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**OBSTACLES TO THE MDGS: STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM. THE ROLE OF THE DONOR COUNTRIES.**

Panel presentation by Sir Emyr Jones Parry, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations. UN 57<sup>th</sup> annual DPI/NGO conference, 9 September 2004.

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**Three key challenges**

1. I have been asked to speak from the perspective of a donor country on the obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and strategies to overcome them. We face many challenges. I would like to focus on three, which I believe are critical to success.

- First, getting delivery right – even in the toughest places. We must do all we can to speed up progress where this is being made, but not shy away from the challenges of conflict and humanitarian crises. New and better approaches are needed to link up development with better global security.
- Second, mobilising global resources to pay the bill. More money for development is needed, and it is needed quickly. Donor countries must deliver the promises made at Monterrey and elsewhere. We must also work together more effectively to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of development aid.
- Third, building political will and national ownership. The MDGs can not be delivered through a “one size fits all” approach. Governments must be in the lead, shaping national plans that fit the bill country by country. Donors and the international system must work harder to help this happen.

**Why the MDGs are so important**

2. The UK believes the MDGs are a key breakthrough in setting the agenda for a powerful global partnership for development. Our commitment to their achievement is well known. Our aid policy is built around them. We are determined that they should be delivered in full.

3. The Millennium Summit in 2000 was the largest ever gathering of Heads of State and Government in UN history. They agreed to establish a global partnership to build a world in which everyone has a secure and decent livelihood, and a long and healthy life. Where there are equal opportunities for women as well as men, and the chance for everyone to develop their skills and knowledge. Protection from killer diseases and an environment that is clean, safe and sustainable.

4. Next year in the General Assembly, we will be taking stock of how far we have come. On current trends, we will fail to meet these goals. If so, we will have lost the best chance we have ever had to rid the world of the scourge of poverty. We cannot allow this to happen.

### **Getting delivery right**

5. The first challenge is to get delivery right. The MDGs are about getting the job done. They are not abstract aspirations, but real and measurable changes for the better. And we know they can be achieved.

6. In the past five years, Mozambique has cut poverty from 70% to 55% and doubled the number of children in school. In Uganda the prevalence of HIV has dropped to less than 5% from a high 10 years ago of nearly 30%. In Thailand, new infection rates have dropped from 140,000 a year, in the early 1990s, to around 20,000 a year now. These breakthroughs took concerted national action, and effective international support. For every good news story, though, there are many failures – and we must learn quickly from these.

7. As donors, we must make sure we are part of the solution and not part of the problem. This means working together to ensure that donor funding moves easily and swiftly to the point of delivery. We must stop clogging up national systems with elaborate and excessive bureaucratic procedures and red tape.

8. The UK believes that the best way to ensure delivery is for donors to work together to provide money directly through national budgets, in support of coherent national plans for poverty reduction. We do, and will do, this in countries where governments have set

up systems that can absorb aid this way, and can account fully for the way public funds are spent. And we are urging all of our fellow donors to follow this same path.

9. The progress made in Mozambique is a case in point. This was helped by a consortium of 12 key donors – including ourselves – working together with the European Commission and the World Bank to provide general budget support to back the government's own poverty reduction plan. In Africa as a whole, though, more than 75% of donor support is still provided through project aid – requiring hundreds, even thousands, of separate audit and progress reports to be submitted by governments every year – taking up precious time that should be devoted to getting the job done.

10. Direct budget support is the model for good donorship. But we must recognise that many countries are not yet ready to take this on. We must also recognise that far too many of the poorest countries are beset with conflict, ineffective or corrupt government, or overwhelmed by disaster, disease or drought. Achieving the MDGs means getting to grips with the problems in the toughest places, as well as pouring support into those that are willing and able to move forward.

11. The scale of this challenge can not be underestimated. The World Bank has calculated that 46 states may be classed as weak or failing. These contain nearly one-third of the billion or more people living on less than a dollar a day. They are home to only 14% of the world's population, but account for more than 40% of child mortality, and a third of the global totals for maternal deaths, children who do not go to school, and people without access to safe drinking water.

12. Taking on this challenge requires us to take a truly global view. Development will not work if it is left to stand alone. Development without security is not possible, and security without development will not last long. We need to work with a global vision linking development, security and diplomacy together.

### **Mobilising global resources**

13. Let me now turn to the question of resources. To achieve the MDGs we need to double current levels of development assistance. The UK is making rapid progress in

living up to the promises made both at the Millennium Summit and at Monterrey, and in speeding up debt relief.

14. Over the next three years we will be increasing our aid budget from 6.8 to 9.5 billion dollars a year. This will lead to a doubling in real terms of UK aid over a ten-year period since 1997. If we are able to maintain this rate of growth – as we hope to do - we will reach by 2013 the target of giving 0.7% of our gross national income to international development.

15. We will ensure that 90% of this money goes to the world's poorest countries. At least 2.7 billion dollars of it will be spent in the next three years on tackling HIV and AIDS. A large share of the rest will be spent on health and education. Much more of our money will pass through multilateral channels, including the UN. All of our aid will be untied, and all of it, in one way or another, will contribute to the reduction of world poverty.

16. We also need to find new and imaginative ways of making more money available more quickly. 2015 is only a decade away, and time is slipping by. Gordon Brown – our finance minister – has proposed the creation of an International Finance Facility. By front-loading donor commitments and leveraging money from international capital markets, this would quickly deliver the extra 50 billion dollars a year needed to achieve the MDGs. Wide support from the donor countries for this initiative would be a huge step forward.

17. We also warmly welcome the work being led by President Lula of Brazil and President Lagos of Chile to find further new mechanisms for mobilising global development resources. We look forward to discussing these ideas further in the UN later this month.

18. However large the aid envelope grows, we know that it is only a small part of the total package of resources needed. The real engines of growth and development are to be found in markets, in trade, and in global investment.

19. The eighth MDG, strengthened by the consensus achieved at the Financing for Development conference at Monterrey, holds the key. This commits all of us to a global partnership for development that will unlock aid flows, free up world trade, and lift

unsustainable debt burdens from the poorer countries. The leading role played by the UK in pushing these vital issues forward is visible to all, and will remain a top priority.

20. We plan to give new impetus to all of these issues next year when we take on the Presidencies of both the G8 and the European Union. Our Presidency of the G8 will be a development Presidency, with a strong focus both on Africa and on HIV and AIDS.

### **Building political will and national ownership**

21. The third challenge is to build political will and national ownership. The MDGs are a set of global goals, but to be achieved must be translated into reality on the ground. Every country is unique, and must find its own way to deliver the promises of the Millennium. We must build the political will at all levels, and in all parts of the world, to achieve these goals. We will fully support those that demonstrate this will, and keep up the pressure on those that do not.

22. The international community must give its support in ways that strengthen national capacities and build, not undermine, national ownership. We must become more multilateral in our approach, and help build a much more effective global system. Key to this is getting the UN to pull together in the same direction, as well as building a closer and stronger partnership between the UN and the international financial institutions. The MDGs provide the focal point.

23. In the General Assembly this year we will be working with our fellow member states to set out an agenda for the next phase of reform of UN operational activities for development. Much has been achieved. But much more needs to be done to ensure that the UN really lives up to its potential as a keystone in the international development architecture. Along with our colleagues in the European Union, and other like-minded partners, we have begun to set out our stall – with the promise that as the UN gets stronger and more effective, so too will our support to it. Our recent announcement of significant increases in UK core funding support to UNDP is proof of our intentions.

### **The role of NGOs and civil society**

24. Last, but by no means least, let me finish with some comments about the role of NGOs and civil society.

25. My remarks today have focussed on what donor governments can and must do to help overcome the obstacles to achieving the MDGs. But without a strong and vibrant contribution from NGOs and civil society, all this will come to nothing. NGOs already play an important role in delivery, and a critical role as champions of poverty reduction and human rights. These roles must continue and grow.

26. The UK has long valued and nurtured the partnerships it has with development and advocacy NGOs. In line with the recent Cardoso report, we support the idea of a clearly defined role for NGOs across the whole UN system. We do not always expect to agree, but we learn much from the openness and vibrancy that are vital characteristics of this dialogue.

27. The role of civil society more broadly is also critical in calling governments to account, and ensuring that political will is built and turned into real action. Strong states without strong citizens quickly turn bad. Our insistence on good governance as part of the international development package is all about ensuring that states work for all those they are meant to serve, rather than only for the few. Without strong and active NGOs, the voices of the many may go unheard. Putting your full support behind the MDGs, and the rights and responsibilities they represent, will give us all more power to work for the poor.

28. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to your questions and comments.