

Championing internationalism in the post-coronavirus world Labour CND RESPONSE

Q3: International development values and strategy

Solidarity and social justice were at the centre of the international development commitments expressed in Labour's 2019 manifesto. It recognised conflict, climate change and a global economy rigged in favour of a tiny elite as the drivers of instability and inequality across the world. This understanding should continue to guide our approach to development policy.

Labour should re-assert the international development values expressed in our 2019 manifesto and redouble our efforts to make Britain a force for international peace and justice in the post-Covid world.

Shadow International Development Secretary Preet Gill is to be congratulated for calling on the UK government to push for the cancellation of debt repayments for low-income countries allowing them to prioritise investment in their health systems during the Covid19 crisis and to play a greater role in securing a global ceasefire at the UN Security Council.

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DfID's projects provide important support to the lowest-income countries and the world's poorest people. The Johnson government's decision to merge the Department with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is widely recognised as a winding down of the UK's provision of humanitarian aid, and taken to mean the end of all but a handful of DfID's current projects.

The decision comes despite a recent report by the Select Committee on International Development, which strongly supports its retention, warning that the merger would erode accountability and shift funds away from the aid budget. Announcing the merger in parliament, Johnson said DfID's goals 'will be wholly integrated with UK foreign policy and described the merger as 'an opportunity to get value for the huge investments we make in overseas spending'.

Our 2019 manifesto promised that 'DfID will continue to respond to the world's biggest crises and will ensure humanitarian aid is provided according to need, not whether the UK has commercial or other interests in the country. DfID will assume a strong position in cross-government decision making, including a permanent seat on the Export Control Joint Unit responsible for licensing arms exports.'

At a time when low-income countries and the world's poorest people are the most devastated by Covid19, Labour should make the case for the retention of DFID with a standalone aid budget of at least 0.7% of gross national income, and commit an incoming Labour government to re-establishing an independent aid-giving department.

BRITAIN'S INTERNATIONAL ROLE

It is widely acknowledged that Britain makes an important contribution to diplomacy, emergency and development aid, and peacekeeping – for example, making heavy equipment and airlift capacity available and providing training for UN peacekeepers. Labour should commit to maintaining a strong, conflict resolution role for Britain.

Our reputation on this front is in stark contrast to how most of the world's nations view the maintenance of a UK nuclear weapons system. In developing policies appropriate to a post-Covid world, Labour should take this opportunity to rethink the Trident replacement programme and redirecting some of the resources saved towards international aid to post-conflict societies.

ENDS

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