

Lisa Nandy MP in conversation with ODI's Sara Pantuliano

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To an invited audience of about 100 G7, G20, G77 diplomats, representatives of international institutions, leaders from the INGO sector and civil society organisations, think tanks and prominent development aid thinkers and experts, in-person at the London hub of global affairs think tank ODI.

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Sara Pantuliano, ODI: Hello, everyone, and welcome to ODI. It's nice to see so many familiar faces around the room.

I am really delighted to welcome to ODI Lisa Nandy, the Shadow Cabinet Minister for International Development.

Of course Lisa is also the Member of Parliament for Wigan and a seasoned member of the Shadow Cabinet. You've held a number of roles in the Shadow Cabinet, obviously as Shadow Foreign Secretary and as the Shadow Minister for Levelling Up. Lisa is also the author of a book, *All In: How To Build A Country That Works* which I've really enjoyed. We'll pick up on a number of things that you say in the book in this conversation today.

The central argument in the book is really that communities want to have the power and the resources to steer their outcomes in life, and that really resonates with a lot of things that we've been discussing in development circles. So I'm really looking forward to hearing your take on this.

You've been appointed to the International Development brief last September, and I know you've been travelling a lot and also talking to a number of the colleagues here in the room to try and help shape what a UK development offer should be, were Labour to win the next general election. So we're really delighted to have Lisa here today, because this is the first opportunity she has to share where her thinking, the thinking of the Labour Party, has got to and tell us what we can expect, again were Lisa able to win the election. But I also know that Lisa wants to hear from all of you,

and so there'll be an opportunity, both in the conversation here and then later over lunch, to join, to stay on, to discuss and engage in exchange with Lisa. But first of all, we'll hear your opening reflections, and I'll ask you a few follow up questions, and then we'll open to all of you. to ask questions. But without further ado, Lisa, I am looking forward to hear your opening reflections on how a Labour government would approach international development.

2:06

Lisa Nandy MP: Thank you so much and thank you for such a kind introduction. I'm looking around the room and thinking that I do actually know a significant proportion of this room, and have spent quite a bit of time with you all over the last few months, and I wanted to thank you very much for giving me such a warm welcome to the brief. There's only one thing I don't like about my job title, and it's the word "shadow" which I'm hoping to drop at some point this year.

I wanted to start actually with the thing that's most occupying my thoughts at the moment, and probably a lot of yours. A ground invasion of Rafah may be imminent. Hostages are held in tunnels underneath. Gaza and more children in Gaza are now dying from hunger and thirst than from bombs and bullets.

We hope an agreement may now be on the table paving the way for a humanitarian ceasefire. It cannot come soon enough.

3:00

When I took on this brief in September I had no idea how central it was shortly to become to us here in the United Kingdom, or how the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza would upend stability across the Middle East. But the frequent trips that I've made to the region in recent months have underlined for me that development is not just aid. It's central to the prospects of peace, stability, global security and the fight against climate change and a Labour government will treat it as such. Development, defence, diplomacy go hand-in-hand, and while this government has treated development as a junior relation, David Lammy, John Healey and I see these as the three pillars that uphold our commitment to playing our full part in the world again.

The instability in the Middle East is a reminder of the stormy times we live in. Violent conflicts are at their highest level for decades, effects of global warming more frequent and more devastating and a generation of young people coming of age, full of ambition, but with no hope for the future. It's a reminder that the arc of history doesn't always bend towards progress, and there is only one way of resolving this ... together.

But the institutions that we have are under strain, the values that underpin them under attack, and at a time when so many people are struggling here at home, populist politicians prey on the widespread anxiety and insecurity to undermine them further still.

In recent years my opposite number, Andrew Mitchell, the Minister for International Development has done much to repair the damage of the Johnson years.

The UK remains a major donor and in our civil service we still have some of the most widely respected creative development expertise in the world.

5:00

But this government will leave us with significant challenges, and they're not challenges that we intend to shy away from. The damage to Britain's reputation as a long-term reliable partner, the needlessly antagonistic relationship with our European neighbours, and a severely strained relationship with the Global South. We can turn this around, but it will require a decisive break from the decisions of this decade.

Firstly, as I've said, to treat development as a key pillar alongside defence and diplomacy in taking on the challenges of our age. Development is a "whole government" approach and we will rebuild the culture that once earned us the reputation of being a gold standard in international development, shifting our thinking away from short term solutions of aid - no matter how well-intentioned - to long-term economic cooperation, and recognizing that trade and jobs and livelihoods are as important as vaccinations, food and clean water.

Secondly, we'll take a more strategic approach based on Britain's unique strengths. In the first conversation I had with Andrew when I took on this job, he made the point to me that the UK - when we left office in 2010 - was working in 33 countries around the world. We're now working in 88, with just a fraction of the budget. We will never pull out the rug from under countries who rely on us. That short-term decision making has cost them and cost us dear.

06:34

But this is not 1997. Our economy is not twice the size of China's, and the world's debt is no longer primarily owed to countries like ours. The central challenge of our time is extreme poverty, climate and debt; too many low and middle-income countries trapped in this perfect storm, this vicious cycle of indebtedness and climate mitigation. So much of the world's development resources have been diverted to middle income countries simply to help them stand still.

The UK is uniquely placed to help break this cycle and return us to development's original purpose of eliminating global poverty. If the purpose of DFID in 1997 was to eliminate global poverty, our purpose in 2024 is to create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet.

In November I was in Zambia, the country that has come closest to escaping this trap. It was a reminder that no country has been able to break free from this cycle under the current system. If it hasn't worked for a single country, it is simply not working.

The UK is home to the city of London and the legal jurisdiction where many of these debts are settled. These countries need us, and we owe it to them to help. So, this

will be our overarching goal in government, to create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet.

