

Towards a strong, credible and effective United Nations

UNA-UK policy document 2007

as agreed by the membership at UNA-UK's 62nd Annual Conference
Warwick University, 13-15 April 2007



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I. Millennium Development Goals ('MDGs') and Sustainable Development

a. Supporting the MDGs

- i UNA-UK affirms support for the realisation of the MDGs as one of UNA-UK's four key policy objectives.
- ii UNA-UK should consider and elaborate policy proposals on how the UK government can promote the realisation of the MDGs, including through the full implementation of the UK International Development (Reporting and Transparency) Act of 2006.

b. Disease

- i The UK government should give full support to the UN's efforts to stop the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, avian influenza, tuberculosis and malaria.

c. Climate change

- i UNA-UK views climate change as the greatest threat facing humanity and notes that the issue has relevance for all of UNA-UK's key policy objectives.
- ii The UK government should initiate a public debate on the way international solutions can be found via the 'contraction and convergence' strategy.
- iii UNA-UK should give due prominence to climate change in its work, with an emphasis on the international, UN-based framework needed to ensure the success of multi-lateral negotiations to combat climate change and mitigate its effects, as well as the role that the UK government, devolved authorities, local communities and individuals can play, not only because of their cumulative effect, but because of the likely influence on policy if the government sees a widespread understanding of the issue and anticipates the effect that this might have on future voting intentions.
- iv UNA-UK welcomes the climate change bill published by the UK government, and urges the UK to build on this achievement by playing a leading role in global action to establish an effective international agreement and mechanism to tackle climate change, following the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol's greenhouse gas emission targets in 2012.
- v A binding UN convention should be negotiated to require states to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, to take effect following the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol's targets.

The UK government should be required to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions at a level consistent with maintaining a stable global climate. This should include a drastic reduction in air transport and the requirement for all new fossil fuel power stations to use carbon capture technology. Research and development towards the identification of new, clean technologies should be scaled up dramatically, with a view to enabling a shift to a low-carbon economy both here in the UK and in other countries.

- vi UNA-UK members should encourage their MPs to support EDM 733, which has cross-party support, congratulating the Women's Institute's 'Stop Excess Packaging' campaign.

d. The exploitation of natural resources

- i UNA-UK supports and welcomes the further development of UN-backed initiatives, such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which aim to ensure that the exploitation of natural resources is conducted in a sustainable manner, with economic gains being spread evenly and justly throughout the host society, and with a view to preventing natural resource exploitation from fuelling conflict.
- ii In light of the rise in numbers of endangered species UNA-UK deplores the increase in forest clearance by logging and urges better use of existing cleared land.

e. Corruption

- i The UK government should play a leading role within the international community in highlighting the ways in which corruption impedes the achievement of the MDGs and in spearheading efforts to combat the problem. The UK government should implement fully its commitments under the UN Convention Against Corruption and ensure that any British companies and/or individuals suspected of corruption are prosecuted.
- ii UNA-UK urges the government to ensure that British companies do not use bribes or other 'sweeteners'.

f. Companies Act

- i The UK government should ensure that all UK companies do not, in their operations in developing countries, contribute to poor governance, poverty, injustice and environmental degradation, or exacerbate other problems, including abusive transfer pricing, which threaten the achievement of the MDGs.
- ii Although the Companies Act 2006 requires listed companies to report on the environmental and social impacts of their operations, the Act includes no statutory standard for reporting. When the UK government reviews this issue, as it has agreed to do, clear standards for social and environmental reporting should be delineated. Auditors should also be given strengthened responsibilities to expose any inaccurate information contained in social and environmental reports.

g. Trade

- i The UK government should work towards the revitalisation of the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations. Such negotiations should aim to create a fair and open international trade regime in which developing countries have access to the markets of rich countries, while recognising the need for developing countries to be allowed to develop manufacturing capacity behind a protective tariff shelter.
- ii South-South trade should be encouraged, and donor countries should allocate aid to build up supply-side capacity in developing countries, particularly the least developed.

