

FS speech: Asia-Europe Meeting, Hanoi, 22.6.21

(5 mins)

Introduction

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

It is real pleasure to be here in Hanoi.

The links between our two regions are deep... bonds of history, culture, business, academia, family and friendship.

Our economies are increasingly intertwined.

On pre-pandemic levels, the flow of goods between Asia and Europe represents half of global trade.

For 25 years the Asia-Europe Meeting has been a symbol of this close partnership.

The UK's commitment to this region is clear.

We set this out in our strategy for the next decade... titled 'Global Britain in a competitive age.'

This is my fourth visit to the region in just 9 months.

It's great to be back... and to be able to make a return visit to Vietnam.

We want to continue deepening our partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

So we warmly welcome the signal from ASEAN leaders that they accept the UK's application to become a Dialogue Partner.

We are starting negotiations on joining the CPTPP.

And we have placed a major focus on the Indo-Pacific through our G7 Presidency.

Last month I chaired the first ever G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting to be joined by ASEAN's Chair in Office, Brunei,

Together with Australia, India and South Korea.

So we have a great foundation to build on.

I want to take this opportunity today to look ahead and highlight five key areas of cooperation.

Areas for cooperation

First is tackling the pandemic.

The UK is playing a leading role in the response to Covid-19... by successfully developing vaccines and supporting equitable, affordable access.

We have helped to raise \$1 billion for COVAX through match-funding other donors.

We have pledged £548 million of UK bilateral aid.

And earlier this month we brought G7 leaders together to pledge over 1 billion doses to the world's poorest countries.

This was another big step towards vaccinating the world.

We will keep working with our partners in the region to that end.

The second area of cooperation that I want to highlight is trade, which is a major driver for the economic recovery.

The UK now has FTAs in place with Vietnam, Japan and Singapore.

We reached an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India in May.

And just last week we announced a new FTA with Australia.

That deal was important for various reasons... including its cutting-edge focus on digital trade and connectivity.

This will open new opportunities for services providers and tech firms.

And we think this is a model for other agreements in the region, boosting these sectors of the future, which will create the jobs of the future.

In addition, the UK's accession to the CPTPP is gathering momentum.

CPTPP members have now agreed to the UK's bid to begin the accession process.

And today we are publishing our negotiating objectives.

The UK joining the CPTPP will provide a real economic boost for all sides.

And it will be a boost to liberal free trade, as we work together to shape future trading rules.

Third, we must keep raising our ambition on tackling climate change ahead of COP26 in Glasgow.

We are urging all countries to publish enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions ahead of COP26, and to commit to ending coal power.

We secured a G7 commitment to meet these targets by 2050, and to end new coal finance this year.

We're working with all of our partners in the region to increase ambitions for what can be achieved.

Under our Presidency, the COP26 Energy Transition Council has now convened donors to support the shift to renewable energy in 7 Asian countries.

We have launched a £10 million multi-donor Rapid Response Facility to provide technical assistance to that end.

And we are also working together to support adaptation to climate change.

Fourth, let me say a word about security cooperation.

We have a longstanding defence and security commitment to the region.

This includes the Five Power Defence Arrangements, which marks its 50th anniversary this year.

We are expanding security cooperation, especially in maritime security and cyber.

The UK's Carrier Strike Group will soon be visiting the Indo-Pacific...

Led by the HMS Queen Elizabeth on her maiden deployment,

And engaging in joint activities with many countries in the region.

The fifth and final area I want to highlight is our shared values.

By this I mean our role as a force for good, supporting vital causes like promoting girls' education, to boost economies and make our societies fairer.

But I also mean respect for the rules-based international system, the rule of law and open societies.

These should be areas where we seek to cooperate more closely.

We have a strong, shared interest in peace, stability and security in the South China Sea.

We must respect international law, including the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.

Conclusion

I have set out some key areas for cooperation today.

But this is just a snapshot of what we can do together.

The UK is optimistic and ambitious for what we can achieve in all of these areas... and more.

As we mark the 25th anniversary of the Asia-Europe Meeting,

We are united by history,

But also by our aspirations and priorities for the future, for the next generation of our young people.

I look forward to deepening our friendship over the next 25 years.

Thank you.