08:00

Thirdly, we need a new approach based on one word ... respect. David Lammy and I have been critical of NGOs, who perpetuate outdated stereotypes, portraying people in the Global South as victims. In 2024 it is not just unhelpful but morally wrong to portray people in that way.

And what's more, it's just simply not true. Since taking on this brief, I've had the opportunity to learn from some of the most inspiring people I've ever met in my life. The young woman engineer that I met - Perpetua - in Ghana, who was the only girl in her village to finish secondary school because of the lack of WASH facilities, she went on to qualify as an engineer, and now runs Wateraid's programme in Ghana, breaking down those barriers and opening the door so that thousands of young women can follow her through it.

Or the Zambian businesswoman – Faith - who was a smallholding farmer who now supports SMEs as the head of one of the biggest agricultural companies across Zambia. Faith, Perpetua. These are the people who know better than we do what the problem is. They know better than us what is needed, and they know better than us most of all what they have to offer and what they have to contribute. And I believe we can do more in government to empower them, to recognize the skills, the assets, and the potential their countries contain, and to trust their ambitions, not impose our own.

09:36

Now, fourthly, you'll have noticed that all the examples I've given so far are women. Empowering women and girls will run like a thread through everything we do. When women are empowered, peace endures. Closing the gender inequality gap is the single greatest growth multiplier available to our generation.

When I was in New York for the General Assembly, a few days after being appointed to this post, somebody said to me “You know somebody is going to cure cancer. Somebody will solve climate change. Why not these young women?”

Fifthly, our partners, our allies, and our friends, will matter to the UK again. Never again will we pull the rug out from under some of the poorest people in the planet and expect others to pick up the pieces.

We will return to 0.7 as soon as circumstances allow. But the immediate task will be to ensure that our development budget is spent on development and not raided constantly by badly-managed departments across Whitehall. It's poor value for money. It's depleted badly-needed resources, and it undermines our reputation in every corner of the globe as a long term reliable partner.

My party has always believed that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone. David Lammy has already set out our intention to repair our relationship with our closest friends and neighbours in Europe. And alongside this we'll shift our development focus and our resources towards greater multilateral action, playing our full part in those institutions again.

11:12

And finally, I just want to say this, that there's a view that I've heard far too often that in difficult economic times investing in people is a zero-sum game. That we can look after people here in the UK or overseas, but not both, and in reality then do neither. This is a false binary, and we utterly, utterly reject it.

It's because the last Labour government lifted a million children out of poverty here at home that we could use that expertise to lift millions more out of poverty around the world. It is because we introduced the world's first Climate Change Act here in the UK that we were able to lead this agenda across the globe. And it's because we helped to bring about peace in Northern Ireland that we could help the people of Kosovo and Sierra Leone to achieve that too.

Pitting people in the UK against people in the world is alien to the Labour tradition of solidarity. It ignores the fact that the world beyond our shores shapes the lives we all lead to an unprecedented extent. And it's based on a fundamental underestimation of the contribution that ordinary, extraordinary people across our towns, villages, and cities have always made to the world, whether it's people on the minimum wage in my Wigan constituency, who donate what they can afford to crisis appeals, or the firefighters involved in post conflict, reconstruction, or the British doctors who have been risking their lives to save others in Gaza. Despite all the attempts to create division and darkness over this last decade, we remain a proud, self-confident, outward-looking country. That's what our government once stood for, too, and with us it will again because this is the country, as George Orwell once said, that lies beneath the surface, and it will be heard. Thank you very much.

13:12

Sara Pantuliano, ODI: Thank you so much, Lisa. That was riveting. It was brilliant, and I hear some of the underlying trends of what we can expect a Labour manifesto to be. I mean, you say that what is central is to see a world free of poverty, and I think it's welcome to hear clearly an interest to support long-term economic development, economic growth, because that's how you achieve if you want poverty, tackling poverty. But we know domestically that that's very hard to achieve. We see the difficulty of achieving economic growth in the UK, and also that there are very many different views as to how you can really engineer economic growth. So how would a Labour government support economic growth that is inclusive and the creation of jobs that are decent, in partner countries?

14:20

Lisa Nandy MP: Yes, this is a good question, and one with no specific answers, where the answers are very specific to particular countries and to particular regions. But there are some common themes, I think, and they're not too dissimilar, actually, to trying to help reinvigorate parts of the economy here in the UK and parts of the country where they haven't been able to make the contribution that they can, for a very long time.

I think the first lesson that I've learned over the last six months, and before that, when I was doing the job as Shadow Foreign Secretary, when Keir was first elected, is that fresh democracies need quick wins. Too often what I hear from people in countries across the Global South is that they have a leader elected who comes in with a strong agenda to try to empower people, to invest in people, to try to build public services, sometimes from scratch.

And what then happens is that they turn to countries like the UK, they turn to the global institutions like the World Bank and they find that the wheels turn very, very (slowly). So what use is it if you're the president of Zambia and you're up for re-election in 2 years, it's no use to you, if the UK comes in, the World Bank comes through 5 years later. We've got to start taking seriously the need to be agile and to work with countries in the timescales that they have in order to deliver results.

Secondly, I think that the great lesson that I've learned in the whole 14 years that I've been an elected member of Parliament, and as a councillor before that, whether it's here in the UK or overseas, that people tend to know better than we do what is needed. They tend to take an asset-based approach rather than a deficit-based approach - where we see only problems they see potential. And so we've got to empower people in their own countries in order to make that change. And if you empower people in those countries to make change, that change tends to last. So a strong emphasis on localism and civil society.

And as we think about how to rebuild the capacity within the D in FCDO which has been lost, that will be part of our focus, is looking for people who understand how to do that. It's harder and it takes longer. But it is the only way to build change that lasts. I talked about the situation of women and girls, and that is, as I said, the greatest growth multiplier available to our generation. It's a moral issue. It's a personal issue for me. But it's also the only way that you actually get to achieve the Global Goals.

