

13 September 2016

The Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Alan Duncan, visited Argentina on 12 and 13 September. The principal reason for the visit was to enhance bilateral consultations with the Argentine Foreign Ministry and attend the Business and Investment Forum organised by the Argentine Government.

The Foreign Minister, Susana Malcorra, met Sir Alan Duncan, in what was his first official visit to Latin America less than 2 months after having taken up his position as Minister of State.

The visit of Minister Duncan reflects the improving relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina. During the visit both sides agreed to put emphasis on the positive bilateral agenda with the objective to make ever closer bilateral ties, developing links and firm cooperation to the benefit of the people of both countries

Deputy Foreign Minister Foradori and Minister Duncan held bilateral talks where the main themes of the bilateral agenda, which are detailed below, were reviewed.

The bilateral meeting was held so both officials could continue to develop a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-sector agenda based on the complementarity between both nations, focused on the strengthening of the bilateral relationship and on the search for solutions to global problems within multilateral fora.

High Level Political Consultations

It was agreed to work together to identify new areas of collaboration and, in that context, agreed to the reactivation of high level bilateral consultations initiated in 2002 based on comprehensive themes and held annually.

These consultations will seek to deepen the bilateral relationship around a positive agenda that addresses global challenges in the medium and long term, in areas such as:

- Democracy
- Human Rights
- Cooperation in international peace and security
- Non-proliferation
- Environment
- Climate change
- Clean/green energy
- Trade and investment
- Science, technology and innovation
- Tourism
- Sport

The Deputy Foreign Minister, Foradori, and Minister Duncan, agreed to set up and institutionalise a mechanism for dialogue and strategic reflection so to approach a future bilateral relationship on the basis of strengthening the values, interests and common principles whose work will be taken forward by the respective teams in formal annual meetings.

Highlighted areas were; joint work in terms of the non-proliferation of WMD; the possibilities of working at a multilateral level in the fight against organised crime, drug trafficking and terrorism; the possibilities of cooperation to comply with contributions of the Treaty of Paris within the framework of the UN Convention on Climate Change; parliamentary bilateral work through “Friendship Groups” established by both countries, and multilateral work within the framework of the International Parliamentary Union; collaboration between regional governments, provinces and cities, in addition to cultural and educational exchanges.

Fight against corruption and organised crime

The Argentine and the UK’s commitment in the area of global anti-corruption was reaffirmed. The UK thanked Argentina for its constant support against organised crime particularly in the area of narco-trafficking, human trafficking and money laundering. The UK praised the efforts of Argentina to confront corruption and build confidence in the regulatory system pointing to its economic reform programme. The UK offered Assistance to tackle corruption, to promote transparency and help open government practices.

Science and Technology, Human Rights and Gender Issues

Opportunities were analysed for cooperation in terms of science and technology, innovation, human resources development and training in manufacturing sectors, human rights and the question of gender issues.

On the subject of Science and Technology it was agreed that Argentina and the UK have strong, historic ties. Both parties welcomed the increase in bilateral links including the creation of potential areas for scientific exchange such as agri-technology, advanced materials and nanotechnology, ICT, life sciences and the development of opportunities for students via Bec.ar scholarship programme in collaboration with British universities and CONICET, collaborating with the Royal Society. Both parties reaffirmed the agreement for a bilateral Scientific Dialogue at a Ministerial level.

Additionally, areas of possible cooperation were evaluated in the matter of Antarctica including exchanges, joint work and agreements between scientific programmes of the Argentine Antarctic Institute (IAA) and the British Antarctic Survey. Also evaluated was the development of joint scientific activities in the area of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Arts, Culture, Education and Sport

It was recognised that Argentina and the UK share strong and lasting cultural links. In this spirit of cooperation and friendship both countries agreed to strengthen these links and to continue to identify new areas of collaboration. An increase in student exchanges was welcomed including the recent increase in Chevening scholarships and the British Council's offer to Argentina to promote teaching programmes in English and Welsh. The UK highlights Argentina's organisation of the 3rd World Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires in 2018 and offers to share British knowledge and expertise obtained during the organisation of large scale events.

Trade and Investment

It was highlighted that Argentina and the UK had agreed to work to significantly increase bilateral trade as demonstrated by the recent visits focussed on trade and assistance to companies and investments in order to capitalise on commercial and investment opportunities, which includes sharing advice and experience in Public Private Partnerships.

Both countries committed to work jointly to strengthen cooperation between governments and the private sector in the area of investments, promoting Foreign Direct Investment in both directions and developing commercial links. Additionally they resolved to identify investment opportunities in each country with a particular focus on areas such as infrastructure, energy and mining. The UK welcomed the initiative of President Macri for organising the Business and Investment Forum attended by more than a thousand representatives of local and foreign companies, including amongst others, the British companies BP, BT, HSBC and GSK.

G20

The wish was expressed to continue to collaborate actively with the efforts shown at the G20 welcoming the election of Argentina to chair the group in 2018. Both countries agreed that they will work together – including wider cooperation in international fora such as the G20 – to promote economic dialogue, increase trade, investment and innovation between the two nations.

OECD

The UK supports the Argentine aspiration for a closer relationship with the Organisation for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD) and offers its advice and experience to help implement the reforms needed to meet membership requirements.

International Security & Defence

Both parties agreed that to confront the threats to international peace and security, closer international cooperation and coordination is required. Both countries are exploring opportunities to widen their fields of cooperation; the visit to the UK by the ARA Libertad training ship was welcomed. Both agreed to strengthen relations between the two Armed

Forces. The UK welcomes the commitment of Argentina to the maintenance of international peace and security via its support to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. In this respect, mention was made to the significant cooperation achieved by the Argentine and British contingents in the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the results of the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial meeting that took place in London on 7-8 September.

Refugee Crisis

The UK praised the Argentine Government's decision to establish a programme to take in 3000 Syrian refugees, stressing the shared, global responsibility to cooperate in the resolution of the problem including financial assistance from the international community.

South Atlantic

In a positive spirit, both sides agreed to set up a dialogue to improve cooperation on South Atlantic issues of mutual interest. Both Governments agreed that the formula on sovereignty in paragraph 2 of the Joint Statement of 19 October 1989 applies to this Joint Communiqué and to its consequences. In this context it was agreed to take the appropriate measures to remove all obstacles limiting the economic growth and sustainable development of the Falkland Islands, including in trade, fishing, shipping and hydrocarbons. Both parties emphasised the benefits of cooperation and positive engagement for all concerned.

In accordance with the principles set out in the 14 July 1999 Joint Statement and Exchange of Letters, both sides agreed that further air links between the Falkland Islands and third countries would be established. In this context they agreed the establishment of two additional stops per month in mainland Argentina, one in each direction. The specific details will be defined.

Both delegations expressed their full support for a DNA identification process in respect of unknown Argentine soldiers buried in the Darwin cemetery. Discussions on this sensitive humanitarian issue will be taken forward in Geneva on the basis of an ICRC assessment supplemented by bilateral discussions as required. Both sides agreed that the wishes of the families concerned were paramount.

Both sides agreed to establish a date for a fuller meeting as soon as possible.