h. Debt

- i UNA-UK urges publication of the results of research, commissioned by the Norwegian government and carried out by the World Bank and the UN Conference on Trade and Development, into illegitimate debt accrued by developing countries. On the basis of this research, and Norway's example in cancelling debt on the grounds of creditor irresponsibility, the UK government should identify which of the UK's past loans, and which of the loans of the international financial institutions for which the UK shares responsibility, are illegitimate and should therefore be cancelled.
- ii In the international community the UK government should work towards establishing internationally agreed criteria for responsible lending to developing countries.

i. Migration

- i The UK government should promote the outcome of the High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development to emphasise the developmental benefits of migration in countries of origin and destination and the ways in which migration can help realise the MDGs, including through remittances.

II. Human Rights and Humanitarian Action

a. Supporting the UN's human rights and humanitarian work

- i UNA-UK affirms support for the UN's human rights and humanitarian work as one of UNA-UK's four key policy objectives.
- ii UNA-UK should consider and elaborate policy proposals on how the UK government can further the UN's human rights and humanitarian work.

b. International human rights law

- i In recognition of the fact that human rights are a precondition of security, the UN Security Council should take measures to uphold and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on Genocide and international humanitarian law.
- ii The UK government should work for the full and routine implementation of all international conventions regarding the treatment of people effectively under the military occupation or control of an alien state.

- iii The UK government should have fuller regard for its own obligations to implement human rights legislation, and should not prioritise security concerns to the detriment of fundamental freedoms.
- c. Responsibility to protect
- i The principle of the responsibility to protect is applicable to the current situation in Darfur. The international community should therefore take immediate action to prevent further atrocities in the region.
 - ii UNA-UK should elaborate specific proposals on how the UK government should implement the responsibility to protect in Darfur and other cases of gross human rights abuses.
- d. Rights of the Child
- i The UK government should intensify its work in furthering the rights of children, including as contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - ii UNICEF should be encouraged to publicise the plight of children in jail in the developed and developing world and the need to ensure legal support for these children.
 - iii The UK government should ensure that its immigration control practices, especially in regard to detention, are compatible with the UK's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - iv The UK government should reconsider its reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which reserves the right of the UK not to apply the provisions of the Convention to those who do not have the right under the law to enter and remain in the UK.
 - v In welcoming the 'wake-up' call provided by the UNICEF report, *Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries*, UNA-UK seeks to further a greater understanding and appreciation of the rights and needs of every child in what is regarded as a successful but inequitable economy.
- e. Human trafficking
- i The UK government should intensify its efforts both to stop human trafficking, and to provide assistance to trafficked persons, and UNA-UK should support the work of organisations working towards these aims.
 - ii UNA-UK applauds the decision of the UK government to sign the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings and urges the government to ratify the Convention and take steps to implement it in full as soon as possible.
- f. Governance index
- i UNA-UK supports the further development of major indices of human development and security, such as UNDP's Human Development Index and the Human Security Centre's Human Security Report; and welcomes the use of these indices by the UN system, especially in ascertaining the ability of states to enhance the welfare of their citizens and to assess their progress towards good governance. UNA-UK promotes greater

use of these indices, in parallel with the UN human rights treaty bodies and associated mechanisms, as early-warning mechanisms, especially in the context of the implementation of the responsibility to protect.

g. Extraordinary rendition

- i** The UK government should investigate allegations that US military or civilian personnel have, within the UK's jurisdiction, overseen or carried out abductions, the movement of individuals to another country through the process of extraordinary rendition, and the torture of citizens of other countries on foreign soil.
- ii** If these allegations of misconduct under UK jurisdiction are found to be true, the UK government should demand that the US government cease these practices immediately and collaborate with other EU states in referring the matter to the European Court of Human Rights.
- iii** The UK government should take all necessary steps to ensure that such practices are illegal in this country, and adopt a policy of non-compliance with the demands / requests of any other state or organisation to assist with or contribute to the movement of persons via such processes, taking particular note of the report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on so-called extraordinary rendition flights.