Debt restructuring is something that I didn't dwell on too much, but will be a major, major focus for us in government. As I said, it will be our primary focus. One of the ways in which we can help those countries to achieve their own ambitions and long-term economic development is to make sure that they have a seat at the table in the institutions where the decisions that are made, those decisions affect their lives to a far greater extent than ours, and they've got to be heard.

17:40

Sara Pantuliano, ODI: Can I go back to something you've just hinted to and was very powerful at the end of your speech, which is - and actually, it's really part of your philosophy - I heard you say that so many times when you were the Shadow Secretary for Levelling Up - this desire that communities have to exercise their own agency, to be in control of their own future. And you're clearly bringing this philosophy to the international development brief. And you just touched on this will be important for how the FCDO works. Can you say a bit more concretely, what does it mean in terms of how the FCDO needs to change the way it works?

Lisa Nandy MP: I think - actually - I don't want to suggest that there aren't people in government who understand this because certainly - although a lot of expertise and a lot of capacity was lost with ... I'm not even going to call it a merger, because to us it was just mindless vandalism under Johnson ... but there still exists, both within Whitehall and on the ground people who are deeply, deeply committed to this agenda, and who have the right mindset, who understand better, actually better than I do, how you can help countries to achieve their own ambitions and to put people back in charge of their own destiny.

Many people in this room have made this point to me over the last six months, that there is a cultural difference between the Foreign Office, which is often far more tactical and short-term-ist in its thinking, and what was the Department for International Development which takes a far more long-term approach, partnering with other countries, and was seen - at least until the Johnson era - as a long-term, reliable partner.

19:26

We want to rebuild that culture. We want to support and sustain those people who still embody that culture, and we want to help foster it on the ground as well. I know it's been a really difficult time for our civil service over the last decade and a half. Every time you open a newspaper you see a fresh attack on civil servants, with Liz Truss this weekend, but it's been many, many other people before. But actually setting a clear expectation that this is what we intend to do. It's not just the "what" that we do, it's the way that we go about it. I think that's really critical for Britain's interests, because - I mentioned it at the start of the speech but - the strain on our relationship with the Global South is just so, so apparent. And actually, that's not just felt in the Global South. It's felt right across the world.

I was in Jordan recently, as part of a trip to the region. I was in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Amman. There's growing anger towards the West about the way in which it's perceived that we disrespect people that we don't take an across-the-board approach to international rights and norms and values.

And some of the decisions that have been made in the recent decade from the UK Government really haven't helped that.

So supporting those great people within the system who are already working to try and rebuild and repair those relationships, with political leadership that comes in and

says “we're not back to save you, we're back to play our part again”, based on that one word that I mentioned “respect”, I think that's a really important message that people need to hear from the United Kingdom. And if we're fortunate enough to be trusted to govern - whether it's in a couple of months time or by the end of the year - that's the message that you're going to hear from us.

21: 26

Sara Pantuliano, ODI: You're absolutely right about these strained relations, and I wanted to pick up on that because a lot of that comes from the breakdown of trust, with the UK and with other wealthy countries - double standards, different priorities. Let's tackle the last one and come back to double standards, but different priorities. You're right to put climate at the heart of what a vision for international development must be for Labour. But there are a lot of tensions around the priority that climate should have over development, for those who see that as a binary choice. I don't [see it like that] but we hear a lot of countries argue that they have contributed the least to the climate emergency and now they're expected to worry about emissions when this is going to halt, if you want, their own development pathways. We've seen many African and Asian leaders voicing anger at the UK and other G7 nations for advocating the MDBs have to stop investing in fossil fuels, while they actually continue to invest domestically in the gas and oil sector. So how would you put climate at the heart of UK development policy in a way that is not seen as being unfair to less wealthy countries in terms of the development aspirations?

Lisa Nandy MP. I think that - actually - the climate debate in some ways we've been having this climate debate here in the UK as well. I represent a coal mining town in the north of England, where, within living memory, we powered the world, and we're proud of the work that we did to do that. You won't meet people in Wigan who want that future for their children, but they are proud of our past, and the role that we played in building Britain's wealth and influence and want that to be recognised. And what we also want is a future on offer that is better than just minimum wage jobs where children can pack boxes in warehouses, and if they want something better than that, then they have to move hundreds of miles away from parents and grandparents and make the heartbreaking decision to choose between the future and opportunity, or love, home, community and family. So this is a debate out through the course of the 14 years that I've been in Parliament very close to home, and it's something that's very personal to me, because still now large numbers of my constituents die very early from lung disease and ill-health, because of the legacy of our history in the mines, and we deserve something better on offer for the contribution that we've made. When I met Mia Mottley recently, when she was over in London, it was a very similar conversation, actually. People want to know that there'll be something better.

Ten years ago, if you talked to people at home about the climate agenda, they'd say “my energy bill's going up and my job's just disappeared”. Well, we've got to do better than that. And I believe that we can. For developing countries around the world, freeing up the climate-debt trap so that the resources can go into education, health, long term, economic development. This is the single biggest thing that we can do - if we help countries to restructure their debt on decent terms, far more

reliable terms than the ones that they currently have, if we help them to access climate finance. I was astonished when I first took on this brief to find that in many African countries only 10% of the development money that they're able to access is private finance. We're not going to solve this problem just from me sitting in the Department with a relatively small budget. We need everybody - private financiers, everybody else - play their part.

I said in the speech we believe that the UK can play *the* unique and outsized role in this, in partnership with the United States, if that's possible. And if it's not possible, it makes it even more important that we do our part.

25:16

And I think in fairness to Andrew Mitchell, the White Paper does go about as far as he was probably able to go, in talking about issues around climate finance. But there's a great big elephant in the room which is debt.

Yesterday I did a round table with a number of NGOs - in fact, there are people in this room who were at it - and talking about the importance of education.

