

Speech: International Development Secretary on UK aid – The Mission for Global Britain

Good morning.

Thank you so much for being here today.

I am the Secretary of State for International Development. And it is my job is to lead the UK's charge on delivering the Global Goals, but it is also my job to listen.

And in this role I have listened to a lot of people.

I have listened to my department, I have listened to my wonderful ministerial team.

I have listened to the recipients of aid, to refugees in Syria and Yemen, to the Rohingya and those who helped in the Hurricane-ravaged Caribbean.

I have also listened to commentators.

To the critics of aid those who say that we are spending too much.

Or that our spending is wasted.

Or goes straight into the pockets of the corrupt.

That we are neglecting our domestic priorities, like the NHS.

Or that it is not necessary as progress will happen without us.

Or that it is a futile exercise and so we should just give up.

I hear you.

I get it. I really do.

You want a return to the priorities of the people.

Not the priorities of the politicians.

I understand that.

That is one reason why I voted for Brexit.

We wanted a return to the priorities of the people.

We chose a different path. We chose British self-determination.

We did this not just to do something.

We did it to be something.

We wanted to protect our values, of freedom, equality, independence and democracy.

Values that we believe the world is better for.

We are a global power, as well as a European one.

And in voting for Brexit I wanted my country to project those values on to the world stage.

Brexit itself is both an example of our faith in democracy and fundamental freedoms.

The recent Oxfam scandal shook the public, because they care about those values.

Remember, we only learned about that from journalists, operating in a free press, in our democratic country.

Our national values and institutions are unselfish.

We believe in sharing. In paying tax.

In our communities, we volunteer, we help each other, we try and be good neighbours.

We believe in democracy. Even when an election or a referendum doesn't quite go as we would wish, we stick with the democratic result.

Britain stands for free trade and cooperation, the rule of law, justice and human rights.

We believe in bravery, in service and in sacrifice.

We believe in the potential of the people.

That everyone should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We're unselfish because we believe in freedom.

And that places an immense responsibility and duty upon nations that have those values.

In April 1945, with German consent, Britain, Canada and the United States air-dropped 11,000 tonnes of food onto the still unliberated Netherlands.

Three weeks after the airdrop, rations in Britons were actually cut.

Why did we do it?

It bore no upside to the war effort. It could have helped our enemy.

It was done at great risk.

And it took from our own.

But we chose to do it and saved thousands of lives.

Last year, the British people voluntarily donated £30 million to help the Rohingya fleeing terror in Burma. This was in addition to the contributions we made through UK Aid and with their taxes.

Why did they do that?

Why do thirteen million Brits volunteer every month to help others?

Because we're leaders. We take responsibility. We feel motivated to act, to share what we have, to help.

Whether it is the needy in our own communities. Or those fleeing terror on the other side of the world.

We hate not being able to help, when there aren't immediate answers, or a course of action is frustrated.

Research undertaken by Eurobarometer found that 89% of Britons believe that helping developing nations is the right thing to do, and they are especially supportive of crisis aid, health and education.

They've learned through much experience that the best place to stop evil is where it starts.

They believe that good aid is the good that it does. Not how much we spend, or how good it makes us feel it is what it achieves.

And some believe we should set out to do the most good we possibly can with what resource we have.

That if we can tackle global poverty and deliver the global goals and benefit the UK into the bargain, then we should.

They're right to believe that.

The public have no truck with the polarized views of aid:

The view we can only deliver a global goal in the recipient nation, that if we chose to do it in a way that also brings other benefits, to the national interest, or another part of government, even if it is the most efficient, even if it is the most sustainable way of doing it, that it is somehow less worthy.

The public know that is perverse.

The view that it is better to fail at delivering the global goals, than let

others –such as the private sector- help.

The public know that is dogma.

Or the view that we should withdraw from the world, just put up a great big shield and focus solely on our own shores.

The public know that that is asking for trouble.

They know their history. They understand the connections.

Between global health security and our own health.

Between trading partners and our own prosperity.

Between security in fragile states, and violent extremism on our streets.

And they understand our ability to act in our own or another's interest is predicated on our own capabilities and resources. And in fact the 0.7% makes that explicit.

If our economy does poorly, the aid budget shrinks, if we do well, we can do more.

There is a strong desire amongst the public that we as a nation should have the power to influence, to prevent, to deter and to intervene, even when that means us standing alone.

Our greatest accomplishments have been driven by that courage and by these values.

To fight, whether it is with arms, with knowledge or science and discovery, against tyranny, against hunger, against disease, for humanity's sake.

Our nation was the cradle for democracy, the fight against slavery and for universal suffrage.

