

A vision for international development in 2015 and beyond Institute of Development Studies, January 2015

Speech by Mary Creagh MP

Thank you, Melissa for your kind invitation to address the Institute for Development Studies. You are world leaders in your field and it is a great honour to be here. You play a crucial part in training the next generation of development professionals. I want also to recognise my Labour colleague Purna Sen who gave me such a warm introduction. Thank you Purna.

As many of you know, Purna is standing to be the next Member of Parliament for Brighton Pavilion. She is also an expert in international development. She is the Deputy Director of the Institute of Public Affairs at the London School of Economics, and has worked on Human Rights for the Commonwealth Secretariat and at Amnesty International.

Two weeks ago, at the launch of Action 2015, Ed Miliband reaffirmed the Labour Party's commitment to global justice and solidarity. And I am delighted to see we have some Youth Ambassadors here from that campaign, and colleagues from the across the sector who have travelled here today. It would be easy in the current climate of political frustration and cynicism to turn away from addressing the world's most intractable problems.

Other parties say now is not the time for renewed global ambition, especially for international development.

I disagree.

Social justice and human rights are central to Labour's values.

As Ed said, "business as usual is not acceptable". The world today is globalised and connected: climate change, economic crises and disease outbreaks are everyone's concern.

Our commitment to the world's poorest and most vulnerable is not just morally right, it is in Britain's national interest.

I want to talk about the once in a generation opportunity that 2015 the European Year of Development gives us. In September, in New York, the United Nations will agree the replacement to the Millennium Development Goals. In December, in Paris, we will agree a framework to tackle climate change.

Both would be priorities for a Labour government.

As well as eradicating extreme poverty, the Sustainable Development Goals must go faster to tackle growing economic inequality. Inequality matters. It reduces growth and hinders development.

Health, education, jobs and participation.

Each a basic human right, increasingly determined at birth. Nearly half of the world's wealth belongs to just one per cent of the population. But inequality is about more than money. Gender, caste, race, community, disability, religion, and ethnicity far too often this is what determines your life chances. If more is not done to protect the most vulnerable people, countries can never fully develop.

It is for this reason that I am determined the SDGs do more to tackle inequality in three areas that matter deeply to the Labour Party: Human rights, climate change and universal health coverage. Areas that this Government barely discuss at all at home or abroad.

Basic human rights are integral to what it means to be free. Women and girls must be free from the fear of violence, coercion or intimidation; and have the freedom to choose how many children they have. We want girls to all the same chances as boys: to enjoy their education, free from the threat of forced marriage. I want to see DFID spearheading more approaches that change the value of education such as the successful cash transfer projects.

We want to tackle the economic conditions and supply chains that tolerate the obscenity of 168 million child workers. There is no better route out of poverty than a job. Workers must have access to decent work, decent pay and rest breaks, and the freedom to join a trade union. We must not have a repeat of the terrible Rana Plaza disaster. So a Labour government will reverse this Government's ideological decision to stop funding the International Labour Organisation.

The private sector needs to play its role.

Labour will support good companies that pay their fair share of tax, maintain a clean supply chain and pay a fair wage. I will say more about this in March, in Cambridge.

We also want to ensure that children affected by conflict have the psychosocial services they need and the right to go to school. And we want LGBT communities to be free to love and marry whom they wish, the disabled to participate fully in society and protection for indigenous peoples.

The effects of climate change hit the poorest hardest. Eradicating poverty will only be possible if we tackle climate change. If we do not cap temperature rises below two degrees then millions will fall back into poverty. The Prime Minister says very little about his wind turbine these days. He is a prisoner of a divided party: split over whether climate change even exists. For Labour, climate change will be at the centre of our foreign policy and integral to our plan to change Britain. There is a genuine opportunity to address climate change this year. The United States, the EU and, most importantly, China, all show a willingness to act. A Labour government would push for global targets to reduce carbon emissions, with regular reviews towards the long-term goal of what the science now tells us is necessary. Zero net global emissions in the latter half of this century.

