

UK Ambassador reflects on UK-DRC partnership in farewell speech

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Alyson King, UK's outgoing Ambassador to DRC, gave a farewell speech in Kinshasa highlighting stronger UK-DRC ties and shared work on peace, prosperity and culture.

Honourables, Excellencies,
Dear partners,
Dear friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great emotion that I speak to you this evening, as I come to the end of my mandate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Serving as the United Kingdom's Ambassador to this extraordinary country has been an immense honour for me. The DRC is a country of exceptional richness, certainly because of its natural resources, but above all because of the strength, creativity and resilience of its people.

Greetings to you all. Thank you very much for the warm welcome, and for all the work we have done together.

Over the past three years, I have only begun to scratch the surface of this fascinating country. I travelled several times to eastern DRC – to Goma and Bukavu prior to January 2025, and later to Beni – where I witnessed both the scale of suffering caused by conflict, and the dedication, care and commitment of Congolese and international actors striving to alleviate suffering, restore dignity and rebuild hope.

I also travelled further inland, until Kisangani and Yangambi, on the majestic Congo River. There, I encountered forests that remain largely untouched, Congolese researchers pushing the boundaries of science, and communities whose livelihoods depend on the forest – whose value we are only just beginning to understand, even as the pressures upon it intensify.

I also saw the Copperbelt, the true engine of this country's economy, now increasingly strategic for international security and the global energy transition.

And here in Kinshasa – the largest French-speaking city in the world – I met artists, musicians, athletes, health professionals, businesswomen and businessmen, entrepreneurs, students, civil society actors, political leaders and members of government: all dynamic and resilient. And yes, I also experienced some of the worst traffic jams of my life.

This evening is an opportunity to thank each and every one of you who has contributed to our growing partnership. Because what I can say with great certainty and some satisfaction is that, during my mandate, I have seen the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to strengthen.

I believe we have much to offer one another. To paraphrase Bilbo Baggins rather freely, I believe we do not yet know each other as well as we should. But I also believe that we are getting to know each other better – and that the fruits of this relationship are beginning to appear.

I believe profoundly in the DRC and in the talents of its people. And I believe just as strongly that

this country and its people deserve a better future.

Over recent years, we have faced difficult moments together. In response to humanitarian crises and the deterioration of the security situation in the east of the country, the United Kingdom has stood alongside the Congolese people.

We have helped save lives, while also strengthening national systems so that communities are better prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow.

Our action has also been guided by a firm belief in the importance of the dignity of every Congolese woman and every Congolese man.

In a context where conflict-related sexual violence continues to profoundly affect communities, we have supported survivors, in partnership with remarkable Congolese actors. Their courage commands respect, and their leadership lies at the heart of lasting change.

Peace remains central to everything. We have continued to support efforts towards a sustainable peace, led by Congolese actors and their regional and international partners.

The strong and growing relationship between the United Kingdom and the DRC has also been illustrated by high-level visits, reflecting the importance we attach to this partnership, including visits by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs David Lammy, Her Royal Highness Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, and Baroness Chapman, Minister for Africa and International Development.

I have been pleased to see the DRC begin to take its rightful place on the international stage, including its representation with exceptional leaders such as Dr Jean Kaseya, DG of the Africa CDC and to see DRC at the United Nations Security Council, the Human Rights Council, and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to play its essential role in the promotion of peace, security and fundamental rights. The United Kingdom is proud to have worked alongside you.

In parallel, our partnership has also expanded to include a shared ambition for prosperity. We have encouraged the investments supported the enterprises and intended to create sustainable economic opportunities. The launch of the UK-DRC Chamber of Commerce marked an important milestone in this dynamic. It embodies our shared willingness to strengthen links between our private sectors, favour exchanges and supporting growth that creates jobs and added value for both countries.

We have also worked together to protect one of the planet's most precious treasures: the Congo Basin. The DRC's leadership in the fight against climate change is indispensable to the world. The fight against climate change begins here, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's leadership as an indispensable solution country is vital for the world.

One of the great joys of serving here has been experiencing the richness of Congolese culture. From music that resonates far beyond national borders - carried by artists such as Werrason, Fally Ipupa and Inness'B - to the vitality of its visual artists, Congolese creativity inspires the world and fills stadiums in the United Kingdom and beyond.

And how could one not mention the national pride embodied by the national football team, the Leopards, whose recent victories have united and energised the entire nation. It had also been many years since my own national team, Scotland, had qualified for the World Cup. I am delighted that, this time, the DRC and Scotland are in different groups: no conflict of interest, and I can therefore support both teams wholeheartedly.

Leopards, to longa elongo.

Leopards, let us win together.

Honourables, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the heart of all this lies one essential principle: partnership.

Our relationship is defined by what we achieve together - through mutual respect, attentive listening and trust.

I leave my post with deep gratitude to all those with whom I have had the privilege to work: the Congolese authorities, civil society, our international partners, and my colleagues at the Embassy and at headquarters. Above all, my husband, whose patience, support and affection have been essential to me throughout this journey.

I depart with great confidence and hope in the future of this country. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is not only a country of opportunity. It is the country of the future. And we are working together to make that future a reality.

Thank you very much. I will keep the DRC in my heart.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ambassador-reflects-on-uk-drc-partnership-in-farewell-speech>