



Thank you to everyone in Conservatives Abroad for all your unstinting support for our Party.

I am sorry that the circumstances mean your annual conference will not be going ahead as usual – but I am delighted that you are all able to take part in our free, online Party Conference. Indeed, I hope that many of you who are not usually able to attend Party Conference will join us and take part virtually this year, from whichever part of the world you reside in.

This Conference is the first time we have had the opportunity to come together as a Party since the extraordinary election in December, when we secured that historic majority. Conservatives Abroad members played a valuable role in encouraging British citizens to register to vote and in making the case for our plan to unleash Britain's potential. Thank you for everything that you did – I know that it will have made a difference in many tight contests.

Our manifesto pledged to make it easier for British expats like you to vote in Parliamentary elections – including ending the Labour Government's arbitrary 15 year limit on voting rights. I am pleased to confirm that Chloe Smith and her officials in the Cabinet Office are making good progress on working up the technical detail, and legislation will be introduced in due course.

This will also be our first Conference since the UK's departure from the European Union. As we strike out in the world as a truly Global Britain, I am looking forward to strengthening our relationship with many friends and allies around the world – including by agreeing new trade deals to boost jobs and make the most of the opportunities that exist outside of the EU.

This has, of course, been a difficult year for our country. Tackling the coronavirus pandemic is the biggest challenge we have faced in living memory, and it is one that is being faced across every corner of our world. But our plan to transform the United Kingdom will not be blown off course. We will continue to deliver on the people's priorities, to unite and level up – and harness the extraordinary national spirit we have seen in recent months so that we can build back better.

Thank you again for all your support.