**Joint Declaration of Cooperation by the** **Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

**Introduction**

1. Latvia and the United Kingdom (UK) are close allies, bound by shared history and a common vision of the fundamental values of democracy and human rights. This underpins our close cooperation bilaterally, regionally, and in multilateral fora including the UN, NATO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the OECD and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
2. 2021 marks the centenary of diplomatic relations between Latvia and the UK and we take this opportunity to reflect upon the history of Latvian - UK relations. Through this Joint Declaration, we are committed to working together as part of a wider global network of liberty to deepen cooperation in the pursuit of spreading prosperity, sustainability and security in Latvia, the UK and beyond. We reaffirm our commitment to the strategic unity of Europe and to Euro-Atlantic security, and to fostering cultural and people-to-people links between our two countries.

**Political dialogue and regional cooperation**

1. We commit to engage in regular bilateral dialogue at all levels. Both parties will aim to meet annually at ministerial level, underpinned by consultations at expert level across the areas identified in this Declaration, and overseen at official level by Political Directors.
2. We welcome regular meetings and increased collaboration between the UK and Nordic-Baltic partners. Latvia and the UK reaffirm our commitment to deeper regional cooperation on foreign policy and international affairs, at political and working level. As a Member State of the European Union (EU), Latvia supports further cooperation between the EU and the UK.
3. People-to-people links are an important and positive driver for building trust, understanding, and prosperity between our countries. The Latvian diaspora in the UK, as well as UK nationals residing and working in Latvia, provide a valuable contribution to both countries.

**Economic cooperation and technology**

1. Recognising the central contribution of free trade to global growth and the alleviation of global poverty, Latvia and the UK reaffirm our commitment to promote welfare and prosperity through economic openness, and our rejection of protectionism. We are stalwart in our support for the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its heart.
2. We will co-ordinate engagement and the exchange of information between our respective government institutions, regulators, companies, and civil society as needed in order to strengthen and foster bilateral economic cooperation, increase the volume of our bilateral trade and investment, and to discuss any obstacles which may hinder the development of economic and trade cooperation between Latvia and the UK.
3. In particular, we will identify opportunities to build closer economic links between Latvia and the UK in key sectors including cyber and the digital economy, life sciences, research and development, technology, defence, energy and infrastructure. We will explore the possibilities for collaboration on Green tech, carbon capture, smart cities and green hydrogen. We will foster cooperation to promote the sustainable and safe application of emerging technologies such as AI, 5G/6G, blockchain and quantum computing. We will also identify opportunities for collaboration aimed at strengthening the resilience of critical supply chains.
4. We will look to facilitate investment opportunities for Latvian and UK companies, in particular increasing our scientific and technological cooperation. In this context, the UK is open to exploring engagement with the 3SI, including through the 2022 Three Seas Summit hosted by Latvia.