h. Niger Delta

- i** The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should investigate reports of violent treatment of local people in the Niger Delta by the Nigerian armed forces and security guards acting for international oil companies. The UN Secretary-General and the UK government should engage with the Nigerian government to ensure that the economic benefits of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta are shared with the people living in the region. This issue should also be raised as appropriate at the UN Economic and Social Council.

i. Zimbabwe

- i** UNA-UK is appalled by the actions of Robert Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe, especially the recent arrest and violent treatment of Morgan Tsvangirai and other members of the democratic opposition; and the violent breaking up of peaceful protests.
- ii** UNA-UK notes that Morgan Tsvangirai has asserted that Britain, as the former colonial power, should not take the lead in opposing Mugabe's regime; and has requested that Britain work in partnership with the rest of the international community, including the African Union, to exert pressure on the regime.
- iii** UNA-UK strongly supports the government's initiative to seek tough EU positions on Zimbabwe at the Human Rights Council, and further urges the UK government to take steps to ensure that the situation is raised in the Security Council on the basis that it is both a humanitarian threat and a serious destabilising factor in other southern African countries.

III. Gender and the UN

a. Institutional reform

- i In the light of the recommendation of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence that stronger practical commitment should be given to gender equality in the UN system, the UN's institutional architecture should be modified to make it better able to address gender and women's issues.
- ii To strengthen the UN system's capacity for dealing effectively with gender issues, UNA-UK calls for:
 - *The UK government to support the acceptance by the UN General Assembly of the Panel's proposals for the consolidation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the UN Development Fund for Women. The consolidated department should be adequately resourced with an Executive Director of Under-Secretary-General rank.*
 - *Consideration to be given to how the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women might be incorporated into the new body.*
 - *A commitment to gender equality to remain central to the entire UN system, and that the new body should ensure that norm-setting, analysis and monitoring are matched by strong policy advice based on field experience and targeted development programmes*

b. Women, peace and security

- i UNA-UK welcomes the UK's national action plan on UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women in the area of peace and security, and urges the UK government to promote actively the adoption and implementation of national actions plans by other countries to achieve the objectives of resolution 1325, in particular the empowerment of women as equal and full participants in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and ensuring the education and engagement of not only women but also men on the role of women in peace and security.

c. Population growth

- i UNA-UK views the continuing rate of increase in world population as a threat to the implementation of the MDGs and even to planetary survival. The UK government should, within UN fora, alert governments to the urgent need to stabilise populations and encourage a debate on the relationship between population growth and the achievement of the MDGs and their sustained implementation beyond 2015. Given the relationship between population levels and environmental stress, UNA-UK notes also with concern the threat posed by unsustainable population growth to climate stability.
- ii UNA-UK notes, within the context of population growth, the positive contribution of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) to family planning, as well as the urgent

need to narrow the educational gender gap as a means of promoting sustainable population levels.

- iii UNA-UK affirms that, in order to encourage sustainable population levels:
 - *Assistance to developing countries aimed at improving public health systems should include women's access to contraceptive measures, as well as the education of all members of society on reproductive rights.*
 - *There should be an emphasis on de-stigmatising contraception and educating men about their own reproductive responsibilities.*

IV. Peace and Security

a. Supporting the UN's work in conflict prevention and resolution

- i UNA-UK affirms support for the UN's conflict prevention and resolution role, as one of UNA-UK's four key policy objectives.
- ii UNA-UK should consider and elaborate policy proposals on how the UK government can further the peace and security goals of the UN.

b. The Security Council, the concept of 'security' and the use of force

- i The Security Council should interpret 'threats to international security' as per the concept of 'human security', as accepted as the basis of the Millennium Declaration, rather than according to the more limited concept of state security.
- ii The Security Council should accept and apply the criteria advanced by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change for deciding on the use of military force.

c. Peace operations

- i UNA-UK is concerned at the lack of available and adequately equipped and trained personnel for immediate deployment to peacekeeping operations. The UK government should give its full support to the existing United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) and to the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG). The UK government should initiate planning for a UN standing force which should be established and maintained for rapid deployment to Security Council-approved operations for peacekeeping and for responding to severe natural disasters deemed a threat to international peace and security.
- ii Countries should show they accept their responsibilities by dedicating part of their existing military forces into suitable contingents for peace operations.