Health care is the bedrock of development. As the party of the NHS we want others to enjoy the protections that we take for granted. Ensuring everyone in the world has access to affordable healthcare is essential to end poverty. Because it is deeply unfair that three million people die every year from preventable illnesses. Because last year there were 1.5 million AIDS related deaths when we have treatments that could have kept those people alive. Three quarters of those living in low-income countries lack access to decent healthcare.

This government does not understand why this matters. They will not support a goal on UHC in the Sustainable Development Goals. Figures from the House of Commons library show this Government cut bilateral spending on health in Sierra Leone and Liberia from 26 million pounds in 2010 to 16 million pounds this year. And while I support the help DFID has given to the Ebola crisis, the best way to protect against disease is to build a resilient, government controlled and government funded health service.

The World Health Organisation has calculated that Universal Health Coverage would stop one hundred million people a year from falling into poverty. There is no simple, measurable

solution to help those countries that want it to set up a health service. Lasting healthcare systems are about more than the delivery of commodities like vaccine and bednets, vital though they are. We have seen the devastation that a failure to strengthen health systems can induce. With no treatment, and no vaccine, we have had no option but to watch health systems in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea all but collapse.

The World Health Organisation, the World Bank and countries like France and Japan are all clear that UHC is the right direction to move in. Britain needs to catch up. I want DFID to lead the pack not follow it. So today, I want to set out two things that Labour will do in government to increase universal health coverage.

First, Labour will establish a Centre for Universal Health Coverage. This will provide global partnerships, support and encouragement to countries that want to healthcare. Labour learned a lot when we set up the NHS. We can watch the difference it made every Sunday night, on TV, on Call the Midwife. Pre natal care. Orange juice and rosehip syrup for expectant mums. Every birth attended by a skilled midwife. Milk tokens for the children and parenting classes to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding over formula feeding. Prostitutes, immigrants and the middle classes all treated with care dignity and respect.

It is a long and difficult journey. It requires vision and courage. It needs bold political commitment. Long term funding. Trained health workers. Functioning public finance systems. And much more. None of this is easy. A Centre for Universal Health Coverage would recognise that building a robust and equitable health system is ultimately a political decision.

It would work with enlightened political leaders in developing countries. It would help them to generate adequate funding from their own as well as external sources and the systems needed to deliver it especially in rural areas. Second, I want DFID to play a role in trying to reshape the global health system. Today, the global health system is under immense strain.

It needs reform.

The last Labour Government helped found the Global Fund to fight Aids, TB and malaria. Today, 13 million people access lifesaving HIV treatment. We set up Gavi to provide vaccines to halve the number of children who die before their fifth birthday. To reach those Millennium Development Goals we knew we needed new ways of working together. We need a similar step change if we are to reach the sustainable development goals. The WHO lacks focus and struggles to reform itself. Too many organisations are focused on specific diseases with too few focused on strengthening health systems. The rate of tackling TB in particular is too slow and must be addressed. I want DFID to bring cohesion across the myriad organisations and to encourage them to work directly with governments to establish durable, country directed solutions.

There is global will at the macro level the UN. And huge political commitment at the micro level of development organisations working on the ground. I want to develop the meso level the intermediate stage between giant global organisations and the mother in DRC or South Sudan who turns up to a clinic to find no vaccines, no healthcare workers.

The meso level is where countries are enabled to take ownership of their own development and health and can fund and deliver it themselves. Labour will provide global leadership to bring some clarity and coordination that puts the needs of partner countries first.

I am not claiming I have all the answers. But I do have values and ideas and political will and a desire to change the world and leave it better than I found it.

I know that you share that hope and vision for a better world. Ours is the generation that can end extreme poverty, reduce inequality and tackle climate change. We can move to a world beyond aid, and enable people to secure justice instead of charity. 2015 is a unique opportunity for the world to think bigger and do better – for ourselves, our children and the world's poorest people.

That is a thrilling opportunity. We must not let them down.