



Hungarian Presidency Conference: The Challenge of Growth

Livery Hall, Guildhall
Thursday 7th April 2011, 09.15 – 09.30
The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London
Alderman Michael Bear

Deputy Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Ministers, Fellow
Alderman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you all to Guildhall this morning.

As Lord Mayor I am a dedicated ambassador, supporting and
promoting the City at home and abroad.

I will be visiting 23 countries over 92 days. I recently returned
from the Far East, where I visited Malaysia, Taiwan and
Vietnam. And tomorrow I fly to China, where I shall be visiting
five cities in a little less than a fortnight.

The growth and energy of the Asian economies is outstanding. And the nations of Europe must engage with our partners there if we are to maintain and enhance our prosperity at home.

But I know that our diplomatic and trade partnership with our fellow member states in the European Union is equally important.

That is why I was so pleased that the first visit I made as Lord Mayor was to Hungary with my colleague Stuart Fraser, our Chairman of Policy.

And my visit showed me clearly just how much our countries shared – not least in the importance the UK and Hungary attached to SMEs as the engines of our economic growth and the source of job creation.

This has been a theme throughout the Hungarian Presidency. It has shared the UK's aim of encouraging innovators and entrepreneurs by reducing the barriers they face.

It is a theme I applaud – both as Lord Mayor and as a businessman with a long experience myself of SMEs.

Because SMEs will be crucial to the future success of the UK economy.

There are 4.8 million SMEs in the UK, accounting for 60% of employment.

And of the near 13,000 enterprises operating in the City, over 80% have fewer than 10 employees.

SMEs will be the engine of jobs, growth and prosperity.

So I am pleased by the opportunities today's conference provides.

Its impressive list of speakers provides us with a real chance to find new ways in which Hungary and the UK can work even more closely together.

To examine the support Government must provide to create the right climate for business. By not encumbering it with burdensome regulation or law – at a national and EU level. I think we are likely to hear more of this from Mark Prisk, our Trade Minister, when he speaks in a few minutes.

And also ways in which the City can support SME growth and development in London, the UK and abroad – and so grow our economies and create jobs.

And City institutions have made commitments to help SMEs in our Bank Lending Task Force Report – for instance in how it finances and supports this vital sector.

I very much regret that I will be unable to participate in today's proceedings. But I very much look forward to hearing about a productive day.

And now I would like to hand over to my colleague Stuart Fraser, who will set the scene for the day and introduce proceedings.

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