It was the provenance of the Paralympics and Amnesty International, for Leonard Cheshire, and of Live Aid.

The British people believe in 'we' not 'they'.

There is only 'us'.

As President Kennedy pointed out: "We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

We are determined to be a great global nation.

And to be a Great Global nation we need the trinity of the 'three Ds'.

We need the influence and encouragement of diplomacy.

We need the aid, alleviation and economic empowerment of development.

And we need the stability, deterrence and, as a last resort, the intervention of defence.

All three are essential.

We know we can only talk softly if we carry a big stick.

And we know that without diplomacy and the 0.7% on aid we are going to need an even bigger stick.

No, it is not a lack of logic that causes public concern over UK aid.

Nor is it a lack of love.

It is a lack of trust that we are spending their money well.

That concern – a concern shared by 50 per cent of those polled on this issue – is one that we must address head on and not just because it's their money we are spending.

Global Britain must mean a country with which the rest of the world wants to engage.

It must also mean a Britain which promotes and defends national interests effectively. Our values, our institutions and our collective offer must be world-class.

To do that that our development offer must be something that we can be really proud of.

It must be something that can be clearly understood.

And supported – in spirit and in practice by those who wish to contribute further to it through extra resource, or their expertise or their time.

It must deliver on both the purpose of Official Development Assistance and also on the public's concerns.

Our new development offer needs to be a national mission that we can all unite behind.

To borrow from the Prime Minister, we need a development offer that “works for everyone”.

That means that 0.7 must not just “be spent well”, but “could not be better spent”.

It must be more effective at ending poverty and delivering the global goals – goals that we are currently years adrift from, or even measuring.

0.7% is often spoken about as though spending it is the goal. The public want a greater focus on the outcomes.

It's about what we're doing, not just what we're spending.

Our offer should reflect the public's strong support of control and independence of our programming and the value they place on partnership. Partnership between nations, between businesses, between institutions and between people.

It should reflect the people's priorities of Global Britain.

It should unashamedly have British values at its heart.

And it should be fit for the world as it is today.

While global poverty is falling, we still need to deliver more for the world's poorest and those global goals.

Our focus must now shift further to this task, to where the heavy lifting is yet to be done: Africa.

We must also recognise that the common thread that runs through the world's worst humanitarian crises is not famine or drought, but man's own actions: conflict, crime, corruption, capital flight, and climate change.

We must focus on tackling those man made crises which now absorb most of the global effort to alleviate suffering and are a block on development.

And we must ensure that no one is left behind, that the potential contribution, and the rights, of women, girls, and disabled people are fulfilled.

And we need a new offer for countries transitioning out of extreme poverty.

To keep developing their economies and so that we can meet our objectives on climate change too.

And we must address the great challenge of our generation. We must identify the answers to mass migration, the displaced and stateless people.

We must focus on helping developing countries stand on their own feet and build sustainable health and education systems.

When governments, who could and should be putting their hands in their pockets refuse to, we should too. And we should recognise those who do step up.

We are clear – governments cannot simply outsource funding their public services to donors indefinitely.

And we will continue to press for further reforms to the global aid rules which prevent 0.7 per cent being spent effectively and flexibly.

Such as being unable to use ODA to assist those devastated by a natural disaster because yesterday before the cyclone hit they were doing perfectly fine.

But we also need to examine how we operate ODA in Whitehall.

How we incentivise more joined up working between departments.

How we account for ODA.

And the quality of our programmes and management of those programmes.

Last month, I convened a meeting of all ODA spending-departments and the NSC and agreed greater coherence and effectiveness. We agreed a package of tools and training to be delivered by DFID to enable them to spot opportunities to design and manage their programmes really well.

In addition we will change our planning processes to ensure that ODA meets that new spending bar.

How does this deliver the UN Global Goals?

Is it really working hard for Britain?

Would it happen without us?

Could that money not be better spent?

And we will co-design projects and lever in social and private finance to supplement our ODA spend and enable us to do more.

This will create programmes that reflect the people's priorities.

That are a win for the UK and a win for the developing world.

We have already done much of this, for example UK aid budget funding the resettlement of refugees in the UK, but we are going to take this much further.

With the Department for International Trade, we are working with sub-Saharan Africa to create jobs and growth. That's good for them, but also good for British companies too.

With the Department for Work and Pensions, we're working to ensure that the International Citizen Service helps young people from disadvantaged background, build the confidence and skills they need to get into work.

With the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, we're tackling illegal wildlife trade, supporting food security, and tackling waste and pollution, all issues the public care deeply about.

