

## The Global Destination For Inward Investment

An Interview with Dame Karen Pierce, DCMG, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the United States

**EDITORS' NOTE** Prior to arriving in DC as the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the United States, Dame Karen Pierce was the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York since March 2018. Prior to this role, she served as the Director General for Political Affairs and Chief Operating Officer of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. She joined the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in 1981. Her first role was in Tokyo between



Dame Karen Pierce

1984 and 1987, after which she returned to the U.K. to work in the Security Policy Department. Ambassador Pierce worked in Washington as the Private Secretary to the British Ambassador to the United States between 1992 and 1995. Between 1996 and 2006, she held several positions in London including Team Leader for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova; Deputy Head of Eastern Adriatic (Balkans) Department; Head of Newsroom; Head of EU Department (Bilateral) and concurrently Head of Afghanistan Political Military Unit after 9/11 before returning to the Balkans as Balkans Coordinator from 2002 to 2006. In 2006, she moved to New York for the first time to be the Deputy Permanent Representative and Ambassador at the U.K. Mission to the UN. In 2009, she returned to London to become the Director of South Asia and Afghanistan Department and the U.K.'s Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2012, she started her second multilateral role, this time in Geneva, where she was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the U.K. Mission to the United Nations, World Trade Organization and other international Organizations until 2015. Between 2015 and 2016, Ambassador Pierce was the U.K.'s Ambassador to Afghanistan.

### Will you highlight your career journey and what led to your role as Ambassador?

I was inspired to pursue a career in the civil service at a young age, when I saw a photo of an African American diplomat Eleanor Hicks in a magazine. I then joined the British Diplomatic Service when I was 21 and have served in a variety of roles over my career. From Afghanistan to Tokyo, from London to Washington, I've always been interested in working on the most pressing global issues of the day. And now more than ever, it's key to

work with our partners and allies across the globe to uphold the values of freedom and democracy.

### What do you see as the strengths of the U.K. for foreign investment?

The Prime Minister has made securing economic growth a fundamental mission of the U.K. government. Global trade and investment sit at the heart of that, and we are committed to ensuring that the U.K. retains its reputation as the global destination for inward investment. Our language, legal system, highly skilled and diverse workforce, competitive tax environment, education system, business-friendly regulation and lack of red tape make the U.K. one of the easiest markets to set up, scale and grow an innovative, creative business.

Britain's economic history is characterized by being pro-international investment and competition. We want the world's best companies to set up and do business here.

### What message would you want business leaders to know about the investment opportunities that the U.K. offers?

The U.K. is Europe's most popular investment destination and a global leader in tech, AI, financial services, creative industries, clean growth, and life sciences. Our start-up culture, open regulations, low tax burden, and world-leading capital markets make it possible to scale innovation fast. The U.K. has established a network of Investment Zones, providing businesses with access to a range of support services, from funding and mentoring to networking opportunities and infrastructure development. We offer investors not only a significant market, but also one of the simplest countries in the world to set up a business.

### How critical is the U.K.'s role in the global economy?

The U.K. plays a crucial role in the global economy. We are the number one globally connected economy in the G20, the sixth largest economy in the world, third in the world for



U.S. President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden disembark Air Force One and greet officials at Cornwall Airport Newquay, England on Wednesday, June 9, 2021, before proceeding through a military honor guard cordon





*The U.S. Deputy Commandant for Aviation invited Dame Karen Pierce to be the guest of honor for the Marines Sunset Parade at the Marine Barracks in Washington, DC on June 17, 2024*

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inward investment stock, and home to a world-leading financial services center. We are the world’s second largest services exporter, and global firms have created more subsidiaries in the U.K. than anywhere else outside of China and the U.S. A third of Europe’s biotech startups are in the U.K. – creating the technology and innovation that will shape the next chapter of

humanity. The U.K. holds a globally recognized higher education system which allows business to have access to transferable, critical thinking skills that drive innovation and business growth.

As we look to the future, have confidence that the U.K. will be at the forefront of invention, devising new products, services and technologies.

**Will you discuss the importance of a strong relationship between the United States and the U.K.?**

The special relationship between the U.K. and the U.S. is our most important diplomatic partnership. The people of the U.K. and the U.S. have shared values, shared ambitions, and shared challenges. We are fervent believers in freedom and democracy and the benefits they bring.

This special relationship makes Americans safer, richer, and happier. The U.K.-U.S. defense and intelligence partnership is the strongest in the world. We are each other’s biggest investors, and the U.K. is the U.S.’ largest trade partner; the U.K. supports more jobs in America than any other country in the world, with more than 1.2 million people in America working for British businesses.

**What do you tell young people in the U.K. about the importance of public service?**

Without public servants, governments cannot function. I did not come from a background typical of those who join the foreign service, so I would encourage anyone who is interested to pursue this career path. We need smart, driven young people to succeed – people who will bring fresh perspectives and new ways of thinking to the world of policy and international relations. ●

*For more information regarding the United Kingdom and business opportunities, please contact the Embassy of the United Kingdom <https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-washington>*



*HMS Queen Elizabeth arrives in New York on September 25, 2022 ahead of hosting the Atlantic Future Forum (AFF22). The Nation’s Flagship was followed up the Hudson to the heart of the USA’s most populous city by its escort, HMS Richmond*