

UK must respond to world transformed by Brexit and Donald Trump's win: PM Theresa May

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London: Britain's vote to leave the European Union and the surprise win of Donald Trump in the presidential election have transformed the world in a year, Prime Minister Theresa May said here on Monday.

Theresa May speaks at the annual Lord Mayor's Banquet at Mansion House

In a major foreign policy speech at the annual Lord Mayor's Banquet in London, May said "change is in the air" and "it's the job of politicians to respond."

She said Britain would champion free trade while managing "the forces of globalization so that they work for all."

The speech, to an audience of business leaders in London's financial district, comes as the British government tries to build bridges with a U.S. president-elect whose victory has surprised "and even alarmed" many European politicians.

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said Monday that it's "very important not to prejudge the president-elect or his administration." And May's spokeswoman, Helen Bower, said Downing Street wants "an effective, strong working relationship" with the incoming U.S. president.

May and Trump spoke by phone on Thursday, the day after Trump's victory was announced. But the call has been overshadowed in Britain by Trump's meeting Saturday with U.K. Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, a key player in the U.K.'s decision to leave the European Union.

UKIP issued a gleeful press release accompanied by a picture of the two men, beaming side-by-side in front of a golden elevator at Trump Tower in New York.

May firmly rejected suggestions that she should use Farage "a political foe of her Conservative party" as a go-between with Trump's team.

Bower said that Trump told May "he looked forward to enjoying the same close relationship that (Ronald) Reagan and (Margaret) Thatcher did."

"I don't remember there being a third person in that relationship," Bower noted.

May, who took office when David Cameron resigned after losing the June referendum on EU membership, has stressed the need to help those who feel left behind by the economic and social changes of recent decades.

Years of recession and economic uncertainty since the 2008 global financial crisis have helped fuel resentments that drove the votes for Trump and Brexit.

May told a black-tie dinner at London's medieval Guildhall: "We meet in a world transformed."

She denied having an "anti-business agenda," saying liberalization and globalization are forces for good, and "free markets and free trade" are the best way to lift people out of poverty.

But "in a nod to the anti-establishment feeling that fueled Trump's victory and the Brexit vote" she added that

governments must help people who have seen "their jobs being outsourced and wages undercut."

"To be the true global champion of free trade in this new modern world, we also need to do something to help those families and communities who can actually lose out from it," May said.

It's unclear whether May's commitment to free trade will be shared by President-elect Trump, who campaigned on promises to bolster U.S. industry and restore U.S. jobs lost to globalization.

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