The amount of money that countries are spending on servicing their debt that could be freed up to go into unlocking education for millions of children around the world, most of them girls, is extraordinary. In some countries it's high as 80% of their funds go on servicing debt. So this is a single greatest thing that we can do to unlock that and make the argument and win it, that climate action, and prosperity go hand in hand.

26:11

Sara Pantuliano, ODI: I want to go back to the double standards, because obviously - you mentioned Gaza - a lot of us are deeply concerned that what the UK is doing, its foreign policy, the position that it's taking towards the normative framework of international humanitarian law and international human rights law towards Gaza is inconsistent with the position it normally takes in defending values-based foreign policy and upholding the normative framework. What would the Labour Government do differently to avoid accusations of double standards when it comes to upholding the laws of war and actually upholding its responsibilities as a P5 country.

Lisa Nandy MP: Yes, I mean, I think we're seeing this playing out very much in the debate around Israel and Gaza at the moment. And like, I said, when I was over in Jordan and Egypt, across the whole of the Arab world there is a rising sense of anger at what people perceive to be different standards. Now ... as a party, we've always been very keen to uphold rights, norms and international law. Keir is a human rights lawyer. It's something that's important to him. It's how he thinks and David Lammy has constantly over the last decade challenged. When the Government itself is breaking international law, it's very, very difficult to then go out and talk to other countries about the importance of upholding that, too. I think you've seen a shift in the Government's rhetoric over the last few years, and that's very, very welcome. But it's something that we're acutely aware is part of the damage that we're going to

have to repair and to restore our reputation as a country that applies norms and values without fear or favour, because that is in the end, in my view, and David's, the only way that you can play a role as an honest broker in situations as difficult and as complex as what's happening in Israel and Gaza.

But there's another point to this as well. I think that is often missed in the debate here in the UK. And that's about accountability, too.

27:18

It's no good to people like the children that I met in Area C of the West Bank a few weeks ago. You'll know that Area C is the area that's controlled by Israel. And there have been a number of settlements that have been built over the last decade and a half. I visited a village where - 10 years ago I went to the same village, and all you could see as far as the eye could see was countryside surrounding this village. This is now the last village where people haven't been forcibly displaced, although they're certainly not immune to settler violence. And when you look 360 degrees around this village, what you see is not settlements. Actually, it's a series of towns that have been built that completely encircle the village.

And it makes people very angry when they hear politicians talking for a decade-and-a-half about a two-state solution as they watch that two-state solution become *de facto* impossible on the ground, without accountability for what is happening. And that's one of the reasons why David Lammy said very early on that there had to be accountability for settler violence, and proposed travel bans on violent settlers, which the Government has now taken up.

But as someone who chaired Labour Friends of Palestine - and previously to that Vice Chair - for ten years that's something that I've lived and breathed, and I think countries around the world want to hear from UK Government and other governments, too, that we don't just stand up for human rights and international law, freedom of speech, democracy, we don't stand up for them just in principle, we actually are prepared to stand for them in practice as well.

30:02

Sara Pantuliano, ODI. That's very welcome to hear. I want to open to the audience. But let me ask one last question. We've been very concerned at ODI that what we've seen in the past few years is a real backlash against human rights, and particularly women's rights. And you talked a lot about respectful partnerships with countries, of course. But what would you do when there is a really strong difference in values, and particularly in countries where this backlash against women's rights and the rights of the LGBTI+ community is being led from the centre of government?

Lisa Nandy MP: Yes, I mean, I'm not new to this in the sense that in the stint that I did when I was Shadow Foreign Secretary, and particularly in the last six months as the spokesperson for international development. There is a different dynamic around the world. People are looking very much to Labour to understand how we might govern. They've seen the opinion polls. There is no sense in which the next election

is a foregone conclusion, and we would never be complacent or treat it as such. But there is an interest in what we're saying and doing, and as a consequence, I've spent the last six months, sitting in rooms with world leaders, sometimes having some very, very difficult conversations about what is happening in their countries.

You know, in Israel, in particular in Jerusalem a few weeks ago, very difficult conversations about the need to open up the border crossings between Israel and Gaza, at a time when still hostages are being held in tunnels where, understandably, this is a nation in trauma. So sensitively, but importantly, to remind our partners of their obligations under international law and the need to uphold those obligations and to stand for those values. And I think there is a very strong role for the UK to be able to play in helping to deal with what has been the rolling-back of those rights, not just across the world, but actually here in the UK as well.

I came of age in 1997. I was 17 years old, just turned 18, just after the election, when the last Labour Government came to power. I think over the course of those intervening years and the early years of the Coalition ... I think my generation had started to believe that progress was inevitable. Well, it's not. And if I've learned one thing over the last decade, it's that if you want to cement those rights, if you want them to be passed on to the next generation, then you have to go out and fight for them every day. And, in fact, my dad, who came to this country as an immigrant from India in the 1950s, who fought these battles all his life and was one of the authors of the Race Relations Act - it's something that he's always said to me and my sister - is that these battles are never won, and you have to keep fighting for them.

But aid is a human rights issue from that, and there will be no shying away from that and there will be no shying away from it under the next Labour government.

One of the proudest things that we did as a country, in my view, was flying the Pride flag over our embassies in countries where loving, who you love is a crime. And there's so much that we can do to stand for those values again, including the very tangible things of economic empowerment. When we were over in Zambia, some of the conversations we have were why women are finding it hard to get access to credit. It's just not acceptable when you've got lots of small business owners who are women, about opening up education to women and girls, and about empowering civil society.

One thing – and this is the final thing I'll say – is just so often what I see is that people are shut out from that decision-making. It's bad here in the UK. And it's bad overseas. Like, I said, if women and girls are involved in peace processes, they tend to last. You can't have a situation across the whole of the Arab world where you've got such young countries, such a huge generation coming of age, shut out from political power altogether. And that's something that ... this is something that gets me out of bed in the morning. The thought that we could do something to help support those people and put the British government squarely behind them as they fight those battles anew.

