

MARCH / APRIL 2005: 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/>

Note: There were limited speeches and news items in April due to campaigning for the General Election that took place on 5 May 2005.

SPEECHES

■ 4 April 2005

Statement on elections in Zimbabwe

Jack Straw, House of Commons, London

Elections were held in Zimbabwe on Thursday 31 March but there is strong evidence that the results do not reflect the free democratic will of the Zimbabwean people. The report of the Commission for Africa set out the need for stronger action by the international community to address Africa's problems. But the Commission also made it clear how much bad governance has 'blighted' parts of Africa, and frustrated people's hopes of building for themselves a better and more prosperous future. There is tragically no more powerful example of that than the situation in Zimbabwe. I am surprised and saddened that Zimbabwe's neighbours have chosen to ignore the obvious and serious flaws in these elections and have declared them fair.

The EU's common position on Zimbabwe is the strongest on any country in Africa - and includes targeted sanctions against the Government of Zimbabwe and an arms embargo. Meanwhile, the UK is committed to doing all it can to help to meet the humanitarian needs of the Zimbabwean population by donating over £71 million in food aid since September 2001 and contributing £26.5 million to efforts by NGOs to tackle the AIDS epidemic now affecting one in four Zimbabweans.

■ 22 March 2005

Towards the Summit: the path to larger freedom

Bill Rammell, Foreign Office Minister at the UK Mission to the United Nations, New York, USA

This is an opportunity to make some comments on the Secretary-General's recent report 'In Larger Freedom' as we look towards the September Millennium Review Summit. There are three broad themes:

1. Freedom from want

Under current progress the MDGs will not be achieved. There cannot be a successful outcome to the Summit unless it includes an agreement to turn things round and to move back towards the MDGs with meaningful commitments from donor countries and developing countries alike. This must include bankable commitments by the donors to increase the flow of ODA significantly. The Secretary-General's recommendations on debt, and on duty-free access for all exports from LDCs are challenging but the British government is committed to a successful outcome to the development round of multilateral trade talks launched in Doha. The Secretary-General's ideas for a green revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, for a global effort on R and D for the poor, for a more inclusive international framework beyond 2012, and for measures to deal with natural disasters and to revise the international health regulations

of the WHO should all be taken very seriously by donor and developing countries alike.

2. Freedom from fear

Fighting freedom is not just a Western agenda. There have been many more victims of terrorism in the developing countries than in the West. The recommendation on the establishment of a peacebuilding commission is extremely important. We have not always been perfect in managing conflict through military operations and/or peacekeeping operations. But our record has been reasonable, whereas in the next phase - post-conflict peacebuilding - the international community's effort has usually been less good. Partly this is due to a lack of co-ordination between the various international bodies (and bilateral donors) involved. Partly it has been the lack of a political imperative, when the 'CNN factor' has faded away as a particular conflict drifts from the headlines. A peacebuilding commission would have a very important co-ordinating role to fulfil but also help to keep the international community hands on a crisis when the immediate conflict had passed; to negate the CNN effect; and to bring together the funds and programmes, the IFIs and the Security Council when necessary.

3. Freedom to live in dignity

The Secretary-General's boldest recommendation is about the responsibility to protect. He also sets out carefully an approach to decisions on the use of force, on the basis of guidelines recommended by the High-Level Panel. We welcome what the Secretary-General has to say about the ratification and implementation of the treaties dealing with the protection of civilians. I hope that it will be possible for everybody to welcome a more active role for the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Security Council, the peacebuilding commission if it is set up, and in other bodies dealing with conflicts. We also welcome the idea of a democracy fund.

The final section of the Secretary-General's report is on institutional reform. I do not believe that any outcome from the Summit will be satisfactory unless it includes a substantial package of UN reform – including strengthening the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of the Secretariat. Security Council reform is an important, but inevitably a potentially divisive issue. Like all of us, the Secretary-General hopes for consensus. But, like all of us, he is realistic enough to recognise that that will probably not be possible. It would be a tragedy if this issue were to overshadow the Summit and prevent a consensus on the core agenda. We should take fully into account the Secretary-General's proposal that the General Assembly take a decision in advance of the Summit.

■ 22 March 2005

Water for Life

Hilary Benn at the Royal Geographic Society, London, at a one day conference on World Water Day

Even though today is World Water Day it seems that there are very definitely two worlds when it comes to access to water. In the UK people take water for granted but on my visits to Africa many poor have told me that their priority for change is water. A lack of safe water increases the burden on pregnant women who carry the water for the household, and poor sanitation and hygiene increase the burden of disease for pregnant women. A lack of water at childbirth increases infant mortality. Children die because of dirty water. Mothers with HIV/AIDS are encouraged to use formula milk, but if the water is dirty their children will suffer from diarrhea that is frequently fatal. Children, especially girls, do not go to school because of the need to fetch and carry water.

