# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE**  | **Brussels and Paris Visit 16-17 January 2020** |
| **DATE**  | **05 February 2020** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language** |

On 16 and 17 January I travelled to promote this Government’s new strategy for International Relations and to help position Wales for the challenges of the future, visiting Brussels and Paris.

In Europe, our strategy identifies Flanders, alongside Brittany and the Basque country, as a key partner region and my first meeting was with Jan Jambon, Minister President of the Government of Flanders. Our discussions included:

* the potential for a Memorandum of Understanding between the governments of Flanders and Wales, creating a clear commitment to ongoing close collaboration
* a mutual interest in cyber-security as a vital component of our respective economies
* potential co-operation and co-ordination at the regional level across Europe
* preparations for UK exit from the European Union and the role of the Devolved Administrations in discussion on future trade agreements
* respective dependencies on frictionless trade between the UK and mainland Europe

At our Brussels Office I met with Eleni Mariannou, Secretary General of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR). Discussion focussed on the continuation of a productive relationship with the CPMR, its influence across Europe and within Brussels, and our common interest in the shared prosperity of its member regions.

Cyber security is an area for promotion identified within the International Strategy and my time in Brussels provided an opportunity to highlight Wales’ strengths in this sector to representatives from the European Cyber Security Organisation.

The Brussels Office is a vital asset in promoting our international ambitions and maintaining the contacts and connections essential to maintaining influence within Brussels, particularly now that we will be operating outside of the many official channels that were previously available to us. There I was able to launch our strategy to a large audience of key contacts and the Welsh diaspora community at a lunchtime reception.

Effective working with UK Government departments will be critical to delivery of the Strategy. My itinerary included a meeting with officials from UKRep, explaining the Strategy to them so that they are better able to communicate our story and actively protect and promote Welsh interests as they move towards increasing public diplomacy.

My programme included a meeting with Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan’s Cabinet where I provided an update them on how we are preparing for our involvement in the UK’s trade negotiations.

At the invitation of His Excellency Martin Shearman CVO Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Belgium, I concluded my visit to Brussels by attending the British Embassy’s New Year reception.

Our strategy identifies France as a key national level partner and in Paris my programme included a series of meetings at the Ambassador’s Residence, with:

* Matthew Lodge: Minister and Ambassador of United Kingdom of Great-Britain and Northern Ireland to UNESCO
* Airbus Cybersecurity
* the Welsh diaspora community in France

Key to the programme was the opportunity to meet Francois Delattre, Secretary General at the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Our discussions included:

* the role of Wales and the other Devolved Administrations in UK negotiations on the future trade agreements with the EU and with the rest of the world
* the potential for strengthening our existing collaborative relationship with Brittany, identified as an area of focus within our International Strategy
* opportunities to engage with the French Government in the context of the upcoming Franco-British summit in France in the autumn of 2020
* our unique Well Being of Future Generations Act as a potential case study for others, highlighting our ability to lead the way on sustainable development

The final call of my programme was at UNESCO headquarters where I:

* highlighted Wales as an exemplar in relation to UNESCO’s planned decade long programme of support for indigenous languages
* discussed the process for bids from Wales for World Heritage status sites, including progress on the [Gwynedd’s slate landscape](http://www.llechi.cymru/en/Slate-Areas/IndustryArea.aspx) bid.