**Foreign and Security policy**

1. Latvia and the UK reaffirm their unwavering commitment to Euro-Atlantic security and stability, with NATO as the bedrock of our collective defence. We recognise the importance of a stronger and more capable European contribution to this, and remain committed to NATO-EU cooperation, with a view to building a mutually reinforcing partnership. We will strive to strengthen our cooperation in areas such as resilience, including cyber security and countering hybrid threats, security in space, military mobility in Europe, and climate security. We will work together to take forward the NATO 2030 agenda and develop NATO’s next Strategic Concept as a means of strengthening NATO cohesion and the Alliance as a whole.
2. We will continue to coordinate and exercise our joint capabilities through small groups – like the Joint Expeditionary Force – as well as through NATO initiatives like the enhanced Forward Presence, to foster collective defence efforts and address current and future challenges.  We will work together to increase the effectiveness of our Armed Forces - bilaterally, through NATO and through the Joint Expeditionary Force - including opportunities for capability development such as Latvia’s acquisition of CVR(T)s.
3. Latvia and the UK, along with our allies, are increasingly the target of hybrid threats that aim to weaken our economies, democracies and social cohesion. In defence of our values, we must increase our deterrence and resilience capabilities to counter interference in our democratic processes, and protect against espionage, disinformation, and malicious cyber activity. We agree to strengthen our collaboration by sharing information and best practice bilaterally, and with regional partners via multilateral cooperation through existing security groupings such as the JEF, and the Northern Group.
4. We will continue to build collective resilience against aggressive behaviour by Russia, working with NATO Allies and partners to protect our shared national security interests. We will uphold international law and the rules-based system, and will continue to call on Russia to uphold its human rights obligations. At the same time, we are committed to constructive engagement with Russia on issues of common interest, such as climate change.
5. We will also cooperate on the systemic challenges posed by China, while working with China to tackle transnational challenges. In doing so, we will hold China to its international commitments, including on human rights.
6. Latvia and the UK support the democratic rights of the people of Belarus and urge the Belarusian regime to release political prisoners and engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition, leading to free and fair elections. We will continue working to counter the harmful and aggressive behaviour of the Lukashenko regime, including the hybrid operation of irregular migrant flows across the EU border orchestrated by Lukashenko.
7. We remain fully committed to Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and remain concerned by Russia’s threatening and destabilising behaviour towards Ukraine. Russia must fulfil the commitments it made at the Paris Summit in December 2019 and under the Minsk agreements. We will keep working with international partners to hold Russia to account for its actions in Crimea. We support Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic integration and the implementation of the judicial and governance reforms required to build its resilience and attract foreign investment. We will also continue our joint contribution to stabilising the security situation in Eastern Partnership countries through international civilian missions, and reaffirm our continued support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each of the countries in the region.

**Regional and Global Challenges**

1. Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges we face. Latvia and the UK will harness the outcomes from COP26 to address this challenge, including through joint diplomatic initiatives. We will seek to raise ambition on climate through regional lobbying as we aim to build back for a better future. Our vision will be characterised by high standards, transparency, and reliability. We will deepen bilateral economic cooperation as we accelerate the transition to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, while ensuring legitimate climate objectives do not become a cover for protectionism. We will increase collaboration on the investment, technology, and innovation necessary to deliver sustainable infrastructure growth, and we understand the pressing need to embed climate change and biodiversity loss considerations into economic and financial decision-making.

1. Disinformation has become a tool for malign actors to promote their goals. Democratic societies must build resilience to disinformation, especially regarding challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to strengthen Latvia’s societal resilience to disinformation and misinformation. This could include enhancing social cohesion within and between communities and regions, and support to balanced and pluralistic media for Latvian audiences, including Russian-speaking and other minority language audiences. We commit to strengthening international partnerships on countering state-sponsored disinformation.
2. We are committed to safeguarding media freedom through our membership of the Media Freedom Coalition and in Eastern Partnership countries by supporting journalists and civil society. We will continue cooperation with non-governmental actors and academia to share research, analysis and experience in Eastern Partnership countries.
3. We agree to examine opportunities for collaboration on Girls’ Education, Gender Equality and other related fields to improve education opportunities for girls, empower women and girls, and end violence against women and girls. We welcome the creation of the Ambassadorial Friends of Gender Equality group in London to provide a forum to discuss our common views and explore areas of possible cooperation on gender equality.
4. We will continue to develop our already strong bilateral cooperation in other fields, in line with existing international obligations, projects and programmes. This includes law enforcement and criminal justice policy, where we are already working closely in support of the security of our two countries. We will collaborate on threats related to Serious Organised Crime to strengthen our collective resilience, including Illicit Finance, Modern Slavery and organised immigration crime. On education, science and culture, we will continue to foster close cooperation, including in higher education, research and innovation and student exchange.

This Joint Declaration was signed in Latvian and English languages, both texts having equal validity.

London, 6 December 2021

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Edgars Rinkēvičs**  Minister for Foreign Affairs,  Republic of Latvia | **Elizabeth Truss**  Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs,  United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |