

BARONESS GOLDIE DL
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

MSU/4/8/1/1/is

19 October 2023

Dear Julie

Thank you for your contribution to the debate on Ukraine on 21 September. During your speech you asked if I would provide more information on Türkiye's NATO position and stabilising the Western Balkans.

Türkiye is an indispensable partner and valued NATO Ally. We engage regularly with them at all levels on a range of bilateral and NATO issues. The Alliance's strength is founded on making decisions by consensus. We discuss our shared security concerns frankly and honestly.

NATO Allies welcomed President Erdoğan's announcement at the 2023 Vilnius Summit that he would support Sweden's NATO accession, and we continue to encourage Türkiye and Hungary to conclude ratification of Sweden without delay. We raised this issue with Türkiye during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Türkiye in September, the United Nations General Assembly and the European Political Community Summit. The Secretary of State for Defence looks forward to meeting his Turkish counterpart at the upcoming NATO Ministerial Meeting.

Regarding your question about the Western Balkans, unresolved tensions in the Western Balkans only serve to embolden those who seek to foster division, and hamper progress towards a stable and prosperous future. We are drawing on the UK's depth of relationships; innovative and agile programming (approximately £46 million); and our strong defence relationships to de-escalate tensions, prevent conflict, and push back on Russian attempts to destabilise the region.

We want the Western Balkan states to be resilient to state threats and internal security challenges, and more self-reliant, including on issues such as democratic resilience, defence and countering cyber and disinformation threats. We are working to further the economic ties binding the region and ties to the UK. We are actively

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reducing the risk of conflict by supporting international peacekeeping, including having deployed approximately 600 UK personal to the NATO mission in Kosovo (KFOR) and supporting the peace stabilisation mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR. Finally, we are working to reduce the threat emanating from the region towards the UK from illegal migration and Serious Organised Crime (SOC).

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

*Yours sincerely,
Annabel Su Lowe*

BARONESS GOLDIE DL