the United Kingdom leaves the European Union and lays the foundations for our future relations.

Anne-Marie de Weck, President of the British-Swiss Chamber of Commerce said:

The BSCC welcomes the signing of the UK Government's continuity trade agreement with Switzerland.

It is imperative for our members, both British & Swiss businesses, that trade continues. Switzerland is the UK's 7th largest export market, 3rd largest non-EU market, 8th largest foreign direct investor and 10th top destination for UK outward direct investment. It is paramount that the British and Swiss governments have secured the continuation of a huge trading relationship with this agreement.

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**[Speech: Lord Ahmad Speech at the](#)**

# Governing Council of the Community of Democracies

I am particularly delighted that I am joined by my good friend and colleague from the Cabinet Office, Chloe Smith and I look forward to her intervention. I thank you Chloe for joining us here at the FCO, it is as I said this morning, a very busy time over the road in Westminster – indeed, as Chloe informed me, the Prime Minister is currently on her feet – so the fact that Chloe is here we are extremely grateful.

As said, by Richard, we are joined by Anthony Smith, from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Having two Smiths either side of me makes me a bit of a sandwich I suppose – I am the filling in the middle here, having such expertise either side of me.

Of course, we talked earlier this morning about democracy and it does not take a single form; indeed, as I am sure we have heard today from some of the representatives. I am glad that you heard from the Maldives Foreign Minister, who I met earlier, about their journey to democracy. Indeed, one of the areas they are keen to do, is also re-join the Commonwealth, which as the Minister of the Commonwealth I particularly welcome.

But as we embark on these journeys, as I said indeed our own journey in the United Kingdom – the actual speed of change is different and the results may differ. But, one true fact is that every true democracy has at their heart and their interest the people. People make democracies tick; it is not just about, as we have seen, giving people the vote – it is also about the process that goes behind it; in terms of education, it is about being informed, being enabled.

I am sure many of us remember that famous scene of the first election – I certainly do – in South Africa, where people queued for hours, just to cast their vote. I am mindful of the fact that there are places in the world, such as Australia, where my wife grew up and even now as an Australian national, if she doesn't cast her vote, albeit by post, she gets fined – so there are different ways of encouraging participation.

But in essence, it comes back to the idea of people and ensuring people are fully engaged and that we facilitate that engagement.

Providing an open space for debate, the ability to question and challenge – and yes, our democracy is reflective of that. It is often said that the British Parliament is quite adversarial, I mean literally we are opposite each other being challenged. But the fact is, it provides that level of accountability.

As I mentioned this morning, the importance of the freedom of press, sometimes they are critical, quite often they are critical of governments and hold us to the account. But this is part and parcel of the free press which

defines a flourishing democracy.

It is no coincidence that where societies enjoy participative democracy, where people are free in an open environment, security and prosperity tend to follow very quickly and are part and parcel what defines that particular country or society.

However, when we look at different comparative democracies there are still those that feel their voices are not heard. This is a challenge we have and Chloe has been very close to that. I remember one of my early days in Parliament, in 2011, looking at the reform of our own electoral system – different electoral systems are perceived as being more fair than the next. So again, democracies can be very different – proportional representation is often said that that way all people are heard; but does that mean that those voices, perhaps who are at the fringes also then gain greater voices in public space – that is a challenge that all democracies face.

Last year, in this respect, the UK held its inaugural, the first ever National Democracy Week. The aim was to increase participation from those most under-represented in this country. Chloe, I'm sure, will talk more to this, and show how the UK is trying to tackle the real challenge of democratic participation; encouraging more people to engage.

For my part, as a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, I can tell you that promoting and strengthening democracy is a key priority, and indeed it figures as a key part of my work as the Human Rights Minister.

We support a wide range of democracy-building initiatives, just to give you a few examples;

- funding NGOs that increase citizen participation,
- promoting the inclusion of marginalised groups,
- providing legal training for legal professionals around the world,
- promoting freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly
- strengthening political parties and parliaments, and
- supporting free and fair elections.

One of the areas that was discussed, between the Foreign Minister and myself, was the elections that are taking place – the parliamentary elections – that there will be election observers and how we work within different observer bodies to ensure that elections are fair.

However, there are many things that limit democracy. For example, you can have a democracy, but through legislation, through the constitution, certain communities are marginalised – they are not allowed to participate. Internet shutdowns – we have seen this recently as well as a means to clamp down on challenge to the government. Out-dated restrictions on women – I mentioned before that 100 years ago women did not have the right to the vote here. But the fact is that there are still places around the world that restrict a woman's ability to go out and simply cast her vote and chose her elected representative. And indeed women's participation in parliament themselves.

We often talk of countries where there have been challenges and conflicts, but I always see things in a very positive light, and as Minister for the Commonwealth I have been current for example in Rwanda – and whilst challenges remain, if you look at the Rwandan parliament, I think it is about 66% of the Rwandan parliament are now women. So representative democracy, in its truest sense, does take place, and sometimes it is not by the oldest democracy, it is by those who are seeking to effect change in a different way. This goes back to my earlier point about how democracies take route and the speed in which they take route.

The UK Government also funds the Westminster Foundation for Democracy – and I am delighted to be joined by Anthony and he will certainly explain more about what they are doing to encourage greater levels of democracy amongst marginalised groups; a greater level of democratic participation amongst women and of course young people. But first, before asking Anthony to give his contribution – as I said I am delighted to be joined her on the panel by Chloe Smith. Chloe and I knew each other before we both came into parliament. So, I am delighted to have her here as both a friend, but also in her role as Minister for the Constitution – Chloe over to you.