

JANUARY 2006: UK GOVERNMENT NEWS REPORT

JICA UK OFFICE

Sources:

- Department for International Development (DFID) website: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/>
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>
- HM Treasury website: <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/>
- 10 Downing Street website (PM's speeches): <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/>

SPEECHES

31 January 2006

TV interview with PM on day of the Afghanistan conference

London

Progress has been made in Afghanistan. The economy has grown by around about 80 per cent in the last four years, millions of people have taken part in democratic elections and many children have gone back in school. The purpose of these two days is to recommit the international community to the process of stability and democracy in Afghanistan, not just for the Afghan people but for our own stability and security right round the world. One thing that is very, very obvious is that the people want a proper functioning democracy.

- How do you realistically tackle the drugs trade?

Poppy cultivation has actually dropped by something like 20 per cent in the last year, but we shouldn't be complacent about that. There have been a lot of seizures and a lot of arrests, and in some sense the national drug strategy of the Afghan government is beginning to kick in, and that is important. But the only answer is alternative livelihoods for the farmers, plus a very strong policy on eradication.

- There is criticism that the poppy trade is not adequately being replaced with new sources of income for the farmers.

We are putting a lot of money into this, and Britain has pledged some £500 million over the next few years. America has also today pledged over a billion dollars again in terms of the help that we give, and we are putting in place the changes in livelihood that they need.

- We had the NATO Secretary General making an appeal to the Dutch parliament to commit itself to the promises made to send troops to Afghanistan, do you have a similar appeal to the Dutch on how important this is?

Of course we want the Dutch to be part of this mission, that is a decision for the parliament now and the Secretary General has obviously made a very strong appeal. But the reason we should want to be in Afghanistan is for our own security, not just that of the Afghan people.

23 January 2006

Humanitarian and conflict reform – an emergency service for the world

Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development, 2nd White Paper Speech, United Nations, New York

A stronger and more effective United Nations is in all our interests and without it we're not going to achieve peace and security. We have achieved a lot already by working together. I know that the changes we all want are not easy. But we haven't yet made enough progress.

Every year, 250 million people are affected by natural disasters and 45 million people are affected annually by the devastating consequences of war. The effects of conflict are felt for years to come. That's why those of us who care passionately about development, must care

just as passionately about dealing with conflict and disaster – their causes and their consequences.

So, what needs to be done ?

First and foremost, all of us need to do more - governments and multilateral organisations – to prevent conflict; giving more attention and resources to the causes as well as the symptoms of conflict. Just last month the Peacebuilding Commission was established: to help raise funds for peacebuilding; to improve plans for reconstruction and institution building; and to keep conflicts in the world's eye so as to prevent countries sliding back into turmoil. I think the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission is a huge opportunity - a recognition that we do have an international responsibility to take action where states are unable, or unwilling, to protect their own citizens from crimes against humanity, from ethnic cleansing, or from genocide. This is the first time that the concept of an international "Responsibility to Protect" has been agreed – it is a huge achievement - but the real test will be whether we use it. Bringing life to "Responsibility to Protect" is about two things – first, political will and second, capacity. Without both, we will not give life to those we seek to protect. Without both we would not prevent another Rwanda. Other ways of preventing conflict include reducing fighting over the use of natural resources through better regulation. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is one example; reducing the impact of climate change is another.

Just over a year ago, I proposed six reforms to the international humanitarian system, and today I want to reflect on the progress that we have made, set out some further steps I think we need to take, and hear your views on what needs doing.

The reforms were:

- the need for more, and more flexible, funding to be available right from the moment crisis strikes;
- ensuring that we have better and stronger Humanitarian Coordinators, with the power and the funds to act;
- greater clarity about who does what in a crisis - including for Internally Displaced People;
- the development of benchmarks to measure how we perform;
- doing something about the unequal allocation of resources between crises;
- greater investment in reducing the risk of future disasters.

So how have we done? I think we have made real progress, and we have learnt a lot.

On the 15th December the UN General Assembly agreed to reform the CERF to start to provide the money the UN needs. 10 countries have committed funding and we have now raised a total of \$182 million. We now need another \$70 million or more to reach a critical mass, and to find a way to get the money to NGOs on the ground. So if you support the idea, and you haven't yet contributed, please give the fund the cash it needs to do the job.

Getting the right Humanitarian Coordinator makes a huge difference. Ensuring that these Coordinators have the funds, and in a single pot, gives them the means to act quickly. Seven donors, including the Netherlands, Sweden and ourselves, are already doing this in Sudan and there will be a second pilot in the DRC this year.

Last year one other proposal I made was to ask ECHO to be the funder of last resort in forgotten emergencies. Perhaps understandably they said no. With 24/7 media coverage, we all have to be where the cameras are. But that's not good enough is it? We also have a duty to be where the cameras aren't. And that's where the "forgotten crisis" part of the CERF can help.