Q&A

34:22

Sara Pantuliano, ODI. Thank you very much. Let me open. We have such a great audience. There are roving mics. I'll come to a number of you. Please say who you are, if you are affiliated to any organisations in particular. Be brief, so we can take as many questions as possible. Do a couple of rounds. Can we start with Christine here?

Christine Allen, CAFOD. I'm the director of CAFOD which is the Catholic agency. Thank you so much for that presentation. A lot of excellent stuff, particularly on the debt stuff. Thank you so much for that. So, I'm not going to ask a question about that. I'm going to ask a question about your point about the fact that aid isn't just something that's this little pot of money. It's about how we do things, not just what we do. Can you talk to us a bit about how your conversations or opportunities for cross-government work, how we can make sure that these principles are really embedded in other departments across the piece? Thank you.

Jennifer Larbie, Christian Aid. Thanks so much, Lisa. Thank you for setting out such a comprehensive vision. Thank you so much, and thank you for starting your reflections as well on the situation in Gaza. I think that was a really important way to set the scene and focus our minds. Yes, it was great, as Christine said, from CAFOD, to hear you speak about debt. I do want to ask a follow-up question on that, and again, great to hear that you really focused on debt restructuring being a really core part of Labour's vision in government. I wanted to hear you say maybe a little bit more about the role of private creditors, and I know that Christian aid along with others, have been working really closely with your team on the issue of private creditors, and that being a key part of any successful debt, restructuring process. So could you say just a little bit more on that. And that I think that we need to recognize that private creditors do need to take a sizeable haircut to make any debt restructuring work. So if you could say anything about the support across the Labour front benches on debt legislation specifically?

36:55

Tamsyn Barton, ICAI. [I'm] from the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, the foreign aid watchdog. Thank you very much for the visionary speech. I wanted to pick up a reference you made to some of the current grim reality, if you like, when you referred to the raid on the aid budget by badly-managed departments. And if I'm not mistaken, that's a subject ICAI has done a lot of scrutiny of, which is use of the aid budget for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, where we found the biggest value for money risks, the greatest inefficiency in use of the aid budget. But it is a challenging question as to how you can change this situation and rescue the reputation of the UK. Because clearly 29% of the budget being used in the UK for our own refugees and asylum seekers doesn't look like the best way to use it. So very much looking forward to those concrete thoughts on how to change that.

38:00

Caroline Harper, ODI. Thanks very much and thanks for an inspiring talk. I run the gender equality and inclusion program here at ODI I wanted to ask you about feminist foreign policy. We work to elucidate that with governments such as the Netherlands, Germany, who are committed to it, with Scotland, who's interested in it and with many others. I wondered, in the context of this backlash against women's rights and human rights in general, what you think of actually being much more explicit in pushback and advocating a feminist foreign policy which puts peace, gender, equality, environmental sustainability and anti-colonial, anti-patriarchy sentiments at its heart?

38:56

Olly Buston, Future Advocacy. Thanks very much, Lisa, for a great presentation, and I was really excited in 1996-97 when Labour was coming in and shaking up international development and looking forward, perhaps for the same thing to happen this time. Recent research by Dalberg showed that for every one dollar invested in strengthening national data systems, there's a \$32 return and strengthening national data systems is a key building block for artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies which most people think will be the main driver of growth in the global economy, for the next decade, The VP of Ghana recently said "we must not miss out on this coming revolution". And one of the green shoots in the White Paper from Andrew Mitchell is the support of the UK for the Power of Data initiative where the UK is joining Ghana and 14 other countries to drive the strength of national data systems co-ordinating between the private sector, civil society and others to strengthen national data systems. So the question is – would a Labour government put strengthening national data systems at the heart of the modern new approach to development? Thanks.

40:16

Jamie Drummond, Sharing Strategies/ONE. Thank you and we all look forward to the removal of the Shadow bit. Could you say a bit more about the balance of bilateral and multilateral? You mentioned meeting Prime Minister Mottley and I helped organize the meeting in Bridgetown a few years ago which led to some of the calls for restructuring the financial system. About 15 years ago there was the Bilateral Aid Review and the Multilateral Aid Review, a very important evidence-based analysis of which way works better.

When you (may) come in one of the first decisions will probably be funding for IDA and then soon after will probably be capital increases or general capital increases for IBRD. And those will come against lots of calls for other uses of that money. So a bit more about that balance, and how you'll make those decisions. You'll be asked to do more of both - bilateral and multilateral - and we will encourage you to do more of both. But that, I think, will be quite a hard, balancing act. Bearing in mind also last week France dramatically cut aid. The week before, or the couple of weeks before, Germany dramatically is looking to cut aid, and the MFF, the Europeans also. So the

picture's not looking good for our partners in the multilateral system. So how will you also make the case to them to do more?

42:00

Lisa Nandy MP. Christine, thank you so much for that, and I have a great friend who worked for CAFOD for a long time, and has been instrumental in helping me to think through what the major issue is facing the world and how we return to that original purpose of eliminating global poverty. And the route through it is through climate change and debt, and I really pay tribute to the work that you've done over a very long period of time. I think this point about whole-government approach is really important, because I started by saying that development is not just about aid. And if it's not just about aid then it's a whole government approach. And this is notoriously very difficult to do. The first thing that I would say is that you have to have a clearer direction of travel and there has to be broad agreement about what you're trying to do internationally led by Number 10, but with the support of all of the key players, particularly the Foreign Secretary. I think probably those of you who have seen David and I over the last 6 months will know that we're great, great friends, we think very much alike. Through the work that we've been doing with Keir and his team, there's a strong sense emerging that reconnecting Britain to the world underpins all of the five missions that we've set out for government, and that development has increasingly over the last four years become seen as much more central to that, not just in my mind and David's, but in Keir's as well.

