



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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18th June 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

I write from the Scotland Malawi Partnership, the national network representing, coordinating and supporting 1,250 civic links between our two nations, to express our disappointment at the decision to merge the Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and to urge you to reconsider.

While neither we, nor the overwhelming majority of the members we represent, receive any funding from DFID, we feel passionately that this is a damaging, backwards step in terms of the UK's development and diplomatic work, our international reputation, and 'Global Britain'.

We are strong supporters of both DFID and the FCO, working closely with DFID Malawi and successive British High Commissioners to support their valuable work. However, we feel it is flawed, in principle and practice, to merge these two departments of State.

We agree with your observation that it is an increasingly complex global environment, with a competing web of challenges, opportunities and priorities. However, we cannot agree with your assessment that we should therefore simplify our own structures, merging and homogenizing our government departments and, in so doing, lose the expertise and reputation we have worked so hard to develop, as a family of nations, in recent decades.

There are a great many complex, technical and practical arguments to be made both in favour and against the merger. However, at its core, this is an inherently simple decision, and it is a moral or ideological decision. Either one understands, accepts and believes that we undertake international development for reasons other than our own self-interest, or one does not.

If one *does not* believe there is inherent value in supporting some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world, such a merger is indeed logical. For, by this understanding, our international development work is simply a device, a tool in the box, at the disposal of the Foreign Secretary of the day, as we look to build our soft power and leverage to get other nations to do what we want, for our own advancement.

If one *does* accept that there is value in a moral purpose beyond our own self advancement, as we and our Members do, it is evident that DFID should remain a respected, independent department. Success for DFID, in this understanding, is very simple: a reduction in extreme global poverty, the great moral outrage of our time. This is its sole mission and it should not be used as a pawn to advance other causes.

In your statement to the House you asked why DFID spends as much in Zambia as Ukraine, when the latter is vital to European security. To us, the answer is as obvious as the question is worrying. Ukraine has twice the GDP per capita, four times as many doctors, six times less infant mortality, 11 times less HIV prevalence and eight years greater life expectancy, than Zambia. There is demonstrably greater need for DFID's work in Zambia than Ukraine and greater opportunity for DFID to have significant human impact there.

In your statement to the House you suggest that having DFID as a lever for the relevant British Ambassador or High Commissioner to pull, would be advantageous as we look to promote good governance. It is hard to imagine that threatening to withdraw humanitarian support for schools, hospitals and gender equality projects if foreign leaders do not act as the UK Government wishes, would be the best way to advocate good governance. To the contrary, DFID's departmental independence, its singularity of purpose and its freedom to act purely based on human need, has been a beacon to the world for the sort of values and principles the UK holds dearest. This is a powerful symbol of who we are and what we believe: that some things are not about self-advancement, some things are beyond the day-to-day cut and thrust of politics, some things serve a greater purpose.

It was with immense pride that we saw a UK Government choose to protect DFID and the NHS in the last global economic crisis, as two untouchable functions of state which could not be compromised, for moral not practical reasons. It was with similar pride that we saw a Conservative-led coalition Government meet the 0.7% target and set this as statute. But it was with immense sorrow that this week Scotland watched DFID being disbanded, told that any distinction between diplomacy and development is an outdated fallacy. We fundamentally, whole-heartedly disagree.

Scotland has a long and proud history of positive internationalism. 44% of Scots can name a friend or family member with a connection to Malawi in a 161 year old bilateral relationship, underpinned by friendship, solidarity and mutual understanding: a dignified nation-to-nation, people-to-people partnership. This is a friendship driven by principles and values, and we are deeply sorry that the core principle of helping others for reasons beyond one's own self-advancement seems to have been lost in this UK Government decision.

We very much hope that you might reconsider this decision. There is, indeed, great promise and potential of a 'Global Britain' as you say: an outward-facing family of nations, working together, advancing our interests through trade and commerce but also, crucially, acting as a good global citizen. But if we forget the values integral to such a vision it is doomed, from the outset, to fail.

We would greatly appreciate the chance to speak with you to discuss this hugely important decision: to respectfully listen to your views and considerations, to share the strength of feeling that exists in civic Scotland on this topic, and, we hope, to explore ways that it might be reconsidered.

Yours sincerely



David Hope-Jones OBE
Chief Executive
Scotland Malawi Partnership