All of this – the progress we have made - has shown, contrary to what some people argue, that the UN can reform itself. And to do this we need three things – a UN that can effectively lead the system; donors willing to back effective UN leadership with the resources that are needed; and a proper system of accountability so that we learn - all of us - and are held to account – all of us – for what we do. In reflecting on this progress, it is also clear to me that there are further changes we need to make.

- First is this, the UN needs to ask for money in a better way. We have to improve the UN flash appeals system. Why because sometimes flash appeals are used to seek funds for a whole range of projects that are nothing to do with immediate humanitarian need, but are

in fact are for longer term work. When this happens credibility is undermined and donors put their money elsewhere, with the result – one reason - that appeals are frequently underfunded. I'd like to propose a better way. Flash appeals should be limited to immediate life-saving needs only, be issued 5 days after the disaster and cover the first 30 days.

- Second suggestion, we need a better system to make sure that we have available, and are able to draw upon quickly, the logistical assets required – for example – helicopters, ships and aircraft. We need to look seriously at how we can best strengthen the capacity of the UN Common Services, and put them to the use of the entire humanitarian community. Traditionally, humanitarians have been hesitant about working with the military, for well-known reasons. However in Pakistan and for the Tsunami, military assets were absolutely vital in delivering relief. Without them, more people would have died. In the long run, the humanitarian system should develop its own capacity; however for the time being, we should recognise that the military has tools that the humanitarian community doesn't have, and that we sometimes need to use these to save lives.
- Thirdly, I think we need a better approach to dealing with hunger. While some crises arise from sudden events – an earthquake or a tsunami – many others build up slowly; for example the food crises in Niger, in the Horn - as I saw in Kenya last week - and Southern Africa. we must address - with developing countries - the underlying causes of those crises.
- My final point is about accountability. Because I'm encouraged by the progress that is being made by WHO and UNICEF for example on improving the quality of information about the health of those affected by crises. Their work will help us to know how many people are dying and how many children are malnourished. But I think we need to do more to increase accountability; accountability to those who suffer in disasters and accountability to our public, who through their taxes and personal contributions pay for the international effort.

Question. Is this enough? Should we go further? Maybe we should ask for, and finance, an independent body to produce an annual World Humanitarian Report, like the UNDP Human Development Report – covering all conflicts and humanitarian responses - drawing on better data collection and the benchmarks being developed for mortality, malnutrition and health?

Now, that's what I think. What do you think? And how can we continue to work together to ensure that we have an effective UN, leading an effective humanitarian system and leading the world's response to conflict?

19 January 2006

Growth and poverty reduction - creating more and better jobs in poor countries

Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development, 1st White Paper Speech, New Economics Foundation, London

This is the first White Paper speech – and it's about growth and poverty reduction – creating more and better jobs in poor countries. Why have I chosen this? You could say, "It's the economy stupid", and you'd be right. The only chance she and her children have of a better life, is if they have the chance to be part of a growing economy. The chance to live in a country with more and better jobs; ways of earning a living. On current trends, poor countries, even with growth rates 2% per person per year, will take two generations to double the incomes of poor people. This is too slow. Even with faster rates of growth, it's going to be a long term process. But there are grounds for optimism. High and sustained growth in successful Asian countries has led to the greatest number of poor people being lifted out of poverty in human history. The number of people living on less than a dollar a day dropped over the last 20 years from 1.5 billion to 1.1 billion – an incredible achievement. Progress is possible, but only if that growth can be sustained by the world's environmental carrying capacity – a point I will return to later on.

Many of the Make Poverty History campaigns say little explicitly about the creation of more and better jobs for poor people. I think there is little real debate about growth. Amongst some there is even hostility to the idea of international integration into the global economy. Some argue that globalisation is a race to the bottom. And amongst others there is a mistrust of the private sector. Ask poor people where the best prospect for escaping poverty lies – they'll tell you it is through self-employment or business - a good job. Making Poverty History will not be possible without more and better jobs in poor countries. And by ignoring job creation and growth, poor countries will be relying on aid indefinitely. And that's in no ones' interest. And it's not, on its own, a solution. We have to do better.