I've been working my way around all the former development secretaries of the last couple of decades - well, not Priti Patel, but the others [laughter] - and one of the things that they said to me - and Clare Short said, this very, very clearly - is that you've got to have a clear direction of travel. You've got to have a clear purpose, because that's the thing that gets the wheels of government moving from every department and turning in the same direction. And so that's why I said very clearly that if the purpose in '97 was to eliminate global poverty, then the purpose for us in 2024 will be to create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet. And you might recognize those words. They are a deliberate signal that we intend to play our full part in the world again, including through those very critical multilateral institutions.

44:29

And then, Jennifer, thanks for what you said about debt. And there is quite a bit that we've been thinking about, and thanks for the work that you and others have been doing to help us think this through. The Common Framework is too slow. It lacks political leadership, and there's no mechanism to get private creditors to the table. If you have a mortgage here in the UK and you need to be able to renegotiate terms of your mortgage, you have the right to get the lender to the table. You don't have that same right if you're a country, and that just seems to me to be completely wrong. Some of the options that we're looking at is whether there's more we can do in terms of guarantees from the UK. An international definition of what sustainable debt actually is, which is about creating a level playing field. We're looking at whether we can use - somebody mentioned us being a P5 country - whether we can use the unique role we've got across a whole range of multilateral institutions to start that

conversation about debt cancellation. I didn't mention Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, but that's obviously something where we want to see a shift of focus and emphasis towards, particularly ensuring that multilateral development banks give greater priority to poor countries. I did a round table with some of the countries that are very involved in the Bridgetown initiative recently. That's something that is actually practically quite complicated to do. But we're not getting it right at the moment, so we're looking at that.

I mean, I suppose what I'm trying to do is give you a sense that there'll be some top line things in our manifesto about the big picture. But there's a lot more work going on behind the scenes, because if we do get the chance to put this into practice at some point this year, we don't want to be messing around for months trying to build the agenda. We're building it now and giving a clear steer to the Civil Service when those access talks start about what it is that we'll need them to do, so that we can hit the ground running on Day One.

Tamsyn, thank you for the work that ICAI has done, because I can tell you it is enormously persuasive with colleagues in the Shadow Treasury team. Value for money matters because it's people's money. They haven't got a lot of it, and at a time when every penny is going to be squeezed. I've got to make the case for why this constitutes money that is really well spent and achieves our intended outcomes. There's a few options that we're looking at around how you return development to its purpose of development spending and ensure value for money. One is that we're looking at the arrangement Andrew Mitchell has set up around the Board that's jointly chaired between him and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and whether we could strengthen the role of that Board in order to ensure that when money is spent it's spent well and really is about helping to support the UK's ambitions on development and aid. We're also looking potentially at the criteria of what we spent our overseas development assistance money on, and whether we could tighten that criteria.

There's obviously a prior question which you alluded to. At the moment a third of the budget is currently spent on asylum-seekers being housed in hotels. I don't even want to call them hotels because they're actually hostels. I've got two in my constituency, and they are appallingly bad accommodation for very vulnerable people. But it's a situation that is completely and utterly unsustainable. And it's something that Yvette is making her first priority to deal with, to get the asylum backlog down, and to deal with that. At that stage that will be a significant boost that will be a significant boost to our ambitions to support countries around the world. But we're looking at how we could perhaps embed that through a changing criteria at that stage.

48:26

On feminist foreign policy. So I did a roundtable with a number of people who've been really leading this agenda over the last few years here in the UK. It's something that we're very attracted to. We've been looking at what Germany's done with feminist foreign policy. And I was over there actually ... about 2 years ago, looking at some of the work they're doing on levelling up. But one of the things we looked at as

well is feminist foreign and development policy, and how we might be able to embed that as an approach through government. I mean, I mentioned the fact that women and girls will run like a thread through everything that we do, but there's bigger dimensions to a feminist development policy. And so it's something that we're working on at the moment.

49:16

On data. Yes, I'm a massive data geek. I recently had a few meetings with people about how we do this. The first thing is, that principle of what countries need to measure not just what we need to measure. I sat next to one of the ministers from Sierra Leone at a dinner that Gordon Brown threw in New York at UNGA, and he told me that they have a full-time minister just working on dealing with donor countries and the criteria that we need them to measure. And it just struck me as an enormous waste of time and energy when we could work together to make sure that that's streamlined and better approached. So, driven by what they need, not just by what we need to measure.

But on the general principle - and we heard it in Zambia as well. Every time. I say, Zambia, I look at Leila because we went out with the Coalition for Global Prosperity. It was a great great trip. We heard it there as well, is that with things like crops, because they're so heavily relying on agriculture, being able to get in-time data about the way in which those crops are developing is just absolutely essential to their ambitions to become a sort of powerhouse in the region and help solve some of the food and malnutrition problems that the region has as well.

And there's a broader principle here which is, if you don't measure something, it's invisible. And so we want to make those things visible that most matter to those countries

50:50

And then Jamie – last one - on this bilateral-multilateral shift. In the White Paper there was an ambition, which we very much supported, to move towards more multilateral working. But the reality is that the money hasn't followed suit. We've been looking at whether there's a floor that we could set below which multilateral funding won't fall or whether there are other mechanisms as well.

And I was speaking to my counterpart in the United States Samantha Power a couple of weeks ago, because obviously, what you don't want to do is erase any ability for agility and flexibility, and I was talking about the importance of that before. But we are really determined that we're going to move towards a far greater emphasis on multilateral working and funding, because we think it's more effective. The theme of my Labour leadership campaign - which we don't talk about ever anymore, so I should probably stop saying it [laughter] - was “together”.

