

Dear Prime Minister

*cc: Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Rt Hon David Lammy MP, Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Secretary; Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds MP, Minister of State for Development*

As <number> leaders of the UK INGO sector, responding to urgent humanitarian emergencies and supporting global development, we are appalled by the recent announcement that UK aid will be cut to pay for defence spending. It is alarming that the UK is now following in the US's footsteps and has accepted the false choice of cutting the already diminished UK aid to fund defence. We implore you to reverse this decision before significant damage is done to both the UK's development and humanitarian work and its global reputation.

Labour pledged to rebuild the UK's reputation on international development in its manifesto, especially as the UK's global partnerships were severely damaged by the previous Government's deep cuts to the UK aid budget. We expected that this meant that the cuts would be reversed over time and we would see a progressive and fair approach taken to address global issues, such as conflict, instability and climate change. Instead, the Government has decided to reduce its UK aid budget to the lowest level for 25 years and introduce the largest cuts in aid by any UK Government.

No government should balance its books on the backs of the world's most marginalised people. We know from the previous UK aid cuts and the current US aid freeze that children will now risk no longer getting vaccines or providing girls an education, and healthcare will be withdrawn in refugee camps. This move will also destroy Labour's legacy on international development and will leave your manifesto commitments and the government's ambition to be a reliable development partner on the global stage in tatters.

We recognise that the safety and security of the people of Britain should always be a priority of the government. But using the UK aid budget to do this is both strategically and morally wrong. UK aid, which is only just over 1p in every £1 of public spending brings a huge return on investment. It builds peace and prevents conflict and instability, forced migration, and the spread of diseases like COVID - which would save the UK money in the long run, and help make both the UK and the world a safer, healthier and more prosperous place for us all. As we saw during the pandemic, viruses don't respect borders. By making these cuts today you're weakening already fragile health systems, putting us all at risk of the next global outbreak.

We urgently call on this government to make a statement to parliament, outlining whether the impact of these cuts has been thought through and whether alternative sources of funding were explored before deciding to remove support to those who need it the most. A wealth tax of just 2% on wealth above £10 million (affecting just 0.04% of the population) would raise £24bn annually. The proceeds of the sale of Chelsea FC, which would be worth billions of pounds, should also be made available to support the rebuilding of Ukraine and other communities impacted by the war - a decision is urgently needed and it is unacceptable that taxing extreme wealth, or unfreezing Russian assets, were not looked at before cutting UK aid.

Now is not the time for the UK to scale back its development and humanitarian support, adding to what is already a nightmare scenario for the world's most marginalised people,

made worse because of the USAid freeze. At a time when the US retreats from the world, Labour should honour its promise to turn the page on international development and once again become a reliable partner on the world stage. Anything less will cost lives and significantly damage our long-term interests.