

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, it's a real privilege to be invited to offer some closing remarks. My apologies that I wasn't here for the whole day, but I hear it's been a stimulating and fulfilling day.

I must start by thanking the teams from the Guardian and MediaGuru not just for their hard work in convening the event but also for inviting UK Trade and Investment to be their international partner for this inaugural event in Singapore.

It's been a wonderful opportunity to make new contacts and to work with some old friends such as NRF, NTU, the British Chamber of Commerce, Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation and the Singapore Tourism Board.

Now, I realise that it's been a long day I am the only thing standing between you and the start of the weekend, I am actually glad that there is a cocktail reception after me or I imagine there would be no one left, so let me just quickly share three thoughts on why what you have been discussing is so important for the UK government.

The first is, of course, the hugely beneficial impact that the internet and the rise of digital technologies and applications has had, and is going to have on the delivery of public services.

Recent figures show that 82% of adults in the UK are online. For many, if not most, of us it's no longer a selling point for a company to offer online transactions, or a hotel to offer free wi-fi, in fact you are marked down, online and instantly through tripadvisor and the like if you don't.

Or look at how we consume information...It's inconceivable that a serious newspaper would not offer instant access to up to date news and analysis not just via a standard website but through means suited to mobile technology. On the last I certainly feel that the Guardian led the way with the launch of guardian.co.uk in 1999 but, as I am sure they would concede, others have followed and fast.

But, as Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude said in the UK Government's Digital Strategy "until now government services have stood out by their failure to keep up with the digital age" and our use of digital public services lags far behind the private sector.

The government provides more than 650 transactional services but while many have a digital option, few people use it. Half don't offer a digital option at all.

And yet, our research shows that transactions online can be 20 times cheaper than by phone, 30 times cheaper than by post and as much as 50 times cheaper than face-to-face. So, by going digital by default, the government could save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion each year.

But it's not just about saving money. Going back to my point about our online lives, the public expects to access Government services in ways that suit them. So, we will use digital technology to drive better services and lower costs, designing services around what users need, not around what government thinks they should have. The result will be that by 2015 we will be the most digital government in the G8.

The second point I wanted to make is about the economic benefits to the wider UK economy of ensuring that the UK stays at the leading edge of the digital revolution.

Those who were here yesterday will have heard my colleague Judith Slater talk about the UK's tech clusters, including Techcity in the East of London, and our Information Economy Strategy. The

figures tell the story – the UK ICT sector contributed 8% of the UK's gross value added in 2011 and supported almost 1.5m jobs. That is an asset that we must invest in, nurture and exploit.

But there's a wider story too, which is the role that the ICT sector plays in supporting our broader industrial strategy. This revolves around 11 sectors in all and 8 technologies, for which the government has drawn up action plans based on a partnership with business. There are also enhanced frameworks for skills and business financing.

All of the sectors are important, and together they will determine the core of the UK's knowledge economy of the future. But if I were to highlight one other than ICT it would be education.

The UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills estimates that in 2011 education exports were worth £17.5bn to the UK economy. Again, I don't need to point out that's a big number, but we are determined to drive it even higher

To do so, we need to offer more UK education overseas, exploiting innovations in educational technology in particular which will remain a key feature and enabler of growth in education.

UK companies are already among the most innovative in the development of digital learning resources in schools and colleges, and we must maintain that record.

That's why next week will see the annual British Educational Training and Technology exhibition, by far the largest and best attended educational technology event in the world.

We know that education technology firms can face particular challenges accessing finance so are committed to making it easier for them to access the right support. UK Export Finance can help exporters and investors, and we are working with the Technology Strategy Board and other partners to develop a more targeted support programme for educational technology innovation and its commercialisation.

The recent development of Massive Open Online Courses in higher education has, of course, raised the prospect that technology could fundamentally change how education is delivered.

Most key players are based in the US, but the Open University, with 21 other leading UK universities, the British Library, British Museum and British Council will pioneer FutureLearn, the first UK MOOC platform which has already developed partnerships with Trinity (Dublin) and Monash (Australia) while Edinburgh runs MOOCs on the US Coursera platform.

Third, and finally, I just want to highlight the importance of this agenda for the British High Commission here in Singapore, working with our partners in the main economic departments and agencies of the Singapore government, our two business communities and also with the British Council.

At a government to government level the Economic and Business Partnership, signed by Vince Cable and Lim Hng Kiang in Oct 2011 sets the overall framework for our ongoing collaboration. Within that we have established three specific sectoral working groups and on the basis of what I have just set out it will not surprise you that two of them are education and ICT. The third is aerospace, itself pretty dependent on skills and technology.

Alongside the EBP are other partnerships, with the likes of NRF and A*Star across the science and innovation agenda – this year marks the 10th anniversary of the UK/Singapore Partners-in-Science programme

And, of course, there are the commercial and institutional relationships whether it's Taylor Vinters working with IDA to develop the Cambridge Connection, Reading Room working with the Singapore government to design their digital delivery or the burgeoning links between NUS and NTU and a myriad of UK universities such as Imperial, Oxford, Cambridge, Southampton I could go on...

But I won't because that's enough from me. I hope I have managed to convey the importance of this agenda for both the UK Government and the High Commission, and our determination to do all we can to help UK companies succeed in the global economy of the future, working in partnership with those of similar ambition and aptitude, and Singapore certainly fits the bill in that regard.

My thanks once again to the Guardian, MediaGuru and all of those who have sponsored and supported Activate Singapore and I very much hope we'll have a chance to work together again.

Thank you, and enjoy the weekend. Try reading the Guardian, it's excellent online....