

7 July 2020

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, I am compelled to write in support of our main denominational development partners, Tearfund and Christian Aid, who have already expressed their deep concern at the decision to merge the Department for International Development (DFID) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In doing so, I also echo the concerns of many other like-minded NGOs and global charities which the members of our 534 congregations support.

Moving international aid to the FCO presents a very real danger around conflicts of interest and risks jeopardising the UK's world-leading humanitarian work, with its dedicated focus on fighting poverty and inequality amongst the world's poorest and most marginalised people.

The decision becomes harder to understand as we find ourselves in the midst of the biggest global humanitarian disaster in a century, with the Covid-19 pandemic threatening to reverse decades of hard-won gains for the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, against the backdrop of challenges posed by the climate crisis.

DFID has built an internationally respected reputation for both impact and transparency and has a strong track record of providing global leadership on development, making a difference for the world's poorest people, while delivering value-for-money for UK taxpayers. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact Review (June 2019) shows that as departments outside DFID have taken on an ever-increasing share of the aid budget (up to 27% in 2019) so more aid spending has been directed towards middle-income countries "... including upper-middle-income countries where the UK has security, economic, and climate interests." This direction of travel raises serious concerns that this merger represents a departure from DFID's stated commitment to 'put the last first' through programmes aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

In your own words, Prime Minister, the decision taken to merge DFID with the FCO will "... mobilise every one of our national assets including our aid budget and expertise, to safeguard British interests and values overseas". British values are, after all, founded on strong ethical Christian principles and we believe that standing together in solidarity with the world's poorest people is an essential element of our Christian faith. To defend the rights of the poor and needy, and to care for our global neighbour as much as we care for ourselves are, for us, gospel imperatives.

Now is not the time for the UK to lower its standards on aid. On behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, I ask you and your government to reconsider this decision for the good of all, not least the poorest on our planet.

Yours most sincerely



Rt Rev Dr David Bruce  
Moderator of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland