

A|D|S, the UK's AeroSpace, Defence and Security trade organisation yesterday commented on the signing of a defence treaty between UK Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicholas Sarkozy.

Ian Godden, Chairman of A|D|S, said:

As the natural partner to both Governments, with an existing strong element of cross-Channel co-operation, the UK-based defence industry welcomes today's treaty. This agreement may well prove crucial to both retaining and developing future capabilities within Europe by ensuring sustained investment in research and technology (R&T) - to deliver the next generation of programmes for our armed forces. The alternative, buying off the shelf from the US, is often not the appropriate solution for our troops and this development ensures that future governments will retain a choice of suppliers both UK-based and from overseas that meet the needs of our armed forces.

The UK is number one in Europe and second only to the US worldwide in terms of global defence exports market share. The UK defence sector employs over 300,000 people, generates more than £35 billion per year to the UK economy and last year our defence exports were worth £7.2 billion. Retaining a manufacturing base of this scale in Britain will sustain this economic strength for the long-term and ensure a continued competitiveness in the global market to meet the aims of the Government to grow our economy through exports.

Joint R&T programmes that lead to collaborative procurement programmes can be an efficient way of delivering capabilities to our armed forces that might not be affordable on a purely national basis. The conditions for co-operating with French industry have never been better. Both countries are seeking to sustain capabilities which they could otherwise not afford. Our R&T budgets are of similar size and we are engaged in similar operations which require similar capabilities. We look forward to joint programmes that will benefit from the efficiencies that flow from larger scale purchases and sustain skills and technology.