



# British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union

**Statement to the 128<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, Quito, 24 March 2013**  
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**“Buen Vivir” and International Development: The future of development goals: Open Economies  
and Open Societies**

Mahatma Gandhi once said: “the future depends on what you do today.”

As a father and a grandfather, this adage has come in useful. Success, I would tell my children, could only be built through hard work, wise investment and the drive to do things better. Ultimately, however, the future was theirs, and only theirs, to shape.

This is true across the board.

Growing up in post-war Britain, I am amazed by how much my country has changed; by the pace of development as well as the scale of it; and how different life is for today's generation than it was for mine.

In Britain, as elsewhere, our story has been one of social and economic progress; advances in technologies and science; and also of increasing health and prosperity.

It's strange to think that only 100 years ago, there was only one country - Sweden actually - that had achieved an infant mortality rate below 10%. In the last 50 years, global life expectancy on average has risen from 47 years to 67 years.

And poverty has decreased dramatically. As we know, the world has achieved the main poverty eradication goal of the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which called for the share of people living on less than \$1.25 a day to be cut by half from 1990 to 2015. I will talk a little more about this in a moment.

These changes did not happen by chance. They reflect our awareness of the past, our aspiration for the future, and the hard work and innovation that took place in between. Collectively, we made it happen.

Now, in *the developing* world, there is a greater story unfolding. For decades the bulk of international development focused on aid. This was important and necessary. International aid programmes have helped transform the lives of millions of people blighted by disease, poverty, conflict and inequality.

Britain for its part has played a lead role in global aid efforts for many years. Our dedicated Department for International Development (DFID) was set up in 1997 and I have seen the dramatic difference we have made.

I am proud that we remain committed, despite the global downturn, to press ahead to spend 0.7% of our national income on development. But there has to be something more fundamental. One of the things the UK has been clear about as we look towards renewing the MDG blueprint beyond 2015, is the need for the international community to tackle the causes of poverty, not just the symptoms of poverty.

While the UK's position is not yet fixed on what the new development goals should be, it's clear that we need a radical new approach -what my Prime Minister has called "the golden thread" of conditions that ties together economic, social and political progress.

Of course -- we must continue to do everything we can to tackle life-threatening diseases such as malaria. We must persevere in providing health protection through vaccinations and access to safe drinking water and support for women. All of these projects are integral to our international development goals.

But if we want to see developing communities grow and prosper in the longer term, we need to cultivate open economies and open societies: respectful of human rights for all, but particularly mindful of the needs of rights for women and minorities, a free media, integrity in government, and the freedom to participate in society and have a say over how your country is run.

We need to think about what can drive prosperity and provide equal opportunities not least for those whose voices are all too often lost – for children, young people, students, entrepreneurs, farmers, and of course, for girls and women.

"Buen Vivir". This is a strategy which in my view, needs to be explicitly reflected within the next development goal framework. This is important because the MDGs have been an effective agent of change. Some of you may remember back in the 1990s, MDGs were dismissed as overly ambitious.

But look at where we are. We achieved the target of halving poverty 5 years early. And not just because of progress in China or other parts of Asia. Even in Africa by 2008, most people, for the first time since measurement began, were judged to be living above the extreme poverty line. Access to basic education has improved dramatically. Infant mortality has plummeted.

So we can see the MDG was not about aspirational words, but measurable actions. Now we need to build on its success, advancing to the next level to address the increasingly complex challenges facing us all.

Aid should continue, but our goal should be to get countries to the point where all countries can stand confidently and donor assistance is no longer essential. In other words, aid must not be a substitute for self-sufficiency. Open economies and open societies should be at the heart of a reinvigorated strategy.

To this end, business does have a vital role to play in economic development. We know that economic growth is the primary driver of poverty reduction and that the private sector is the engine of that growth; creating new jobs, opportunities, markets and prosperity. For example, 90% of jobs in the countries in which we apply our development work are generated by the private sector.

The facts are compelling wherever long-term per capita growth has been higher than 3% - China and Vietnam are examples which spring to mind - we have also seen significant falls in poverty.

A UN report published only a few days ago confirmed this. It found that underpinning poverty reduction was developing countries' increasing share of global trade, which grew from 25 per cent to 47 per cent between 1980 and 2010.

Recognising this potential, the UK's DFID has already set up a Private Sector Department to spearhead a new level of engagement with the private sector with the aim of removing the barriers to trade, increasing investment and promoting responsible business.

But we need to go even further. One thing which is very clear from the last decade is that the countries getting left behind in the pace of progress are those suffering from chronically poor governance. It's for this reason we are gradually increasing the proportion of the resources allocated to parliamentary strengthening initiatives.

So far we have worked to deepen democracy across Africa. Worldwide, we have supported more than 20 countries in strengthening law-making capabilities and institutions, and we have recently signed a pledge to support Somali parliamentarians as they establish their new government and federal parliament.

We've got a lot of work to do, and, frankly it will not be easy. We're in the throes of the worst financial crisis since the 1930s. But we cannot allow this to dampen our momentum.

In this regard we are very supportive of the IPU's efforts to place democratic governance firmly on the agenda for the post-2015 development goals. As our record on implementation of the MDGs shows, if we act, we can deliver.

So as we approach 2015, and reflect on the progress made, we should be clear about the principles that should guide the next phase. Only by looking at the underlying causes, can we find overarching solutions.

Only, if citizens are free to provide for their livelihoods, to express their voice, exercise choice and have faith in governance, will long term prosperity and security be achieved. There is an old African proverb which says: "tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

By helping developing communities to prepare now, we will be putting the future in their hands. So let us begin!

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