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FCO Press Release: Foreign Secretary Hunt: Britain has some of the best connections of any country and ready to strengthen links with Asia

Foreign Secretary to speak at International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore and announce Partnership for the Future.

On the first day of a three-day visit to Asia, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt will speak at the think tank the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore today (2 January), where he will say the Britain has some of the best connections of any country and is ready to strengthen UK ties with Asia after the country departs the European Union.

In a keynote speech, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt will say:

“Most importantly, in a world where it is rarely possible for one country to achieve its ambitions alone, we have some of the best connections of any country – whether through the Commonwealth, our alliance with the United States and our friendship with our neighbours in Europe.

“Those connections mean that, in this part of the world, Britain is amongst only a handful of European countries with an Embassy or High Commission in every member of the Association of South-East Asian nations.

“Later this year, we will open a new mission to ASEAN headquarters in Jakarta, as we seek to strengthen our relationship with ASEAN after we leave the EU.”

Today’s speech entitled ‘Britain’s Role in a Post-Brexit World’, follows Foreign Secretary Hunt’s ‘An Invisible Chain’ speech at Policy Exchange in London last October. Speaking in Singapore, Foreign Secretary Hunt will emphasise that Britain’s connections across the world are stronger than any other nation of comparable size or wealth. He will also highlight the announcement earlier this year, of the biggest expansion of the UK’s diplomatic network for a generation and make the case that Britain can play the important role of the “invisible chain” joining likeminded countries in support of the international rules-based order.

Foreign Secretary Hunt will say:

“Britain is already the biggest European investor in South East Asia, with ASEAN trade of nearly £37 billion, and over 4,000 British companies employing more than 50,000 people in Singapore alone.

“Those connections are why Britain’s post-Brexit role should be to act as an invisible chain linking together the democracies of the world, those countries which share our values and support our belief in free trade, the rule of law and open societies.”

The visit, the first to Singapore by a UK Foreign Secretary since 2015, will also see the joint announcement with Foreign Minister Dr Balakrishnan of a new UK–Singapore ‘Partnership for the Future’. The partnership, agreed by the Prime Ministers of both countries in April 2018 at the Commonwealth Summit, will build on the historic links and strengthen collaboration in the digital economy, sustainable business and innovation, security and defence, and on education, culture and youth.

During the visit, British Council and National Arts Council will renew a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) committing to greater collaboration between Singapore and the UK.

The Foreign Secretary’s visit to Singapore at the start of 2019, coincides with 200 years since the establishment of a trading post in Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles. As part of the three-day visit to Asia the Foreign Secretary will also travel to Malaysia.

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