I think there are seven essential ingredients of growth and poverty reduction:

1. The first is undoubtedly a stable macro-economy - with reasonably low levels of inflation and responsible and sustainable levels of public debt. Because stability is the precondition for growth. High levels of inflation hit the poorest hardest.
2. The second is through getting conditions right for the private sector and improving the investment climate. The aim must be to bring products to market of the right quality and price, while at the same time creating more jobs. single most important thing a developing country can do to benefit from the trade and investment opportunities thrown up by globalisation, is to get their investment climate right. The basic conditions that are right for farms and small businesses, are also good for large firms, and multinational corporations too. Two key areas are infrastructure, and a supportive financial sector. Access to a bank – to credit or having an account - is a crucial part of the investment climate. Property rights also have a role to play.
3. The third is in raising agricultural productivity. It is a simple fact that virtually no country – be it China, India, the USA or the UK - has achieved economic progress and improved the welfare of its people without first achieving progress in agriculture. It was certainly the case in Asia where cereal production has tripled over the last 40 years, lifting millions out of poverty through increased incomes, cheaper food and more employment.
4. The fourth through trade. Poor countries more than anyone else need a fair and transparent global trading system, and equally importantly they need to develop the capacity to take advantage of it. More and better jobs will come from more trade and investment.
5. A fifth area is in investing in people – providing decent and free basic education and health care, and income support for those who need it. Now income support – or “social protection” – or “safety nets” - can stop the Malawian farmer selling precious assets – her livestock, seeds for planting and tools – when she suffers a crisis, such as a drought or someone in her family becoming ill.
6. A sixth issue is environmental sustainability. Because at the New Economics Foundation you know all about this, and I'm sure you'd agree that it's a myth that developing countries can go for growth and worry about environmental sustainability later on. Environmental wealth – natural resources - is one of the main sources of growth in developing countries, and central to the livelihoods of poor people. But at the same time we can't, and shouldn't, deny poor countries the chance to grow their way out of poverty.
7. And finally, strong institutions and capable states. Perhaps more important than anything else, is the ability of governments to promote development – to prioritise wealth and economic growth and job creation. Unless you have a capable and effective state it is impossible to make progress in the areas I described earlier. Strong institutions matter more than anything else in explaining the difference in growth performance between different countries.

Our agenda is about growth with equity, not either or.

The approach I have tried to outline, however is intended to stimulate debate. We want to hear what you think. Because in essence, it's a part of the development story that we need to tell more often – the story of how growth should become a more central part of progress in poor countries. Question – do you agree?

“It’s the economy, stupid” is right, but underlying that is another truth. “It’s the politics, stupid” which I will look at in more detail in a later White Paper speech.

PRESS RELEASES

27 January 2006

An **additional £41.7m** UK funds to help **fight tuberculosis (TB) in India** has been made available. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and Stop TB Partnership will administer the funds which will be used to help procure anti-TB drugs and support a five year plan to provide technical support through the WHO to the Government of India’s revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP). Separately, a new £5m DFID fund for research into health policy and systems that work to the benefit of the poor, often utilising simple solutions, is awarded to the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, a network working under the WHO umbrella. Currently just 5% of research conducted worldwide on health policy and systems focuses on the problems of low and middle income countries and many simple life saving technologies remain inaccessible to poor populations there. The new funds come in addition to the UK’s recent doubling of its contribution to the Global Fund To Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria (GFATM), to £100m per year for 2006 and 2007.

17 January 2006

DFID, in collaboration with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, announced details of a conference to be held on 6-7 March 2006 in London to focus attention on building new forms of partnership to eradicate poverty in Asia. **Asia 2015: Promoting Growth, Ending Poverty** will bring together high-level international figures, including ministers of finance and planning and senior officials from across Asia, as well as influential figures from civil society and the private sector, to discuss the changing face of development in Asia over the next decade. The aim of the two-day event is to agree how Asian countries, together with development agencies and the international community, will meet the remaining Millennium Development Goals.

A dedicated conference website has been launched. All conference discussion papers will be posted on the site in advance of the conference and the site will also host a discussion forum allowing the public to have their say on Asian development issues.

- Asia 2015 conference website: www.asia2015conference.org

17 January 2006

The UK will provide a **£55m grant to support implementation** of the **Kenyan Ministry of Education’s five year plan**, the **Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (2005-2010)**. The support will contribute to the implementation of all 23 investment programmes in the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) and will fully fund the scaling up of the highly successful Primary School Action for Better Health (PSABH) programme to reach all schools. Communities and children will continue to benefit from funds transferred directly to school accounts for the purchase of textbooks and learning materials. Additional funds will be made available for whole school development including rehabilitation and construction of classrooms, as well as water and sanitation facilities. It is anticipated that by 2010 there will be around 11,880 refurbished and/or new classrooms, and more education materials provided to each one of the 18,500 primary schools in Kenya. As the KESSP is a sector wide plan, all sectors within education will be supported. In addition to ongoing support to the primary sector, funds will enable the development of strategies for the expansion of secondary education and reform of the university sector.

