

Alok Sharma: The moral and economic case for UK aid

Alok

Sharma, International Development Secretary, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The Manchester Convention Centre, said:

(Check against delivery)

“Conference.

Five

weeks ago, I stood at one of the busiest crossings along the border of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I

saw the vital support UK aid is providing to prevent Ebola crossing borders.

I

spoke to health workers. Community leaders. Women and children in a local village. Their verdict was unanimous.

Britain’s

international leadership in combating the spread of this deadly disease has been critical in saving lives.

Some

may ask, why does this matter for Britain?

To

those people, I would say it is the right thing to do.

Since

August 2018, over 2,000 people have died from Ebola in East Africa.

The

latest reported victim a 9-year-old Congolese girl.

If

we can prevent deaths from diseases where there are cures and vaccines, then we must act.

But

for me, the Conservative Party’s ultimate goal is about supporting countries to help themselves.

To

become economically self-sustaining.

Our
trading partners of the future.

I
want developing countries to trade their way out of needing aid.

It
is a vision shared by all my brilliant Ministerial colleagues Zac Goldsmith,
Andrew Murrison, Andrew Stephenson and Liz Sugg.

Successful
countries draw on the talent of all their population.

That
is why I am delighted our Prime Minister is championing 12 years of quality
education for every girl around the world.

On
a visit to Kaduna State in Nigeria I saw precisely what British leadership
and
support can achieve.

I
visited a previously failing school which, with UK support, had almost
doubled
its school roll in two years.

Over
half the pupils enrolled are now girls.

They
are achieving great results.

And
the students spoke of their ambitions to be business leaders, doctors and
journalists.

We
should all be very proud that it is a Conservative Prime Minister and a
Conservative Government helping to empower girls and women around the world.

Helping
them to build a better future for themselves, their families and their
countries.

Conservative
Prime Ministers have a habit of setting the pace on global action.

I
remember the last time I spoke on the main conference stage, I was 20.

We
were in Blackpool and Margaret Thatcher was our Prime Minister.

For
all of us, Lady Thatcher is an icon.

That
is how my family viewed her.

It
was her economic policies that allowed my parents to build their small
business.

On
a personal level, my family owes her a deep sense of heartfelt gratitude.

Margaret
Thatcher set the pace in so many areas, including on climate change.

She
did more than any other major UK politician at the time to legitimise the
environment as a concern at the highest level.

30
years ago, speaking passionately at the United Nations about the threat posed
by climate change.

And
this week at the United Nations, our Prime Minister announced that we will
double our support to help developing countries turn the tide against climate
change and species loss.

It's
us Conservatives, tackling climate change and protecting the world's
biodiversity.

Since
arriving at DFID, I have renewed our emphasis economic development,
particularly when it comes to climate resilient infrastructure.

I
have set up an Infrastructure Commission to help us mobilise private sector
investment, to create jobs that will lift millions out of poverty in Africa.

We
must support partner countries to raise more resources
through private sector investment and their own tax revenues.

Within
10 years, we want to support partner countries to raise ten times more
resource
through private sector investment and their own tax revenues than they
receive

in UK aid.

That
is how we help to build sustainable economies.

And
that is where we differ so much from Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party.

Labour
believe in handouts at home and abroad. We believe in a helping hand.

Labour
see business as the enemy. We see the private sector as an enabler.

Leaving the European Union will present new
opportunities.

We
will be able to spend our aid budget more efficiently, deciding for ourselves
what to spend it on.

That's
why we need to get Brexit done.

The
only reason our country is able to help others is because of our strong
economy.

A
strong economy rescued, yet again, by a Conservative Government from the
clutches of another failing Labour administration.

An
economy, based on sound economic principles, delivering record employment.
Wages growth out pacing inflation.

And
what is Jeremy Corbyn's economic model? Venezuela.

Who
does Jeremy Corbyn consider as one of his mates? Maduro, the Marxist
President
of Venezuela.

A
man whose policies have resulted in millions of Venezuelans fleeing their
country.

And
millions more trapped, suffering the impact of a growing humanitarian
disaster.

The

economy collapsed.

Public
services collapsed.

The
very being of the country on life support.

We
should be proud that Britain has stepped forward to provide life-saving humanitarian support to millions of Venezuelans.

Just
last week, I announced an aid package that will deliver life-saving medicine and clean water to those suffering from the dire crisis in that country.

Venezuela
serves as a grim reminder of why we cannot allow Corbyn and his Marxist henchman McDonnell loose on the British economy.

We
need a thriving economy in order to be able to help others.

As
Conservatives, we believe there is both a moral and economic case for UK aid.

But
what I will not tolerate is hard working British taxpayers' money, your money,
being frittered away on projects that don't make a difference to the world's poorest.

UK
Aid must be built on a commitment to end extreme poverty.

We
should be so proud to live in the best country in the world.

A
tolerant, generous and outward looking nation.

With
one of the world's biggest economies.

Providing
leadership on the international stage.

Projecting
British values around the globe.

But
to do all that, we must keep our economy strong, with a Conservative Government.

United
behind our One Nation Prime Minister.

Ready
to get Brexit done, so that we can move on and deliver on the people's
priorities.

Delivering
opportunity, and economic prosperity, across the whole of our great United
Kingdom."

ENDS