We are very far from reaching the water and sanitation MDGs: if we are to achieve the targets, 175,000 people need to gain access to safe water and 350,000 people to basic sanitation every day between now and 2015. That's almost the number of people who live in Luxembourg – it means connecting up the equivalent of a Luxembourg to water and sewerage *every single day for the next 10 years*. The task is enormous.

There are three main reasons why we are not on target:

1. The problem of funding

Spending on water and sanitation has declined – both by donors and it seems by developing country governments. If you look at the years 1999 to 2002, global assistance fell by 14% - largely attributable to the largest donor, Japan, cutting its funds by nearly two-thirds.

Reasons for this are a shift in focus by donors to the social sectors and PRSPs that have limited focus on water and sanitation.

2. The role of the private sector

It was hoped that businesses could help solve the problem but in Africa, the stories of international companies going into the water market and then promptly leaving it are many. Indigenous companies, on the other hand, simply don't have the capacity to do the job.

3. 'Governance' in the sector – its structure and management

Water is often best handled at the local level with the communities themselves planning, operating and managing water schemes. But communities are not managing these budgets, and nor are they then making proper demands of the people above them.

DFID – like the rest of the international community – has not done nearly enough to turn the demands of the poor for better water and sanitation into reality on the ground. And although there are still more people without decent water and sanitation in Asia, there has at least been progress in that continent. It is in Africa where the water MDG is badly off-track in several countries, and the sanitation MDG off track in almost all. DFID will therefore double its funding (both bilateral and multilateral) for improvements in water and sanitation in Africa over the next three years; up from £47.5 million this year to £95 million in 2007/08.

There are four countries in Africa which are most off-track with the water and sanitation MDGs: the DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Sudan. Here, we'll also look at seconding people in to boost capacity in governments, and we'll try to find quick ways of boosting spending on water and sanitation.

DFID cannot fix water and sanitation alone. The EU and World Bank are important partner agencies where DFID has a say and it will push them to do more.

■ 14 March 2005

Oral Statement by Hilary Benn to Parliament on the Commission for Africa

"African poverty and stagnation is the greatest tragedy of our time" is the conclusion of the Commission for Africa's report, published on 11 March.

The report is painfully honest. It tells the truth about the corrosive effects of corruption and conflict in Africa. It tells the truth about the things that Africa needs to change. It is equally honest about the past broken promises of rich countries and about the things that we must now do. It also recognises, however, that there are signs of hope: more democracy in Africa than before; more governments now trying to do the right thing by their people; there are fewer conflicts. In some countries, economies are now growing strongly for the first time in years, and poor people are being lifted out of poverty. And best of all, Africans are taking responsibility for Africa, with the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development—NEPAD—having set out the continent's vision of its own future.

The report is clear that more ad hoc initiatives are not the answer. It sets out a comprehensive plan of action for implementation by Africa and by the rest of the world. Aid to Africa should be doubled and made more reliable. The international finance facility should be launched immediately. For poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which need it, there should be 100 per cent debt service cancellation as soon as possible.

The future of Africa lies in the hands of its people and Governments but rich countries need to stop holding Africa back. We must make the international trade system fairer and end the damage that export subsidies are doing, while Africa increases its own capacity to trade. To do that, and to increase economic growth, Africa needs major investment in infrastructure. Leaving it to the private sector alone has not worked, so the report recommends a new \$10 billion dollar a year infrastructure fund, alongside proposals to improve the investment climate in Africa and to boost agriculture.

Finally, the report recommends support for the African Union's new leadership in peace and security and for Africa's increasingly important regional institutions, and it proposes a new monitoring mechanism to hold the world to account for implementing what the report tells us needs to be done.

The UK government is committed to playing their part in responding to the report. We have already set out a timetable to reach the United Nations 0.7 per cent aid target, and we are leading the world with the Chancellor's proposals on the international finance facility and on multilateral debt relief. We are on course to double aid to Africa by 2010, and we will need to do more to support good governance and tackle corruption.

This is not a report, however, to the UK alone; it is a report to all of us. The Prime Minister is committed to putting the commission's recommendations before our G8 colleagues and to doing so with determination.

Most important of all, this report shows us that something can be done. It tells us how, and what it will cost. We—this generation—can no longer claim that we did not know about the condition of Africa or what to do to help it to change its future. Our challenge now is to do it. If we fail to act, as Africans or as the rest of the world, those who will come after us will ask how it was that people who were so aware of the suffering and so capable of responding chose to look away. If, however, we do act, we will help to build a safer, more secure and more just world. The choice is ours, and it is by the decisions that we make that we will be judged.