d. The UK and Trident

- i UNA-UK regrets that the UK government did not fulfil its stated intention to conduct a full and thorough debate but took a premature and rushed decision to renew Trident, the UK's nuclear-weapon system. Our concerns remain that the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is being undermined. A renewed and sustained effort is required to sharpen the debate on the replacement of nuclear weapons, and on the policies and mechanisms required if the objectives of the NPT are to be achieved.

e. International arms trade

- i UNA-UK welcomes the agreement by member states to open negotiations towards the creation of an international arms trade treaty and urges that an effective treaty be established promptly.
- ii The UK government should emphasise the need for diversification of the arms industry towards non-military purposes in such a way that employment levels would be maintained.

f. Cluster bombs and depleted uranium munitions

- i UNA-UK notes that many cluster weapons and depleted uranium munitions, as used in Iraq and Lebanon, have survived impact to become a danger to civilians comparable to landmines. We welcome the UK government's recognition of this in DfID's decision of 4 April 2007 to provide £30 million towards the clearing of unexploded munitions in southern Lebanon.
- ii The UK government should ratify the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War and should urge those countries that have not done so to ratify this protocol, as well as the Protocol on the Prohibition of Landmines.
- iii UNA-UK should lobby the UK government to accept the recommendations of Lord Dubs's Private Members Cluster Munitions (Prohibition) Bill, proposing to make it an offence to use, develop, store or transfer cluster munitions.
- iv UNA-UK welcomes the UK government's recent decision to ban the use by the British armed forces of 'dumb' cluster munitions but notes with regret the retention of so-called 'smart' cluster munitions. UNA-UK also welcomes the outcome of the conference hosted by the Norwegian government in February 2007 at which participating states agreed to begin negotiations towards an international treaty banning the use of cluster munitions which 'cause unacceptable harm'.
- v The UK government should seek the rapid negotiation of an international treaty banning the use of all cluster munitions as well as depleted uranium munitions, and should renounce the use of all these weapons by the UK armed forces. UNA-UK welcomes any re-thinking on these lines undertaken by the UK government.

g. Small arms

- i All governments should adopt a system of laser marking for all small arms and light weaponry, in order to facilitate weapon tracing, as already implemented by some German and US manufacturers.
- ii A trust fund should be established under UN auspices, financed by contributions from

UN member states and other interested parties, to enable adoption and implementation of this proposal.

- iii It should be a legal requirement that all small arms manufacturers should laser mark their weapons so that they can be traceable; and the UN should set up a unit to monitor this process.

h. Defence Export Services Organisation

- i UNA-UK notes that the trade in military equipment and services can damage economic development at global, regional and local levels.
- ii The UK government should close the Defence Export Services Organisation and in so doing should neither transfer its functions elsewhere in the public sector nor allocate public funds enabling these functions to be undertaken in the private sector.
- iii The UK government should prohibit the export of all kinds of armaments, directly or through intermediaries, to any state which has not signed and ratified a mutual defence treaty to which the UK is also party.

i. Terrorism

- i The UN's role in combating terrorism should be furthered, based on the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

j. Burma/Myanmar

- i UNA-UK welcomes former Secretary-General's Kofi Annan's initiatives to ensure that the UN maintains pressure on the Burmese/Myanmar government to institute democratic reforms.
- ii Despite the veto of China and Russia, the UK government should work to further a multilateral approach to the democratisation of the Burmese/Myanmar government without resorting to 'regime change' through the use of force.

k. Somaliland

- i The UK government should support the efforts of the African Union and the UN to restore peace and effective government in Somalia, while recognising the right to self-determination of the people of Somaliland.

