

FULL TEXT OF TONY BLAIR'S SPEECH ON 'RETHINKING LEADERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT'

-CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

We should never forget the first purpose of aid.

Alongside the obvious mission to help those in need, its purpose is to help countries stand on their own feet.

The purpose, in other words, should be to use aid to end aid.

For the first time this is possible to foresee.

That is a sign of progress.

There's a new generation of African leaders – in politics, business and civil society who are anxious to take the destiny of their nations into their own hands.

We should encourage and support them. That's the challenge for the international community – and the many eminent development leaders in the room today - and it's the idea behind the Africa Governance Initiative to help make it happen.

None of this is to discount the vital role aid has played in saving lives in Africa.

Access to anti-retroviral drugs for those living with aids has increased tenfold since 2001, notably through the PEPFAR programme and the work of the Gates and Clinton Foundations.

Literally millions have benefited every year.

Measles deaths have been halved through vaccination programmes.

Malaria has fallen sharply in many parts of Africa.

So aid works, for sure, in areas like disease, famine and in relieving the worst effects of poverty.

When I chaired the G8 in 2005 and put aid and debt cancellation at the top of the agenda.

I did so because I knew these commitments would have a big and lasting effect.

But the other part of the Summit was a focus on partnership and on the work of the Commission for Africa. That report stressed, instead, the need to move beyond aid alone

We recognised that a partnership was a two-way street.

The wealthy nations would give; but it was important to give in such a way as to create the ability of the African countries to govern effectively. That means, getting behind African governments' own priorities and using local systems to deliver aid. The Paris Principles are still the right ones for how aid should be delivered –and the international community needs to live up to those principles.

And for the African countries we placed an emphasis on governance and helped establish peer reviews to test it.

But governance for me has never been a simple evaluation of systems of transparency and accountability. Of course, the growth of democracy is one of the great signs of progress in Africa.

But governance is also about effectiveness the capability to get things done. It is here that African leaders need support.

Assume good faith; usually the correct assumption nowadays.

Assume the right vision; often the case.

The tough part is not wanting to do the right thing or even knowing what the right thing means.

It is actually doing it that is hard.

The challenge is less the “what” than the “how”.

Many of the leaders I know in Africa – and elsewhere – will work 18 hour days, 7 days a week. Prioritisation is hard when resources are scarce. And with capacity around them so low, they end up trying to do everything themselves. With the additional demands of diplomacy, international meetings and social/political events, with precious little time spent on priorities.

Their governments do not have the capabilities to support them as they need.

The capacity to implement, track and monitor performance isn't there.

Development plans will have 150 priorities. Actually only five can realistically be done in a term.

And even if the centre has the capacity, the Ministries don't.

African governments have made huge progress in growing their private sectors and attracting investment –which has to be the long term answer. But often private sector investment arrives in a random way, sometimes from investors of dubious quality. Decisions are haphazard, even if honest. And in the area of resources, how the deal is structured and done can be the single most determining factor in the economic future of the nation.

What AGI offers is help, there on the ground, from people who have done it, not just talked about it. We understand that the right technical answer will not always be politically or practically do-able. We know that if you miss the politics, you miss the point. And we start from the position that it is Africa's priorities not ours that are on the agenda and that in achieving them, you need some political realism in the plan.

We started in three countries and we're now moving into a fourth with more countries asking for our support and we believe the results are the best witness.

To take just one example, Free Healthcare had been knocking around as an idea in Sierra Leone for decades. And there were even donor resources available to support the reform. Including very generous backing from DfID. But until the government lined up the political will –a clear lead from President Koroma –and the basic systems to manage the reform nothing happened. Once those things were in place the reform happened at speed. With great results: since Free Healthcare for mothers and young children was introduced almost three times as many under-5s were treated in

government health facilities than during the previous 12 months, leading to an 80% reduction in child deaths in hospital from malaria, thereby saving thousands of lives.

But the reason it can work today is that we find we have colleagues from those countries working alongside the AGI team who are convinced effective government is the key. And, because the capacity we support is clearly linked to the political priorities of the leadership, there's a real drive behind the changes

So if these nations have, for example, power, electricity and basic infrastructure, the world opens up to them.

Their natural resources can then be exploited and there is no sensible reason why they can't then create a tax base, raise revenue and develop services like health and education.

What's more with innovation and the use of technology, they can move ahead rapidly.

But without the first step being taken by clear decisions made and implemented, they remain mired in underdevelopment and pretty soon the fine visions of progress are lost in a sea of disillusion and resentment. That is why democracy and delivery must go hand in hand.

So capacity is the answer; indeed the only long term answer.

It has to be built in partnership and through systems of effective and structured decision making.

Round the world the lessons are there and available.

I spent ten years learning them and though obviously it is different in a developed country like Britain, it is remarkable how many are applicable universally: deciding priorities; getting the right policy to achieve them; execution skills to deliver them; and tracking them, at the top, to make sure it really happens.

This is not an impossible hope. It could be done.

Ending aid dependency in a generation is not an idle dream; it's an idea whose time has come.

It is a challenge to the international community. It is a challenge to the leaders of developing nations.

It is where a true partnership between developed and developing nations should take us.