CFA Report Executive Summary (English):

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/cfa-executivesummary.pdf>

CFA Full Report (English):

http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/thereport/english/11-03-05_cr_report.pdf

CFA website: <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/>

■ 14 March 2005

Sustainable development: a global challenge which affects us all

Jack Straw, Foreign Minister, at the launch of the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London

The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy is being launched today. Sustainable development is a global challenge which affects us all: threats such as climate change, pollution and the depletion of natural resources cross international boundaries. Furthermore, deforestation, the spread of deserts or the over-use of natural resources deprive local people of their livelihoods, and fuel the poverty and despair which contribute to wider insecurity.

We will promote sustainable development through the UK's Presidency of the EU and G8 this year, with a particular focus on Africa and climate change. G8 countries account for almost two-thirds of world GDP and almost one-half of all emissions of greenhouse gases, so this is a crucial forum for action. We are also working to strengthen the UN Environment Programme and to support the reformed work programme of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

In Europe, this year sees the start of the EU emissions trading scheme, which we want to extend to aircraft emissions. We also want to ensure that the revised EU sustainable development strategy acts as a catalyst for integrating sustainable development into all EU policy. We are also seeking support for international action on climate change beyond 2012, when the current Kyoto protocol commitment period ends.

Lastly, I'm delighted to say that we are doing a good deal to put the FCO's own house in order. Our paper, furniture and many office materials are now recycled or re-used. The FCO building runs entirely on electricity from renewable sources and from next month, we will be conducting an audit of air travel so as to introduce full carbon offsetting by April 2006. This means that for every flight

taken by a Foreign Office Minister or official, we will fund projects such as reforestation to absorb the amount of carbon dioxide emitted.

■ 11 March 2005

Remarks by Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer at the launch of the Commission for Africa report, the British Museum, London

Africa is a continent ripe for progress - at a moment of opportunity but tragically weighed down by poverty, illiteracy and disease; by the burden of unpayable debts inherited from the past; and now in danger of being failed by millennium promises made but not delivered.

When I visited Africa earlier in the year, everywhere I travelled I saw not only the potential and promise for the economic and social growth of Africa but also mothers paid only five pounds a week begging for free education for their children; supporters of AIDS orphans asking only that they have free health care; and men and women everywhere with a yearning that their growing political and constitutional rights now be matched by economic and social opportunities.

At the heart of the new partnership for action set out in the CFA report is our new deal for Africa in debt relief, fair trade and new investment. We say in our report that justice promised will forever be justice denied until we remove from this generation the burden of debts incurred by past generations. This is the first official report to call for a lasting deep seated trade justice that would mean that Europe and the richest countries be honest about and address the scale of the waste and scandal of agricultural protectionism, unfair rules of origin and much criticised economic partnership agreements and address infrastructure needs – transport, power, water, telecommunications and then technical and vocational skills – to build the capacity African countries need to trade.

The Commission and G8 will be judged, though, not by this report alone, but most of all by our endeavours in the next few months. This message and manifesto from this Commission for Africa, the call for justice for Africa – must now be heard at the IMF and World Bank meetings at Easter; at the G8 summit in Gleneagles in July; at the United Nations special summit in New York in September; and at the World Trade talks in Hong Kong in December.

This year, now, urgently. No longer evading, no longer procrastinating, no more excuses. But endeavours which by making change happen this year, can make real the vision of this report of justice on a global scale.

■ 11 March 2005

Remarks by Tony Blair at the launch of the Commission for Africa report, the British Museum, London.

There can be no excuse, no defence, no justification for the plight of millions of our fellow human beings in Africa today. There should be nothing that stands in the way of our changing it. That is the simple message from the Commission for Africa report published today.

Africa can change for the better. The report shows how. The issue is: do we, together, in Africa and amongst the wealthy nations of our world, have the will? The moral reason is clear. There is also a common interest to get it done for, as the report demonstrates, to tackle the instability, conflict and despair which disfigures too much of Africa and which can fuel extremism and violence, is to help build our own long-term peace and prosperity.

It can be done. Forty years ago, Asia was the poorest continent on the planet - twice as poor as Africa. Today, it is the fastest growing continent on the planet and twice as rich as Africa. The story of the report is therefore not one of blame or gloom but of optimism.

