

**ADDRESS BY
MS JUSTINE GREENING,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT,
ON BEHALF OF THE
UK GOVERNMENT**

Address by Ms Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development,
United Kingdom Government

Opening Session, EBRD Annual Meeting
London, 11 May

I am delighted to be here with you at the EBRD's 25th Annual Board of Governors meeting.

Over the last quarter of a century the EBRD has played a unique and powerful role on the world stage, helping countries transition towards market orientated economies and democratic principles. More than 30 countries, from Bulgaria, to Mongolia, to Jordan, to Tunisia now benefit from the Bank's investment and expertise.

My key message today is that in our age of crisis, with all the challenges the world is facing, a strong and effective EBRD - an international institution with a European heart – has never been more important. More than ever we need the private sector to be centre stage in tackling the global challenges we face - and the EBRD's leadership on this remains absolutely essential.

We know the world is facing unprecedented challenges to our global prosperity and global security...

...Uncertainty in the markets, the threat of climate change, the impact of protracted displacement crises such as we are seeing in Syria and the region...

And the reality is we have a shared responsibility for meeting these challenges. If we choose to neglect the problems beyond our borders today – they become our own tomorrow.

So we must work together to tackle the root causes of poverty and instability.

The past 25 years have shown us that trying to build development and to help transition in any country without a solid foundation of peace and stability simply doesn't work.

Stability is not only about war and conflict – it's about countries having strong economies, a strong private sector, healthy and educated populations and, crucially, it's about the strength of their institutions.

Today, we are gathered in the City of London – the world's leading financial centre and home to many multinational firms. And not too far from this building you will also find the sites of many of Britain's great institutions from the London Stock Exchange, to the Bank of England, to the Royal Courts of Justice.

These institutions were vital to Britain's own development. Without rule of law, without parliamentary democracy, without open markets – Britain would never have prospered in the way we have - and that's true for so many of the countries represented here.

So institutions matter – to citizens and to businesses as well. And it's not only national institutions that matter - the strength of our international institutions is critical as well. The UN, the World Bank, the IMF and, of course, the EBRD.

Twenty-five years ago when this Bank was formed...just after the Berlin Wall had fallen and with it, symbolically, Europe's Iron Curtain... It was a time of great hope but also great uncertainty. There were no guarantees that former Soviet bloc countries could easily transition into democratic, market orientated economies.

But in response the world's leaders did not sit back and wait to see what happened –

Just as they had once forged new alliances after the Second World War - the end of the Cold War paved the way for new and enduring partnerships, and ultimately a more stable, more peaceful, more prosperous Europe.

The EBRD was formed with a unique economic and political mission - that focused on the creation of open market economies in countries committed to multi-party democracy and pluralism.

And the Bank has played a critical role supporting: banking systems reform; the liberalisation of markets; replacing inefficient state monopolies with greater competition; and the creation of proper legal frameworks for property rights.

This has helped foster the kind of open societies and open economies where jobs, growth and enterprise can thrive - and individual rights to liberty and property are safeguarded. All of which, in turn, opens the door to greater private sector investment and a virtuous circle of growth.

Of course the challenges of 25 years ago are different from the challenges we face today. The EBRD has to evolve and adapt in a changing, and often turbulent, world.

And under Sir Suma's leadership the EBRD is rising to this challenge.

In response to the Arab Spring, the EBRD rapidly expanded into the Southern and Middle Eastern Mediterranean countries region - with support from the UK and others.

In light of the economic and financial challenges facing Ukraine, and in recognition of the new government's resolve to undertake comprehensive reforms and combat corruption, the EBRD has reconfirmed its commitment to support Ukraine in this reform process. In fact the Bank is the largest international financial investor in Ukraine.

And I'm pleased that the EBRD and the UK will be collaborating on our response to the refugee crisis in Jordan.

At the London Syria Conference earlier this year, the international community took its first step in recognising the global public good that neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are providing by hosting the vast majority of Syria's 4.6million refugees.

Together the world pledged vital, record-breaking billions to meet the urgent humanitarian needs – and made historic commitments to provide education, jobs and, in doing so, hope for refugees stuck in a permanent emergency situation.

Again, the EBRD will play its part and has already engaged with government agencies, donors and other stakeholders to identify where and what investment is needed. As a result the UK has agreed a £30million grant to the EBRD to support a series of investments in Northern Jordan. This will focus, firstly, on improving overstretched infrastructure in refugee-hosting cities.

And, following the crucial commitments at the London Syria Conference to open up work permits to up to 200,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, the EBRD will help deliver some of these opportunities by identifying skills and engaging with the private sector to offer training and work based learning opportunities and routes into jobs.

I also want to commend the EBRD and Sir Suma for your work promoting inclusion, in particular the Bank's strategy for the promotion of gender equality.

It is now increasingly recognised that women's economic empowerment is one of the biggest potential levers we have for boosting global prosperity. That's why the UN Secretary General has set up the UN's first ever High Level Panel to kickstart a global movement on women's economic empowerment - and I'm proud to be one of the founding members of this Panel.

The EBRD has a crucial role, working with businesses, to create new opportunities for women's economic participation. As much as any other reform law, it is how we underpin and unlock growth.

I believe it's critical that all of us working together - including the EBRD - continue to up our game on this and break down the remaining barriers that prevent girls and women from fulfilling their potential and contributing fully to the global economy. We can't afford not to.

In today's world, with all the challenges we face, the EBRD's mission is as relevant and as important as ever.

Aid alone will not be enough for delivering sustainable development and global prosperity – we need business, more jobs, growth and enterprise. And that means dramatically increasing and improving our performance in leveraging private sector financing.

The UK believes that the EBRD with its in-depth knowledge, experience and expertise must be at the heart of helping to solve some of the most difficult and urgent challenges we face - whether that's the displacement of people and the refugee crisis or helping countries transition to low carbon economies or empowering women economically.

The EBRD by committing to its private sector mission...by continuing to concentrate more of its efforts and resources in the poorest and most fragile areas it works in...and by focusing on inclusion, gender equality and results -

-Can and must play a fundamental role in delivering sustainable, inclusive development over the next 25 years, working alongside other multilateral organisations.

A quarter of a century ago investing in former soviet bloc countries was morally the right thing to do – but it was right for our national interests too.

Today we have a fresh set of complex global challenges but we need to show the same determination, innovation and ambition.

Then, as now, our best chance of rising to the challenges we face is by working in partnership... Working together to build the more stable, peaceful and prosperous world we all want. With the EBRD continuing to play a central, unique role on behalf of our continent.

Thank you.