

CROSS PARTY GROUP: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGM

22 JANUARY 2013

COMMITTEE ROOM 5, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

5.30PM – 7PM

Present:

Sarah Boyack MSP, Patrick Harvie MSP, Bruce Crawford MSP, Margaret McDougall MSP, Neil Findlay MSP, Hugh Henry MSP, Alice Picard, Manuela Coletti, Barbara Darcy, Martyn Edelsten, Elizabeth Cranfield, Colin Pritchard, Michael Turner, David Kenvyn, Cathy Crawford, Agnes Ngulube Holmes, Charlotte Snelling, Alys Mumford, Alex Young, Chance McDonald, Chris Wigglesworth, Anthony Olowoyeye, Fiona Trafton.

Apologies:

Jamie McGrigor MSP, Jackie Baillie MSP, Jean Urquhart MSP, Dr Julia Wilson, Mario Aguilar, Dr David Stevenson, Alan Dixon, Professor Roger Leakey, James Trolland, Paul Jowitt.

Welcome and Introduction:

Sarah Boyack MSP chaired the meeting in her capacity as Convenor. She welcomed all attendees and thanked her MSP colleagues for attending and showing an interest in the work of Jubilee Scotland to develop an arbitration system to deal with sovereign debt disputes. Sarah congratulated Jubilee Scotland for their long standing track history in raising awareness of global debt and commented on their involvement in the Make Poverty History campaign movement. Sarah stated that global debt is an important public issue and citizens across the world are more conscious of the debt injustice that continues to ruin lives.

Alys Mumford, Campaign Director, Jubilee Scotland:

Alys addressed the group highlighting Jubilee Scotland's efforts to campaign for global debt justice and to further raise awareness of the suffering the people of some of the world's poorest countries are subjected to. Jubilee Scotland is at the forefront of the campaign to make Scotland a seat of a fair and transparent arbitration process. The process involves two parties, with a grievance over debt, coming together in front a neutral arbiter and working toward making a decision that will be binding.

Alys highlighted that many countries have been given irresponsible lending and in some cases for every \$1 in aid, countries are paying back \$5 back. She gave the example of aid being given for 'white elephant' projects, such as a building of a dam in Kenya in an area susceptible to droughts and earthquakes.

Charlotte Snelling, Policy and Research Assistant, Jubilee Scotland:

Charlotte explained that Scotland already has cutting edge legislation that would make it an ideal place for arbitration. The 2010 Arbitration (Scotland) Act and the opening of the Scottish Arbitration Centre have provided the key foundations.

The key principles of the Rules include: the mandate to decide disputes on a basis of justice and fairness, provision for transparency and openness and the creation of a suitable Debt Arbitration Panel.

Charlotte also raised the point that arbitration could be considered a preferable option by creditor countries when debtor countries continue to default on their repayments with no resolution on how the debt will ever be repaid. It was highlighted that in 2006, Norway cancelled up \$80 million of loans on the basis that they were illegitimate.

Patrick Harvie MSP, Depute Convenor of the International Development Cross Party Group:

Patrick addressed the group arguing that the Scottish Parliament has notably carved out a distinctive role in International Development and that devolution has helped Scotland to engage and develop relationships with the international community. Patrick thanked Jubilee Scotland for their work in organising the meeting and for the informative presentations.

Questions and Answers:

During the discussion which followed, the cost of the arbitration process was raised and Charlotte explained that the costs would be met by the parties involved. Members of the group highlighted the success of previous campaigns, specifically the anti-apartheid movement.

Next steps:

Sarah asked the group if they would like to have a further meeting next year for an update on the proposal which was widely accepted. Alys asked people to spread the word, stay tuned into the campaign and keep in touch for updates.

Sarah closed the meeting reminding members that the next meeting would be attended by the Minister for External Affairs and International Development and that it would be good if people sent in suggestions for questions so that she could structure the meeting to ensure members' interests were covered. Additional questions could obviously be asked on the day.

Forthcoming CPG meetings:

- 19th February - the Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf MSP, will address the group to discuss the Scottish Government's work.
- 26th March – Education and Malawi

Dates for Your Diary:

- 17th June 2013 - Centenary of the Birth of Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, who was one of the outstanding leaders of the campaign against apartheid.
- 18th July 2013 - 18th July has been designated by the United Nations as Mandela Day, and people are asked to give 67 minutes of their time to voluntary work in honour of the 67 years that Mandela has given to public service.