

UN urges building more just, equal societies to increase happiness and well-being worldwide

20 March 2017 – Speaking at an event today marking the International Day of Happiness, the deputy United Nations chief called for more inclusive, equitable and balanced approaches to development that promote sustainability, poverty eradication, happiness and well-being of all peoples.

“Many countries have undertaken efforts to develop broader measures of progress, often through public consultations, parliamentary commissions, and efforts to develop new indicators and understanding of well-being,” said Amina Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General.

Cautioning that pursuing only economic growth and disregarding social and environmental dimensions can have negative impact on human well-being and can result in growing inequalities and environmental degradation, she underlined that development should not take place “at all costs.”

“Not at the cost of environment or the marginalization of the poor and other vulnerable groups,” she added.

In her remarks, Ms. Mohammed noted that well-being did not depend solely on income but also included other factors such as personal and job security, fundamental freedoms, a clean environment, as well as having strong family and social relations.

VIDEO: Global Happiness Council launched at the United Nations

“These human needs can be fulfilled in societies where people are empowered to pursue their own goals that ensure their personal well-being in societies that are inclusive and egalitarian, and where human rights are cherished and respected,” she said.

The deputy UN chief recalled that the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have provided a blue print to collectively building such societies and their recognition that ending poverty needs to go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

Highlighting the organization’s work to promote and secure the well-being and happiness of all peoples she urged everyone to renew the commitment to continue building more just and equal societies to increase people’s happiness and well-being worldwide.

Bicycling for love

Also today, commemorating the International Day, the UN Bookshop in New York hosted the launch of *The Amazing Story of the Man Who Cycled from India to Europe for Love* that recounted the story of artist Pradyumna Kumar, or PK.

Born in a poor family belonging to the so called 'untouchable' caste in India, PK undertook a bicycle journey through Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, (former) Yugoslavia, Germany, Austria and Denmark to be reunited with the love of his life, Charlotte, in Sweden, whose portrait he had drawn a few months earlier, in India.

They have been happily married for more than 40 years now.

[President of India presents KCK International Award for excellence in print Journalism](#)

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee presented the KCK International Award for Excellence in Print Journalism organized by Rajasthan Patrika in New Delhi today (March 20, 2017).

[Scandals like this only further support the case for Labour's Tax Transparency Enforcement Programme – McDonnell](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to the Guardian revelations that some British banks were involved in the laundering of hundreds of millions of pounds from Russian criminals, said:

"This scandal needs to be investigated in full by the National Crime Agency, and the government must ensure they have all the resources and support needed. Britain cannot be a haven for the criminals of the world who are looking to hide their money.

"It's deeply disappointing that there are British banks involved in yet

another banking scandal as the actions of a few shouldn't overshadow the hard work of the thousands of employees in the sector who will have had nothing to do with this case. But it appears that some of these big banks haven't learnt the lessons of the past, and are clearly not doing enough to clamp down on financial crime and money laundering.

"The government's overall approach to the banking sector is one that has seen them handout billions in tax giveaways that favour the big banks over the challenger banks, and pursue a 'light touch' approach to regulation that borders on a return to the bad old days before the crash. Now we know the date for when Article 50 is to be triggered, we need clarity from the government that this scandal is not a glimpse into the future of what a Tory Banker's Brexit will resemble.

"It is scandals like this that only further support the case for Labour's Tax Transparency Enforcement Programme to ensure that there are no more hiding places for the super-rich to dodge paying their taxes, or to hide proceeds of crime. If the Tories will not act to clamp down on such acts, then the next Labour government will make them a thing of the past."

Ends

Scandals like this only further support the case for Labour's Tax Transparency Enforcement Programme – McDonnell

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to the Guardian revelations that some British banks were involved in the laundering of hundreds of millions of pounds from Russian criminals, said:

"This scandal needs to be investigated in full by the National Crime Agency, and the government must ensure they have all the resources and support needed. Britain cannot be a haven for the criminals of the world who are looking to hide their money.

"It's deeply disappointing that there are British banks involved in yet another banking scandal as the actions of a few shouldn't overshadow the hard work of the thousands of employees in the sector who will have had nothing to do with this case. But it appears that some of these big banks haven't learnt the lessons of the past, and are clearly not doing enough to clamp down on financial crime and money laundering.

"The government's overall approach to the banking sector is one that has seen

them handout billions in tax giveaways that favour the big banks over the challenger banks, and pursue a 'light touch' approach to regulation that borders on a return to the bad old days before the crash. Now we know the date for when Article 50 is to be triggered, we need clarity from the government that this scandal is not a glimpse into the future of what a Tory Banker's Brexit will resemble.

"It is scandals like this that only further support the case for Labour's Tax Transparency Enforcement Programme to ensure that there are no more hiding places for the super-rich to dodge paying their taxes, or to hide proceeds of crime. If the Tories will not act to clamp down on such acts, then the next Labour government will make them a thing of the past."

Ends

Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement on Syria sanctions

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood said;

"New EU sanctions against those involved with chemical weapons use in Syria represent a significant step in holding those who have used chemical weapons to account. We are sending a clear message that chemical weapons are completely unacceptable. Along with our international partners, the UK will continue to seek justice for the victims of these heinous attacks and to deter the further use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere."

Note to editors:

For further details, the EU press release can be read [here](#).

Further information