It's a core Labour value that we achieve more through our common endeavour than we achieve alone. I've been left in no doubt, by the people that I've met and the

things that I've seen over the last six months that the UK can't do this on our own. But what we can do is act as a catalyst to help the world move in that direction.

We've got IDA replenishment ... (I'm) very acutely aware this is coming down the line. I've been having discussions with the World Bank and others about what that is and what that could look like. And I appreciate that we're operating in difficult times, and that people are pulling back. But I guess I'll just convey the sentiment that somebody said to me in New York. You know, the problems are so big and the challenges are so great. Sometimes it's absolutely mind-blowing to think of how much there is to do. And I said to this woman "this is huge" and she said "well, that's why we start now". And that's going to be the sentiment that drives us in government. It is the very scale of the challenge itself, and the difficult circumstances that we find ourselves in that make us even more determined that we're going to do this, and we're going to succeed.

53:00

Kuniaku Amatsu, JICA: Thank you for the presentation. So I have one question, about "development superpower". You didn't mention this word in your presentation but some influential people mentioned (it) in the last one or two years. Do you pursue (being) a development superpower too? If so what kind of development superpower would you like to pursue? Because in the past, around 15 years or 10 years ago British international development used to be a development superpower. In my understanding, this was sustained by five forces or sources of power, a single goal backed by (i) the International Development Act (ii) a single department, DFID (iii) budget (iv) expertise within DFID and (v) also a strong wide ecosystem. In the past 15 years this power is declining one by one. But depending on the type of development superpower you pursue the type of the business model you would pursue (would be) different? That is my question. Thank you very much.

Duncan Green, LSE and Oxfam. Building on that, you've talked about policies and spending priorities. Those can be reversed. What's interesting is the institutional innovations that you can do to make it all sticky. And I was thinking that three that come from Labour in the past (i) the creation of DFID (ii) MDGs with Clare Short and (iii) 0.7 - wasn't really labelled. But what are the institutional things you're going to do to make sure that even when Labour lose office, as they will one day some of these good things carry on?

55: 22

Phil Goff, New Zealand High Commissioner. One of the critical things holding back the development of the Third World is the agricultural protectionism and heavy subsidisation of the First World which stops those developing countries, either competing in the First world or, in fact, in third markets. Does Labour have a policy on what you might do about agricultural protectionism and subsidies?

55: 51

Christa Rottensteiner, IOM UK. Thank you for this inspiring speech. My name is Christa, and I head up The international organization for migration (in the UK) and I would be interested to hear what the vision of a future Labour Government be would be around the opportunities that migration bring to international development. Very often we talk about the challenges. And you've talked about the strained relations with the Global South And what we hear from our Member States as IOM is that often migration is given as one of the reasons why these relations are strained. There is a focus on deterrence. There's not enough opportunities to move for work, even though the needs are great in in developed countries. So what would be your way of how you can make the most of those opportunities?

56:47

Ben Quinn, Guardian. Thanks for a very substantive discussion, just a question on the outdated stereotypes which some NGOs have perpetuated. Can you give examples of those stereotypes and which NGOs have perpetuated them? [laughter]

57: 15

Olivia O'Sullivan, Chatham House. Thank you. I'm from the UK Program at Chatham House. Thank you very much for this talk. You spoke about being a partner to countries seeking economic development, and one of the obstacles to that is corruption and kleptocracy. I've heard David Lammy talk about anti-corruption, anti-kleptocracy measures as a plank of Labour's prospective foreign policy. How do you see that playing into development policy, if you do?

Lisa Nandy MP. First thing to say is that I didn't use the word "development superpower" because - I don't know if I'm alone in this but I have felt listening to people like - I'm just going to name him, Boris Johnson - over recent years, that there's an absurdity about this sort of language about dominating something that will only ever be achieved if we do it in partnership. When we took office in 1997 – I can't claim any credit for what the last Labour government did. I was still at school - but there was very much a view that we played our part in the world, and we did it as partners who reached out to other people and respected the fact that in every part of the world people have the same ambitions for themselves, their families, their communities, their countries, as we do here in the UK. And we're all better off if more of us are able to achieve it. And I don't think I've ever heard anything as absurd as a Prime Minister standing up at the dispatch box talking about having a world-beating Covid system, when, by definition, in order to beat Covid we all have to be able to do it together.

So I didn't use that language, but you shouldn't read into that in any sense that our ambition is undimmed. We are enormously ambitious about what Britain can do and what Britain can contribute. And I talked about the challenges because I want you all to know that we recognise that there are challenges, and that this is not 1997 - the UK is in a different position. But when you look at what Britain has as its unique strengths, as well as the city of London, and the outsized influence that we'll be able to play in climate and debt, we also have health and education systems that are of serious and significant interest to people in every part of the world. We have

university education that is renowned across the world for being a major strength and something many countries are seeking to emulate. We have great strengths, particularly in our scientific research, our medical research, that we're able to help to share with the world.

And Rory Stewart was one of the people that I spoke to very early on when I was appointed to this job. He and I share a view that we need to do more to empower people, and he's very keen on this thing about giving people cash, which actually the Department does do some of. But there is more that we have to contribute than that.

And when I've been at these global summits in New York - and I'm off to Geneva next week - meeting with people around the world who are still trying and working very hard to achieve progress towards the Global Goals, the thing that they most miss from the UK isn't the budget. It's the leadership that we used to provide, and the thought leadership in particular, and there is still much of that in the Department, and there are many, many good people who we've been lucky to hang on to, but there's so much more that we could do if we supported them and rebuilt that capacity.

And that kind of brings me on, Duncan, to your question about the institutional reform, because one of the things that we have said that we will do and will do in government is to rebuild capacity. A lot of expertise was lost, particularly within country, because when DFID became part of the FCO, a lot of foreign national expertise was lost. So we think there's a lot that we can do to rebuild that capacity within the Department.