The UK has contributed £35m to the education sector in the past five years through the Strengthening Primary Education Programme. This support has assisted the Ministry of Education to help children get into and stay in school through the development of a simplified and cheaper primary curriculum; the provision of textbooks and learning materials in all

schools; training for all primary teachers which has improved lesson planning, classroom practice and enjoyment of lessons by students; implementation of a successful large scale HIV/AIDS prevention programme in primary schools and strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems.

17 January 2006

The UK will provide a **further £3 million** in response to the **Kenyan food crisis**. The funding will be provided to the World Food Programme to move Government of Kenya food stocks and distribute them to the most vulnerable people and to help provide water. This will bring the total UK contribution to the food crisis to £12.7 million since June 2004. £1 million of the new funding will help towards the transportation of urgently needed food, £1 million will go to the hire of water tankers and £1 million will fund essential bore-hole drilling.

16 January 2006

Hilary Benn visited Kenya and Ethiopia from 16 to 18 January to make clear the UK's commitment to fighting poverty in both countries as well as the need for both Governments to fulfil their commitments to protect human rights and fight corruption. Mr Benn met with the leaders of both countries to discuss progress on tackling corruption in Kenya and the widespread concern about the current political crisis in Ethiopia. He will also hold discussions about how the UK can further support the Eastern African countries that are facing food crises.

NEWS

30 January 2006

An **International Development (Reporting and Transparency) Bill** was **tabled** by the Rt Hon Tom Clarke MP, formerly shadow secretary of state for international development (1994-1995). This **aims to increase transparency in international development reporting** so that the level, poverty-focus, and coherence of the Government's international development policy and expenditure – and their contribution towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals - may be readily tracked.

If the Bill becomes law it **will require** the Secretary of State to **prepare an annual report to parliament** using information that is comparable over time, including between Government administrations. It will also place on the statute books for the first time a specific reference to the UN target (signed up to in 1970) for expenditure on official development assistance (ODA) to constitute 0.7% of gross national income (GNI). It will also, for the first time, prescribe in law how DFID should report on its development policies and use of resources.

Although few Private Member's Bills make it to the Statute Book, this one **enjoys Government support**, and passed its crucial Second Reading in the House of Commons unopposed. The Bill also has **strong civil society backing**, as demonstrated by the open letter to MPs published in The Guardian on 19 January. The Bill now passes to Committee Stage where amendments to the Bill will be tabled and debated before Third Reading and passage to the House of Lords.

25 January 2006

Masood Ahmed, Director General of Policy and International in DFID since 2003, is to **become Director of External Relations Department** at the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. He will be taking up his new post on the 1 May. Mark Lowcock, currently Director General of Corporate Performance, will take over from Masood Ahmed as Director General Policy and International. Mark's successor will be announced separately.

19 January 2006

The **first major review of UK development policy in five years** began today with a series of **frank debates** on the **future of development** which will **inform a new White Paper** due to be **published** in the **summer**.

Explaining the reasoning behind the consultation and plans for the White Paper, Mr Benn said: "We achieved a lot last year: an EU agreement to commit 0.7% of our national income to aid by 2010; a G8 agreement to universal access to AIDS treatment for all by 2015; an International Finance Facility for Immunisation to save 5 million children's lives; a new humanitarian fund to respond to natural disasters and emergencies. But we still have a long way to go. We need a clear plan for how we can translate the promises of 2005 into better lives for people in poor countries and ensure that our international system can deliver on them effectively as we seek ultimately to eliminate poverty. But governments don't have all the answers. What we need is a plan that we can all believe in and all work towards so that – together – we can achieve this."

Figures from the development world will be invited to the debates, and members of the public and international development partners will be involved in the consultation process. The **consultation process** will last for **11 weeks**, ending 7 April, and will seek the opinions of non-governmental organisations, governments, other donors and the public.

The **consultation process** will be **built around a series of speeches** by Hilary Benn, which will form some of the themes of the White Paper:

- on reform of the humanitarian system;
- corruption and governance;
- public services;
- trade, climate change, migration; and
- how the international system should support development better.

Each speech will be **accompanied** by a **series of questions** to focus the debate, and respondents are invited to comment via the DFID website. Readers are also being asked to contribute to the debate online at www.politics.guardian.co.uk

19 January 2006

The UK government will allocate **£24 million** over the **next five years** to help **tackle illegal logging**. The funding came as 25 major timber industry representatives from across Europe and Africa and the UK Government agreed to actions to improve transparency, production and the procurement of legal and sustainable timber. This will complement the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) regulation adopted by the European Union in December 2005.

18 January 2006

Hilary Benn **visited Ethiopia** as part of a three day trip to East Africa. He held separate meetings with Prime Minister Meles, families of some of political detainees, members of the opposition and representatives of international NGOs and aid donors, including Action Aid. Mr Benn expressed his **continuing deep concern** to the government about **human rights** and **governance** in Ethiopia.