

Comment

Our final goal must be to offer a global new deal

We will be judged on how we deliver the resources to prove that making poverty history was not a passing fashion

Gordon Brown
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Having taken the first steps to make poverty history, we must ensure 2005 is remembered as the start of something - not the end. We must learn from our achievements and failures, not least the depressing lack of final agreements on trade. So when finance ministers meet in Moscow next month, I will propose a post-Gleneagles agenda, founded on delivering the G8 commitments, for the empowerment of developing countries. It should, as a matter of urgency, include:

- a new \$4bn-5bn on-call facility for disaster relief and reconstruction
- full debt relief for not 38 but all the world's poorest countries
- a new environmental fund for developing countries
- a delivery plan produced by developing countries themselves for achieving the millennium development goals
- a push by world leaders to restart and complete the trade talks

At the heart of this empowerment agenda we should offer a global new deal: rich countries honouring commitments on finance, debt, trade and the environment; poor countries, freed from the shackles of debt, underfunding and protectionism, enabled to grow, invest and trade, and defeat hunger, illiteracy, disease and underdevelopment.

A century ago people talked of "What we could do to Africa". Last century, it was "What can we do for Africa?". Now, in 2006, we must ask what the developing world, empowered, can do for itself.

If Make Poverty History shifted from the old calls for charity to the new demand for justice, 2006 must see campaigners and governments moving the agenda beyond addressing the consequences of poverty to attacking its root causes. The delivery of aid is not the final goal, but just the first stage in the process of empowerment.

That is why all developing countries must now produce their own poverty-reduction and development plans - not just for economic empowerment through

transparent monetary, fiscal and corporate policies to tackle corruption, but for social empowerment through universal free schooling and healthcare.

As we start 2006, preventable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis still kill 7 million children a year, and in South Africa half of all 15-year-olds are expected to die from Aids. By frontloading aid and investing an extra \$4bn in vaccination now, the path-breaking international finance facility for immunisation could save 5 million lives by 2015, and a life-saving vaccine could soon be available for malaria to save 1 million lives each year.

So next month, I will ask the G8 to put the most innovative financial mechanisms at the service of the most innovative medical research. We should create the first mechanism whereby rich countries underwrite the research, development and bulk production of affordable vaccines and treatments. And by reducing the price of drugs and building healthcare systems, we should meet our promise of universal access to HIV/Aids treatments by 2010.

If past generations said "If only we had the knowledge, the technology, the medicine and the science to act", today we have no such excuse.

As we start 2006, there are 110 million children who, far from being empowered, do not go to school. So our new resolution for every country must be universal free education - the best and most empowering investment we could ever make.

And 2006 must also start by agreeing not just better, swifter and more coordinated responses to emergencies and disasters but - learning another lesson from 2005 - major reforms of the way international institutions tackle poverty. For while last year showed that round the world there is not compassion fatigue but a mountain of goodwill, 2005 also exposed a deadly disarray in the world's response to humanitarian crises.

So in future individual compassion and charitable activism must be matched by rich countries financing and replenishing a UN disaster-relief and reconstruction fund.

From their \$1.2 trillion windfall, oil-producing countries should help finance our proposed IMF shocks facility. The IMF's surveillance work - monitoring how countries implement the codes and standards vital to economic stability and growth - must be stepped up and conducted independent of politics.

To coordinate the war on poverty there should be a regular summit of the World Bank, the IMF and all UN agencies. And recognising that the recent doubling of oil prices has hurt poor countries most, we propose the World Bank considers a new \$20bn loan and grant fund for investment in alternative energy sources and energy efficiency.

An empowerment agenda for economic self-sufficiency requires world trade agreements that finally address the scandal of rich countries' agricultural protectionism. But they must do more than open the door to trade: poor countries must have the strength to walk through. So part of any deal must include funding infrastructure and education to enable poor countries to compete effectively.

But empowerment of the poor will be a false hope until the decades-old debt crisis is fully resolved. In December, 100% multilateral debt relief was finally achieved for the first 19 highly indebted poor countries - and, despite prior worries, with no extra conditionality.

In Britain's view, all 67 of the poorest countries should secure debt relief. By paying our share of their debt service, we will unilaterally lead debt cancellation for up to another 30 countries, and I will urge others to follow.

These are more than crumbs of comfort. They are a signal that globalisation could mean not just global flows of capital, but social justice on a global scale too.

In 2006 we will be judged not just on willing the millennium development goals but on delivering the resources to achieve them. All involved will have to prove that making poverty history is not just a passing fashion but a commitment for our generation.

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