1:01: 27

And in terms of the structure of the Department itself, I'd just say, watch this space. We don't know whether we're weeks or months away from a General Election, but there will be more to be revealed over the course of the next few months

The thing that I would most say about your final point about "how do you embed this in the structures so that it lasts and it outlasts a Labour government?" is that I don't think there's any substitute for winning the argument. I started this job six months ago, thinking the only way that you would really win the argument with the public as a whole is to make the utilitarian, self-interested argument about why aid and development co-operation matters deeply to Britain's interests. I've completely changed my mind over the course of that six months. I think actually the public is in a far better place than the politicians that they've had leading them in recent years. My constituents give more as a proportion of their income to charities like Oxfam than most of my colleagues in Westminster, and it's an argument that I believe that we can win. It's an argument that I believe that we have to win, because if you look at what happened at the end of the last Labour government, many of the things that we'd done – Sure Start and others - were just abolished overnight by a couple of people sitting in meeting rooms. Well, the things that lasted like the minimum wage, like civil partnerships, these were things where we'd gone out and we'd won the argument with the public, and we'd won it so comprehensively that David Cameron didn't just keep those things. He actually went further and extended them. And that's

the position I want us to be in after 10, 11, 12 terms of a Labour government [laughter] before we finally lose office.

1:03:20

On agricultural protection and subsidies. I don't have a definite answer for you that I can share today. But it's something that Nick Thomas Symonds and I have already been talking about. I said in the speech that trade is as central to our ambitions to support the ambitions of countries across the world as vaccinations and food and water. And that's something that you probably wouldn't have heard from a Labour spokesperson for some time, but it's something that we really feel is absolutely core to people's lives. And most of all we've heard it from them as well. So again, watch this space and apologies. But you do get this in election year because I can't unveil the manifesto right now, or I won't be your Cabinet Minister for International Development.

1:04:06

Christa, I think it's fair to say on this point about migration, I started the Levelling Up job two years prior to September, by saying that the big test for us of whether we'd helped every part of Britain to achieve its ambitions and to make the contribution we knew that it could make, is when young people didn't have to get out to get on and that they had choices and chances wherever they happened to live. For too many young people in the UK geography is destiny, and that had to change.

Well, I started this job - I sort of like to joke that I've gone from levelling up the country to leveling up the world [laughter]- but I started this job with the same sentiment actually, that far too often that what happens is those choices, those chances, just aren't available to young people in the countries where they want to stay and contribute to the future of that country.

And that's why this shift to focus on long-term economic development is so important. I had a young man come to see me recently from Syria, he runs an organization called Violet. It was one of those conversations where you feel like a tremendous underachiever because he was 14 years old when he set this organization up, in Syria, in conflict, and he did it because he could see what was happening to a whole generation of young people, including himself - disrupted education, had known very little but the trauma that comes from war and conflict and very limited economic opportunities on the horizon - and he wanted that to change, and he knew if that change was going to come, it was going to come only from themselves. They now invest in helping young people to be able to get, not just education, but then to be able to do startups, to be able to have the office space and all the practical things and the mentoring that they need in order to achieve their own ambitions in their life. And it was just one of those really stunning reminders that this is already happening in every community in every country around the world. But what it needs is a partner who's prepared to really put rocket boosters under it. And that's what we intend to be.

1:06:19

And then Ben on any NGOs in particular that I'd like to name and shame in this room. No, I'm making a broader point, you know. You only have to turn on the TV in the middle of the day. And you see these adverts with African children presented as victims. It's just such a different picture to the picture that I've seen even in war zones, even in conflict, even people who've lived all their short lives in refugee camps. We were in a refugee camp in Zambia on the last day of our trip, and only one young person from that refugee camp had got a scholarship to go to university the year before, and this is one of the largest refugee camps in the world.

But we walk into a room. And there are these kids sitting behind their computers, working away, every hour that it takes, because they're so determined that nothing is going to stand between them and living the richer, larger, more dignified lives that they want to live. That's power, that's agency. But it needs to be unlocked and unleashed, because too often it has nowhere to go.

And I made a promise to those kids that day that I would come back if we get the chance to be in government, and I would I would make good on that promise I would come back with something to say about what we'd done to help unlock and unleash that potential.

And that's the story that we have to start telling, using the platform that we've got, and I can't do that on my own. That's the point that I'm making. It falls to every single person in this room, every single one of us, to tell that story on their behalf, because that's what they deserve and that's the least that we can do. And frankly, that's the only way that you win the argument with the public. If the situation is hopeless, if people can't help themselves - if they're not willing to help themselves - it's very difficult to explain to people who are struggling here in the UK why they should help and support. But the reality is so, so different. And we've got to give voice to it.

1:08:19

And then, just on this question about corruption and kleptocracy, Olivia, it's something that David is really passionate about - and not to try and one-up him, but when I was doing his job before him, we did actually set up a commission to look at this, particularly in relation to concerns that London was home to a lot of this illicit money that was then helping to harbour and sustain those regimes overseas that our politicians were then railing against. And [turns to Sara Pantuliano] you began this by talking about part of the anger towards the West is to do with the fact that it's perceived that we have double standards. Well, this is a really important part of our approach to foreign policy and helping developing countries to achieve their own ambitions is helping to ensure, not just that we stand against corruption where we see it in other countries, but that the UK is not allowed to be an enabler of that as well.

Sara Pantuliano, ODI. Lisa, thank you so much for your passion, for your candour. It's really refreshing to hear your vision. You've said repeatedly that the vision is to create a world free of poverty on a liveable planet. But actually, what I've heard

stronger than anything, is the “how”, is that you're going to do that through the power of people's agency. And I think that's so important and so refreshing, to hear something I deeply believe in personally. Hearing you speak so passionately about joining up the domestic and international agenda, moving away from paternalists, really bringing this solidarity focus to the centre is so welcome. Fantastic to have you here.

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