The report sets out a comprehensive plan of action and is a report with a mission. The report itself is only a first step - it is nothing if we don't use it to achieve change. In it we propose a mechanism to monitor its implementation year by year. I will be asking world leaders, at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in July, in Europe, at the UN Summit in September and at the WTO in Hong Kong in December, to back this comprehensive report with action. I will also be asking them to listen to all our citizens. Millions across the world are now campaigning to Make Poverty History. Millions in the UK today will support Comic Relief. They are demanding that we act for Africa. If we fail to act, we will betray the future not just of hundreds of millions of children in Africa but that of our own children as well. It is unthinkable that we should do so.

■ 9 March 2005

Making science and technology work for the poor

Hilary Benn, at the Smith Institute in London

Science and technology are vital for development, and vital for our fight against world poverty. New drugs and medicines; new crops: for centuries we have seen them transforming both lives and livelihoods. Science & technology works; science & technology saves lives. For this reason we will increase our Central Research Department spending by 58% over the next three years – from £86 million last year to £136 million in 2007/8. That's an extra £50 million per year.

Four key areas will get the bulk of the funding:

1. Sustainable agriculture, especially in Africa
2. Killer diseases
3. Climate change
4. What do we do when the state doesn't work in the interests of the poor – what reforms work, and what others can do

To find answers - and crucially to get them applied –we have to think big. For science, this requires a new *combined* approach – one based on *partnership*:

- Partnership that works right across the board in the UK public sector
- Partnership that works across international boundaries
- Partnership that works between developed and developing country scientists
- Partnership that works with the private sector

PRESS RELEASES

■ 1 April 2005

The UK's **annual contribution** to the **International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)** will **increase** by **25%** to **£15 million** provided over the next two years. The money will help fund essential family planning advice and sexual and reproductive health services to women, men and young people living in some of the poorest parts of the world. The UK is now the second largest donor to IPPF.

■ 24 March 2005

DFID pledged **£5m** to help fund the work of the **Stop TB Partnership** over the **next three years**. This is more than double the support given over the previous three-year period, and makes DFID the third biggest donor to Stop TB.

■ 22 March 2005

The UK is to **double** its **funding** for **water and sanitation in Africa** over the **next three years**, increasing from £47.5m this year to **£95m** in **2007/8**. Immediate action will also be taken to help the 11 African countries where the problem is most acute: Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Sudan.

■ 17 March 2005

The UK government today announced that it will **no longer** give aid to support **Nepal's police, prison services and the Prime Minister's office** following the King's dismissal of the government in February.

A total of £2.4 million had been committed but £1.3 million remains unspent and will now be cancelled.

■ 17 March 2005

The **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) conference** held in London **agreed a set of criteria** that all countries need to meet to **increase transparency in oil, gas and mining revenues**:

- publication and reconciliation of payments and revenues;
- independent audits;
- extending the approach to all companies;
- engaging with civil society;
- and a costed timetable for implementation.

Experience in the four countries that have piloted EITI – Azerbaijan, Ghana, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Nigeria shows that while different countries have taken different approaches to implementation, this needs to be backed up by clear international rules of the game for the initiative to be effective and credible.

■ 14 March 2005

The **South Atlantic island of St Helena**, which is one of the most isolated inhabited islands in the world, will get its **own international airport**. **DFID will provide funding** following an international tendering process. UK assistance to St Helena (pop 3900) is currently about £13 million per year. This includes budgetary support to meet essential public services and to subsidise the island's dedicated shipping service.

■ 2 March 2005

New policy paper: 'Partnerships for Poverty Reduction: rethinking conditionality'. In this DFID states that it will not in future make its aid conditional on specific policy decisions by partner governments or attempt to impose policy choices on them, including in sensitive economic areas such as privatisation or trade liberalisation. Instead, the UK Government will agree benchmarks with partner countries which look at the impact of the decisions they take on reducing poverty and improvements in health and education.

The paper outlines changes in four key areas:

- Developing country ownership
- Aid predictability
- Mutual accountability between donors and recipients
- Harmonisation

New policy paper: 'Partnerships for Poverty Reduction: rethinking conditionality':

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conditionality.pdf>

■ 1 March 2005

A **new development package** worth approximately **£236 million** (27 billion Pakistan Rupees) will be provided to **Pakistan** over the next **three years**. Plans for the funds are set out in the new Country Assistance Plan for Pakistan. Key aims are to:

- improve education and health services,
- increase incomes of the poor,
- and encouraging greater accountability of the government to its citizens.

Country Assistance Plan for Pakistan: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/cappakistan.pdf>

NEWS

■ 27 April 2005

Launch of the **'Blue Book - DFID's Essential Guide to Rules and Tools'** that sets out **core information** about **how to do things in DFID** most staff are expected to know. It covers rules governing key corporate activities including programme management, finance, people management, security, IT and propriety. It will later be supported by further work bringing together best practice from DFID and other agencies. Compliance is tested through audit processes and Directors must provide an assurance each year to the Management Board that their Divisions are operating according to the rules set out in the Blue Book.

Blue Book: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/blue-book.pdf>

■ 19 April 2005

Launch of new working paper: 'Banking the Underserved: New Opportunities for Commercial Banks'. The paper explores whether commercial banks can provide useful financial services to the poor and make money. Cases presented:

- Sogebank/ Sogesol, Haiti
- Banco Wiese Sudameris, Peru
- Hatton National Bank, Sri Lanka
- Stanbic Bank, Uganda
- Khan Bank, Mongolia
- Capitec Bank, South Africa

Banking the Underserved: New Opportunities for Commercial Banks working paper:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/banking-undeserved.pdf>

■ 5 April 2005

UK-based humanitarian de-mining specialists Disarmco have teamed up with ordnance and explosives experts at Cranfield University, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire and **developed the next generation of anti-land mine device**. DFID has sponsored the development of this product with approx £500,000 over the last two years. The project looked at the development of a system for destroying mines once found. There were two aims. One was to find a cheap and simple mechanism for destruction itself. Dragon, which is a fiercely burning torch will cause it to detonate and render it harmless. The second aim was for this device to be capable of manufacture in the mine affected country using ingredients that in themselves are not dangerous.

■ 5 April 2005

The UK will **write off** over **£6 million of debt** owed by **Jamaica** in 2005. Under the Commonwealth Debt Initiative (CDI), DFID will forgo the debt to allow the Jamaican Government to spend the money it will save on improving essential services, and to continue to make progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Between 1998 and 2004, DFID has written-off £39.2million of Jamaican debt and current contributions of £2.5 million every year are made to help the poorest.

■ 1 April 2005

Release of **second DFID Institutional Strategy (IS)** with the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** covering the **period 2004/05 to 2007/08**. It focuses on DFID's relationship and priorities with UNFPA and sets out how the partnership can be maximised to achieve the Millennium Development Goals – particularly those relating to health and poverty, reproductive health and HIV and AIDS.

UNFPA Institutional Strategy: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/unfpa-institutional-strategy.pdf>

■ 31 March 2005

Launch of new working paper: 'Sending Money Home' – the **first UK survey of money transfer products** to developing countries for use by the **diaspora** in the UK. The survey focused on six countries: Bangladesh, China, Ghana, India, Kenya and Nigeria. The aim is for remittances to contribute more effectively to international development.

Sending Money Home working paper summary:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/sendmoney-summary.pdf>

Sending Money Home full report: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/sendmoneyhome.pdf>

Website: www.sendmoneyhome.org

■ 24 March 2005

Launch of **working paper: 'Do Credit Guarantees lead to Improved Access to Financial Service?'** Drawing from recent evidence from Chile, Egypt, India and Poland, the paper explores whether Credit Guarantees Schemes (CGS) result in sustainable changes in the behaviour of lenders towards markets to which CGS introduce them. The key conclusion is that CGS serve as accelerators, not drivers, of financial sector deepening.

Working paper Do Credit Guarantees lead to Improved Access to Financial Service?

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/creditfinancepolicyreport.pdf>

■ 21 March 2005

The **first-ever meeting of G8 Environment and Development Ministers** was held in Derbyshire under the UK Government's Presidency of the Group of Eight Countries.

On the **impact of climate change on Africa**, Ministers:

- noted that African countries are particularly vulnerable to climate variability and climate change
- discussed the urgent need to assist Africa to reduce vulnerability
- committed to supporting the need for an effective international response to build scientific capacity and integrate measures to address the impact of climate change in international development assistance and national development plans.

The **UK** announced a **commitment** of a **further £100K** towards **regional predictions of climate change** for **Africa** and **£400K** over the **next three years** towards a **new multi-country initiative** on advancing **knowledge, capacity and networks** in support of climate change in Africa.

On **illegal logging**, Ministers agreed to tackle both the supply of and demand for illegal timber by:

- taking steps to halt the import and marketing of illegally logged timber
- doing more to support developing countries' own efforts to enforce forest law and improve governance
- ensuring government procurement does not contribute to the problem of illegal logging
- reviewing progress on these commitments next year

■ 3 March 2005

DFID announced **£10 Million contribution** to **Palestinian Authority** to help it improve the lives of its people. The funds will be provided directly to the Palestinian Authority's budget **through** the **World Bank-led Financial Management Reform Trust Fund**. This £10 million will bring total UK financial assistance to the Palestinians this year to £61 million.