

Special Message by The Hon. Paul Scully MP, Minister for Technology and the Digital Economy, UK

Excellency The Governor of Penang, Tun Ahmad Fuzi,

Michael Yeoh, the Organizing Chairman of the World Digital Economy & Technology Summit and President of the World Digital Chamber

Distinguished Speakers, Ladies & Gentlemen

I am honoured and delighted to send this Special Message to the 2nd World Digital Economy & Technology Summit meeting in the lovely island of Penang – the Pearl of the Orient. Penang has a strong historical link with the United Kingdom. We cherish our relationship with Penang and the whole of Malaysia. As I am also Minister for London, I bring warm greetings from London to Penang.

I wish to commend the organisers of the World Digital Economy & Technology Summit for undertaking this great effort to bring together Government, business, thought and industry leaders from across the world to discuss and deliberate in the vital importance of digital transformation and how digital technology impacts on our lives, our communities, our businesses and our countries. I believe that the future of the world will to a large extent be impacted by digital technology such as AI, Blockchain and crypto assets. These will bring tremendous changes to the way we work and live.

It is important we prepare our children and the young people of today to face an increasingly digital world of the future. The mobile phone is now ubiquitous. We can't live without them. And the roll out of 5G will magnify further the power of mobile communications as well as healthcare, banking, education and many other sectors.

As a result, I believe we need to further enhance digital cooperation and collaboration. In an increasingly borderless world brought about by the digital revolution we need to collaborate more so that the benefits of the digital economy can benefit our countries and companies meaningfully. The United Kingdom is a leader in innovation with our well-established Universities, research institutions and centres of excellence in technology. Collaboration in research and technology innovation will benefit mankind and enhance the welfare of our people.

I hope that there can be greater collaboration among Commonwealth countries especially among our research institutions and Universities. University-Industry collaboration can also catalyse the development of new innovations. The UK will extend our hand in cooperation with Commonwealth countries to bring about digital transformation in our countries and industries. Commonwealth countries like Australia, Canada, India, Singapore and Malaysia have contributed to innovations in technology.

I believe British innovations in digital and technology can benefit the world. From the first ever telephone in 1876, to the World Wide Web which has expanded across the globe, the UK has been home to some of the most genius inventions. More recently, ARM technology – which began with just a dozen engineers working out of a barn in 1990 – has now shipped over 86-billion chips across the world and I'm willing to bet that one of these chips are in your mobile telephones right now.

Britain has outstanding research institutions and leading Universities. These leading world class institutions can also contribute greatly to a better future. Britain is ready to assist in human capital development and contribute to the betterment of the planet. Top UK universities including Nottingham, Heriot-Watt, Southampton, Newcastle and Reading have established campuses in Malaysia. In 2021-22, over 12,000 Malaysian students were studying in the UK and over the past 12 years, over 80,000 students from Malaysia have studied in the UK and graduated with UK HE qualifications.

We are ramping up UK – Malaysia collaboration in Science and Technology through the Science and Innovation Network, based in the British High Commission in KL. Our Science and Innovation Network has also initiated the creation of the Malaysia Artificial Intelligence (AI) Consortium with members including AI researchers from over 15 Malaysian universities, including UK based universities, business stakeholders and government officials. We look forward to the UK Malaysia Artificial Intelligence (AI) Conference in October, which will enable a platform to discuss the full spectrum of AI - ranging from governance, regulations to application. I am sure that these initiatives will continue to strengthen research and innovation partnerships between the UK and Malaysia.

Building on this collaboration, for us to have a sustainable future, we need to work together to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Digitalization will support the SDGs and help advance sustainability. We need to emphasize SDG 17 which strives to promote partnership. The need for public-private-people partnership is keen to achieve the SDGs. There must also be greater international commitment to global partnership in technology and innovation.

Finally I wish to congratulate the organizers of the 2023 edition of the World Digital Economy & Technology Summit – the World Digital Chamber and the KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific for a splendid effort. This international meeting of minds is a welcome initiative.