V. Middle East

a. Peace process negotiations

- i UNA-UK welcomes the UN Secretary-General's speech at the opening of the Summit of the League of Arab States in Riyadh on 28 March 2007, in which he stated that the Arab Peace Initiative "suggests a new way forward for the region".
- ii The UK government should work, including through the EU, towards the following objectives:

- *Achieving a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, taking account of the Road Map and other initiatives including the Arab Peace Initiative, through negotiations involving all parties to the conflict and the Quartet, with the UN playing a prominent role.*
- *Ensuring that peace negotiations involve as many participants as possible, including other states in the Middle East, with a view to rapid progression to final status talks.*
- *Persuading all parties to the conflict to end the supply of arms to the region and calling on all parties to cease acts of violence against non-combatants.*

b. Palestinian Authority

- i Governments should recognise and cooperate fully with all institutions elected democratically by the Palestinian people, including the Hamas-led government.

c. Palestinian economy

- i Governments should work to strengthen the Palestinian economy and to develop an urgent international reconstruction programme, building on the initiatives taken by the UK Chancellor in 2005-6.
- ii The decision by the EU and the US, Japanese and Canadian governments to withhold funding from the Palestinian Authority gravely threatens the health and prosperity of the Palestinian people. The UK government should work through the EU and with other states for the immediate re-instatement of the funding, as well as the return of Palestinian revenues withheld by the Israeli government.

d. Lebanon and Gaza

- i UNA-UK welcomes the deployment of UNIFIL II to Lebanon and urges the UN Security Council, including the permanent five, to continue to give the force its full and unequivocal support. We urge the UN to determine the full extent of the environmental damage and destruction of infrastructure caused by the recent conflict and mobilise the international community to take remedial action.
- ii A UN peacekeeping force similar to UNIFIL II should be deployed on the frontier between Israel and Gaza to avoid further violence and loss of life there. The inhabitants of Gaza should be given free access across their frontier with Egypt, as well as full control over their coastline, and recognition should be given to the integrity of Gaza's airspace.

VI. UN Reform and the Promotion of Multilateralism

a. The promotion of multilateralism and the rule of law

- i UNA-UK affirms support for the promotion of multilateralism and the rule of law, including reforming the UN to make it more credible and effective, as one of UNA-UK's four key policy objectives.
- ii The UK government must recognise and support UN international treaties and the international rule of law and urge other governments to do the same.

b. Institutional reform

- i UNA-UK should consider and elaborate policy proposals on how the UK government can further the reform and strengthening of the UN.
- ii The UK government should take the lead in:
 - Furnishing the UN Office of Human Resources Management with a ‘head-hunting’ capability to attract more high-quality staff to the Secretariat, especially women and individuals from developing countries.
 - Securing the implementation of the report of the Steering Committee on the Comprehensive Review of Governance and Oversight of the UN (‘King Report’).
 - Ensuring that the Human Rights Council is effective in the promotion of human rights, giving particular focus to the establishment of the Universal Periodic Review and ensuring that this will not diminish the role that the Council plays in the ‘naming and shaming’ of any state which is a gross human rights abuser.
 - Any initiatives to replace the UN Environment Programme with a new UN environment agency, with a stronger mandate, to promote international agreement by all countries on measures that need to be taken to protect the environment (especially from the effects of climate change) and to reduce dependency on and conserve supplies of fossil fuels, and to promote the use of renewable energy sources.
 - Improving the effectiveness and coherence of the UN’s development and humanitarian work, in particular through the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence.
- iii The Peacebuilding Commission’s remit and capacity should be expanded to include the prevention of war, as well as post-conflict reconstruction.
- iv UNA-UK supports the view of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which stated that the “task is not to find alternatives to the Security Council as a source of authority but to make it work better than it has”.

c. Security Council expansion

- i The membership of the Security Council should be increased, without any additional permanent members, in accordance with Model B of the report *In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*. UNA-UK urges the UK government to work immediately for the restriction of the Security Council veto so that it is applied neither to situations related to genocide nor to the process of appointing the Secretary-General. UNA-UK also calls for a review to be undertaken of which matters may be considered procedural in nature and thus exempt from the veto, taking as its basis the reports of the Interim Committee of the General Assembly during the 1940s. As a longer-term objective, UNA-UK urges the UK government to seek the restriction of the veto to Chapter VII resolutions and, eventually, its abolition.