KURDISTAN, 20 NOVEMBER

We’re travelling to Kurdistan on Sunday, arriving Monday morning. Later on Monday, you will speak at the Middle East Peace and Security Forum, taking place at the American University of Kurdistan (a couple of hours from Erbil), hosted by Prime Minister Barzani.

**Itinerary attached** – depart Sunday night, overnight flight, event on Monday, fly back overnight arriving home Tuesday morning.  We are travelling without Prot Force, but will have local KRG protection and protocol with us throughout.

**Format**

You will do a 10 min speech, followed by a 45 min Q&A, which will include some questions from the audience (delegates, not media).  There will be about 500 people attending in person.

The event is open to media so everything you say will be on the record.

They have asked for your **speech** to cover UK-Iraq and Kurdistan Region Relations, including how pleased you are to be there and your own unique relationship with the region; plus global economic dynamics; Russia/Ukraine; China etc.  Clearly you will want to reference the situation in the middle east too – but they have very specifically requested that you do not refer to terrorist groups by name, which is apparently illegal in Iraq, and refer instead to “terrorism by non-state actors”.  They will recap this with you on arrival.

**Nadhim recommends** that you open the speech by paying tribute to your host, Prime Minister Barzani, and commend his economic reforms, digital government work and trying to get Baghdad to realise that Kurdish oil and gas can only be good for the whole of Iraq. And that a strong united Kurdistan Regional Government that is prosperous and tolerant of all faiths and none is a great thing for the region and for Iraq.

Please aim to have your speech finalised and ready to print in Erbil, before we drive to Duhok.

The **Q&A** will be built around the following themes:

1. Changing Dynamics of Global Power:

   - Overview of current global power dynamics focused on the roles of China and Russia.

   - Analysis of shifts in power and their impact on the existing world order focused on the Middle East.

   - Opportunities and challenges presented by these shifts.

2. Climate Change and Environmental Security:

   - Exploration of the implications of climate change on security.

   - Examination of how climate change contributes to resource scarcity.

   - Consideration of the potential for increased conflicts in the Middle East due to environmental factors.

   - Addressing the impact of conflicts on civilian populations and the resulting refugee crisis.

3. Economic Interdependence and Trade:

   - Discussion on the role of economic interdependence and trade in promoting stability and cooperation among nations.

   - Examination of the impact of economic sanctions on regional stability.

   - Case studies on successful economic cooperation and its positive geopolitical effects.

   - Consideration of challenges and potential solutions in promoting fair and sustainable trade.

4. Future Scenarios and Recommendations:

   - Exploration of potential future scenarios for the global order and the Middle East focused.

   - Identification of key geopolitical trends and uncertainties.

   - Perspectives on the role of international institutions in shaping the future.

   - Recommendations for fostering peace, security, and cooperation in the face of a complex geopolitical landscape.

The **moderator** will be a British-born Kurdish Academic, Dr Ranj Alaadin. The audience will include lots of academics, diplomats and media.

Other notable speakers: Francis Maude, Nadhim Zahawi; John Jenkins (former FCO Director MENAD, HMA Riyadh etc).  Liz Truss is not now going.  Bernard Kouchner has been heavily involved and is on the Board of AUK, has spoken at previous events, but is not listed as a speaker for this one.

The other formal part of the programme is a meeting with the President Nechirvan, Prime Minister Barzani and Deputy Prime Minister.  Details sketchy but I think you will be presented with a series of Kurdish ministers for short meetings (via interpreters) and photos.

We discussed **cultural options** – depending on time, we will do a quick visit to the citadel and tea room in the morning before we drive to Duhok. When we get back from Duhok, we will arrange to have dinner somewhere (Nadhim will join). We will also have our hotel rooms available until we go to the airport if needed for rest/work.

We have had lots of requests for you to do media, but have declined all bids – there isn’t really time, and media have access to your session at the event.

Attached are a couple of briefing documents from the FCDO. We will meet the BCG Erbil team briefly on arrival at the conference to give you some more context ahead of your session.

A reminder of your previous interactions with KRG:

* President Nechirvan came to Downing Street in September 2021
* Prime Minister Barzani came to downing street April 2022
* You visited Erbil in January 2015 as Mayor of London. Nadhim accompanied (+ Eddie + Will Walden). City Hall summary of that trip:

*The Mayor met the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the British trainers; met with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and other Cabinet Ministers; spoke to a Kurdish and UK business forum called “From London to Erbil: the UK’s partnership with the Kurdistan Region”; and undertook a tour of Erbil International Airport. The Mayor had a lunch meeting with the Governors of Erbil, Duhok and Sulemani, and the Mayor of Erbil about developing cities and regions; he met with members of the newly formed British business group in Kurdistan; visited the Baharka internally- displaced-people’s camp (where the UK Department for International Development) is funding health facilities; and took a tour of the citadel hosted by the Governor of Erbil.*

To note, there was some media coverage a while later about an unpaid bar bill!