

The UK Government coalition agreement and the Vote Global manifesto

May 2010

On 20 May 2010 the Conservative - Liberal Democrat coalition government published its programme for government. This document compares the policies outlined by the new government to the policy recommendations contained in the Vote Global manifesto – endorsed by more than 200 organisations.

The following government commitments are in line with the recommendations of the Vote Global manifesto

- We will honour our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid from 2013, and to enshrine this commitment in law.
- We will encourage other countries to fulfill their aid commitments.
- We will support actions to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, we will prioritise aid spending on programmes to ensure that everyone has access to clean water, sanitation, healthcare and education; to reduce maternal and infant mortality; and to restrict the spread of major diseases like HIV/ AIDS, TB and malaria. We will recognise the vital role of women in development, promote gender equality and focus on the rights of women, children and disabled people to access services.
- We will use the aid budget to support the development of local democratic institutions, civil society groups, the media and enterprise; and support efforts to tackle corruption.
- We will keep aid untied from commercial interests, and will maintain DfID as an independent department focused on poverty reduction.
- We will stick to the rules laid down by the OECD about what spending counts as aid.
- We will push hard in 2010 to make greater progress in tackling maternal and infant mortality.
- We will support efforts to establish an International Arms Trade Treaty to limit the sales of arms to dangerous regimes.
- We will support reform of global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in order to increase the involvement of developing nations.
- We will introduce full transparency in aid and publish details of all UK aid spending online. We will push for similarly high levels of transparency internationally.

The following government commitment is broadly in line with Vote Global recommendations pending clarification of further details:

- We will make every effort to tackle tax avoidance, including detailed development of Liberal Democrat proposals.

The following government commitments are not in the Vote Global manifesto but reflect Bond member policy:

- We will review what action can be taken against 'vulture funds'.

The following government commitments are not Vote Global recommendations but are opportunities for Bond members to shape new initiatives:

- We will create new mechanisms to give British people a direct say in how an element of the aid budget is spent.
- We will support innovative and effective smaller British non-governmental organisations that are committed to tackling poverty.
- We will explore ways of helping the very poorest developing countries to take part in international climate change negotiations.
- We will ensure that UK Trade and Investment and the Export Credits Guarantee Department become champions for British companies that develop and export innovative green technologies around the world, instead of supporting investment in dirty fossil-fuel energy production.

The following government commitments fall short of our recommendations:

- We will work to accelerate the process of relieving Heavily Indebted Poor Countries of their debt.

Vote Global calls for the full cancellation of all illegitimate or unpayable debt through a democratic and transparent debt tribunal.

- We will support pro-development trade deals, including the proposed Pan-African Free Trade Area.

Vote Global calls for a commitment that every trade deal should allow developing countries to retain control over their economies. This is not pledged in the coalition Government's texts released to date.

- We take white collar crime as seriously as other crime, so we will create a single agency to take on the work of tackling serious economic crime that is currently done by, among others, the Serious Fraud Office, Financial Services Authority and Office of Fair Trading.

Although this is progress, there is no explicit commitment that this body will cover environmental crimes or human rights abuses as a Commission on Business Human Rights and the Environment would.

- We will introduce a banking levy and seek a detailed agreement on implementation.

There is no indication to date that this will fund international development or climate adaptation.

- We will push for the EU to demonstrate leadership in tackling international climate change, including by supporting an increase in the EU emission reduction target to 30% by 2020.

Vote Global calls for a 40% cut in CO2 by 2020 without offsets.

The following commitment raises concerns:

- We will provide a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction where the British military is involved – building on the Stabilisation Unit in Whitehall and creating a new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force to bridge the gap between the military and the reconstruction effort.

Vote Global calls on government to make all efforts to protect and promote and protect humanitarian space and humanitarian principles whereby people affected by conflict are assured access to impartial and independent assistance.

There are considerable risks that a Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force may threaten humanitarian space. Therefore it needs to be implemented in a way that avoids such impacts.

The following Vote Global themes are not yet mentioned in the coalition government's announcements:

- Delivering aid, debt cancellation and trade agreements without economic policy conditions such as trade liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation attached.
- Providing funds for climate change adaptation and mitigation through the UN.
- Adequately funding the International Labour Organisation.
- Encouraging Decent Work Country Programmes.
- Supporting the International Criminal Court.
- Supporting the principles of the Right to Protect.