And with Defence we are taking forward new projects, to increase our own countries' capacity to respond to crises and build stability.

In future years, if it is cost effective for us to deliver aid using taxpayer funded assets, we should do. That's common sense, and the fact it might also help another government department's budget shouldn't count against it.

We will take this approach – a win for the developing world and a win for the UK – with every single government department.

It is an approach that does not dilute the good we do, it doubles it.

We shouldn't stop at Whitehall either in the rolling out of our tools to track progress.

In the future, we should develop our tracking tools so the public can see in real time the results of the geocoded projects they fund.

It's not about who spends it within government – whoever spends it needs to spend ODA really well and the public should always know what, where, how and why.

And if we want others to help towards the global goals, we need to further open up our work further still. We need to work much more strategically with global business, we need a network of entrepreneurs.

We need to broaden our supplier base, we need to create more partnerships.

We need to match the nimbleness and flexibility of the private and tech sectors and smaller organisations.

We have a moral duty to both the people we seek to help, and those who enable us to do so, to provide the best value for money and the most positive impact for every single pound we spend.

That's our approach.

So here's what we are going to do:

We're going to keep it simple.

We are going to focus on five things to tackle global poverty:

1. We will help through humanitarian assistance
2. We will care through global health partnerships
3. We will develop economies and human capital
4. We will protect through security, rule of law, human rights, tackling crime and corruption
5. And we will connect all that our nation has to offer, its talents, its people and communities, its expertise and knowledge, and its resource to those in the developing world through a new Initiative: the Great Partnership.

Firstly, humanitarian assistance: of which the public are rightly proud. The work of our team in responding to crisis, the expertise of our healthcare,

rescue and aid workers is world class. We're a major humanitarian donor and it is in our interests to increase the resilience of those countries that are in need.

So we are going to prioritise getting the humanitarian system to work better, working in concert with other major donors and we will require agencies and suppliers to share data, to share intellectual property and collaborate.

We will pre-empt the need for humanitarian relief by building in resilience through recovery reconstruction and through the development and promotion of insurance schemes.

We will devote more effort and resource to tackling the complex challenges of migration, refugees, stateless and displaced people. We will call on the international community to enshrine a new approach later this year in the UN Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration.

We will no longer be content to merely raise the plight of people we currently cannot help due to the limits of our capability. I have already launched, with my US counterpart, a challenge fund: Hope in Conflict, to ask tech innovators to find solutions to protect people from harm.

Today, I can announce that we will set up a Humanitarian Innovation Hub to increase our capability to be the best in the world at what our public feel so strongly about: protecting people who cannot protect themselves.

Seventy years ago that principle and our unselfish values led our nation to create the best healthcare system in the world: the NHS.

Our healthcare innovation, our health economics and research base has much to offer the rest of the world.

And UK aid spent on such initiatives delivers huge returns on that investment.

Thousands of lives saved, thousands more in school, thousands more spared a life-changing disability.

And as we have seen from the work we have done already in this area such schemes benefit own population too. Diagnostic tests in use today as I speak to you in NHS wards have been created by UK aid.

And having NHS expertise contribute to global health security ultimately keeps NHS resources from being needed to combat pandemics and plagues on our own shores.

So, secondly, we will build on our work with the NHS and Public Health England.

We will work to build comprehensive, effective healthcare systems – not just a collection of separate projects and programmes, after all weak healthcare systems in the developing world are not just a danger for the people that live there – they pose a risk to us all.

In Global Britain we will take a stronger lead in ensuring Global Health Security – protecting humanity from pandemic diseases and tackling the growing threat of anti-microbial resistance.

We will work also to tackle undernutrition – today I can announce that together with funds raised from the private sector and foundation funds we will extend our programme the Power of Nutrition to a further five million people.

We will redouble our efforts in the fight against polio, malaria, neglected tropical diseases, TB and AIDS.

And I reiterate our commitment to end FGM and to continue our work on family planning, as others step away from that field.

Thirdly, we'll increase our work supporting security, the rule of law, human rights, and tackling crime and corruption.

Without security you can't develop. You cannot achieve investment, you can't have economic activity, the state cannot collect taxes, you cannot invest in human capital.

DFID is already committed to ensure the 50% of our budget that is spent each year in fragile states genuinely tackles the underlying drivers of instability. We will focus on building long-term stability, addressing the causes as well as the consequences of conflict.

However, we will go further as part of cross-government efforts to directly tackle national security threats such as conflict, terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime.

We will create new country-level programming targeted at specific communities and locations vulnerable to extremism and organised crime.

One of our objectives will be to reduce the need to provide emergency humanitarian support and we will move to deeper more enduring partnerships as we are already doing with countries such as Jordan and Lebanon.

In addition, we will do more to end modern slavery, building close partnerships with countries where slavery is widespread. And under the Prime Minister's leadership we will continue to push the international system to end this global disgrace.

We will introduce new programming to support human rights, schemes to protect those who are persecuted for their religious beliefs.

And we will support and promote the freedom of the press.

We will work with new rising powers to strengthen and shape the international system and to tackle global issues such as crime and corruption.

And we will develop a new area of co-operation to stop illicit financial flows that pick the pockets of the poor in Asia and in Africa.

DFID will explore setting up a presence in the world's financial centres. And we will work with the National Crime Agency and the City of London to ensure there are no hiding places for illicit flows and that we have a global financial system of which we can be proud.

We should recognise that inclusive free trade and the creation of jobs and livelihoods is the most reliable bringer of peace. Millions of people in the world's poorest places have gotten a job, or improved their income, thanks to UK support. But we need to do more. So fourthly we will develop economies and human capital.

If we want nations to move from aid to trade, we must too.

So we are stepping up our work through education and a new strategy which will prioritise good learning, good teachers and national reforms and we'll reshape our economic development work.

We are going to have a new trade offer which includes a new partnership with the City of London to bring down the barriers to trade and unlock investment for emerging markets in Africa and Asia.

Achieving the Global Goals and delivering financial returns, innovation and markets for the UK.

And as we leave the EU, we will scope new instruments and institutions to sit alongside CDC, our private sector investment arm, to provide loans or guarantees to ensure a better offer to developing countries as they transition out of extreme poverty but before they're fully reliant on international capital markets.

We can show the world that doing the right thing – pays.

And our work can create new opportunities for British pension funds to invest in new markets in developing countries and deliver higher returns for British pensioners.

Last year, I instructed DFID to deepen its work with the Treasury and HMRC to enable developing countries to manage their tax collection better. And today I can announce a further unit focussed on business integrity, which will enable companies working in developing countries to place anti-corruption and human rights front and centre.

And we will ensure British businesses can compete freely and fairly. As we will also expect from any competition using EU instruments that Britain has contributed to.

And as we leave the EU we must deliver on the promise of Brexit to the world's poorest, and demonstrate how our new freedoms are mutually beneficial for developing nations through preference utilisation. We will be explicit about this and we will be a champion of free trade.

Finally, we will found a great partnership.

The aid budget is a fraction of what Britain has to offer the rest of the world. It is also our knowledge, the City of London, our law, our technology, our education, our charity sector, our faith and community groups, Whitehall, town hall, our entrepreneurs, our public servants, our agencies and institutions.

We will create partnerships, we will connect great people, we will share ideas and our creativity, we will develop our aid match and small charity programmes to enable the small and local to be able to contribute too, and next week you will hear more about commitments and connections that will be championed by a revitalised Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting will be the largest gathering of Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers and Commonwealth organisations the UK has ever hosted.

People will come together from across all 53 nations to discuss the issues of most importance. And we will deploy our development expertise in the emerging group of countries that are increasingly important for finding solutions to our global challenges.

So that is what we will do.

Here's what we won't.

We won't do tied aid. It's bad for UK competitiveness and it's bad for developing nations.

We won't fund programmes that fail to meet the new spending bar.

We will not fund organisations that don't perform or meet our standards or contribute to our objectives.

We won't fund governments who can afford to, yet chose not to, invest in their own people.

We will not fund projects that would happen without us.

Or spend money that could be better spent otherwise.

To those who say the private sector has no place in development, I say: "Do you want to deliver the global goals or not?"

To those who say you can't spend ODA effectively and support the UK's national interest, I say: "Watch us."

To those who are shy about promoting British values, I say: "the world needs us to be confident."

To those who say the Global goals are just unachievable, I say: "Look how far we have come."

And to those who say please put up a shield,

I say, we are.

A shield against uncontrolled and unsustainable economic migration.

A shield against pandemic disease.

A shield against organised crime.

A shield against poverty and its parasitic disease terrorism.

It's a shield called UK aid.

It's a defence against all those ills, but if we want to do better than a score draw, then we also have to fight.

And to win that fight we must come together:

Behind smarter aid and global Britain.

United in a national mission.

In the national interest.

Striving for global goals.

So to the British public, who I know to be generous and compassionate and who also want us also to return to their priorities, I offer this new approach and I say to them.

Be proud of what you enable.

Be proud of the lives you save.

And the future you build.

Be proud of your country.

Be proud of who we are.