

JULY – DECEMBER 2005: THE UK PRESIDENCY OF THE EU. WHAT DOES HOLDING THE EU PRESIDENCY MEAN IN PRACTICE FOR THE UK?

During the UK Presidency, the Prime Minister, UK Ministers and officials will chair meetings of Member States. Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for International Development, will chair meetings of EU Development Ministers. The UK will represent the Council (Member States) in its dealings with other EU institutions such as the Commission and the European Parliament and in its relations with countries and organisations outside the EU.

Key development events during our Presidency include:

- ★ Millennium Review Summit in New York, 14-16 September
- ★ Informal meeting of EU Development Ministers in Leeds, 24-25 October
- ★ Formal meeting of EU Development Ministers in Brussels, 22 November
- ★ World AIDS day event in London, 1 December
- ★ World Trade Organisation Ministerial meeting in Hong Kong, 13-18 December

Our priorities will be to secure decisions related to the Millennium Development Goals, HIV and AIDS, development in Africa and the revision of the EC's Development Policy that maximise the EU's combined contribution to the fight against poverty. We will also continue to work towards an ambitious outcome to the Doha Development Round that makes trade work for developing countries and strive to ensure that greater account is taken of developing countries in EU Trade policies, including in negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements.

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DFID Department for
International
Development

The UK Presidency of the European Union: July – December 2005

Working Together in the Fight Against Poverty

HOW DOES THE EUROPEAN UNION CONTRIBUTE TO THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY?

The EU brings together 25 Member States, the European Commission, the European Parliament and European Civil Society. By pooling resources and working together, the EU is at the forefront of efforts to reduce global poverty and increase prosperity and stability.

Collectively, Member States provide around £25 billion (€37 billion) in Official Development Assistance (ODA), over half of all aid. In May 2005, the EU agreed to double their aid by 2010 and spend at least half of the new funding for Africa.

Member States channel around 20% of aid through the European Commission (EC). The largest regional recipient of direct EC aid in 2003 was Sub-Saharan Africa. Other key country recipients included Serbia and Montenegro, Afghanistan and the Palestinian Territory. Around £300 million a year is spent on humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters, such as the 2004 tsunami and man-made disasters such as the conflicts in Sudan.

Aid is only one remedy to poverty. EU policies in areas such as trade and agriculture are equally important. Europe is the world's single largest market and the main trading partner of many developing countries. EU internal policies on export subsidies and import tariffs affect developing countries' ability to sell their goods abroad.

HOW DOES THE UK WORK IN EUROPE?

In 2003/2004, DFID spent around £1 billion, just over a quarter of its budget, through the EC. As the provider of around 18% of the EC's budget, the UK has an influence on how that money is spent. The UK contributes to the EU decision-making process through meetings of the Member States, and also through working with the UK and European Parliaments. The UK Parliament has a say and gives an opinion on all proposals put forward by the European Commission. The European Parliament, including its 78 UK members, helps set the EC's budget, monitor spending and hold the Commission to account.

Individual UK NGOs use their experience and expertise to help shape EU development policy. UK and EU NGO groupings such as BOND and CONCORD ensure a strong public European voice for development. The work of NGOs, including through the Make Poverty History campaign, has been a powerful force for change.



Tajikistan: Water and Sanitation project ©EC/ECHO/Peter Taylor

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EC AID?

The EC has real potential to mobilise support for common causes. During the 1990s the EC struggled to quickly release development funds and was criticised by many for failing to adequately help poor countries.

In 2000 the Commission began a programme of reforms to improve its aid program. EC aid is now governed by a single Development Policy that puts poverty reduction first. The Development Policy is due for revision this year. New EC country offices have been opened and new procedures allow for quicker provision of aid in developing countries. The proportion of EC aid spent in the poorest countries is increasing.

The UK and other Member States will continue to work with the Commission to ensure that EC aid is provided quickly for those who need it most.



Central Africa: Medical Assistance Project 2004 ©EC/ECHO/Francois Goemans