



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prime Minister Tony Blair Calls for Second Brandt Commission Commission for Africa Will be Led by Trevor Manuel and Gordon Brown

Philadelphia -- February 26, 2004 -- British Prime Minister Tony Blair will convene a blue-ribbon commission on international development, emphasizing poverty in Africa. Trevor Manuel and Gordon Brown, finance ministers of South Africa and Great Britain, have been chosen to guide the inquiry, which will address global aid, debt relief, AIDS, trade, monetary, financial, and governance issues.

In a timetable announced in London by Blair, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, and British International Development Secretary Hilary Benn, the new development panel will deliberate this year and issue a report in 2005 – the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Brandt Commission Report, North-South: A Program For Survival. The Brandt Commission, chaired by former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, had proposed a major restructuring of the world economy to allow poor countries to develop equitably and compete in global markets, ensuring stability and prosperity for all nations.

Blair hopes to avoid the obstacles that befell the Brandt Report. North-South sold nearly a million copies, was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations, and was discussed at both the G-7 summit and an economic summit of world leaders in 1981. But following that success, Western governments ended the dialogue on global development, and there were no significant negotiations on the issue until the 2000 UN Millennium Summit and the UN Financing for Development conference in 2002.

Britain will hold the presidency of both the G-8 and the European Union in 2005, giving Blair a major platform for influencing the international policy agenda and sustaining public interest on global poverty and inequality. Blair plans to focus world attention on Africa, where lack of education, AIDS, and poverty are chronic. Global aid to Africa is now US \$13 bn a year, slightly less than in 1980.

The Brandt Commission challenged developed nations to increase their foreign assistance to 1% GDP by 2000, but aid to poor nations since 1980 has actually decreased from .35% to .21% GDP. Like Brandt, Brown wants governments to improve the effectiveness and volume of their annual aid, and will propose an international financing facility to borrow up to US \$50 bn to meet the UN Millennium Development goals of cutting world poverty in half, reducing infant mortality by two-thirds, and enrolling all the world's children in school by 2015. The Commission for Africa is also expected to explore new ways of expanding trade and investment flows and reducing debt in developing nations.

Joining Manuel, Brown, Zenawi, and Benn on the panel for African development are K.Y. Amoako (Ghana), Michael Camdessus (France), Nancy Kassebaum Baker (US), and Sir Bob Geldof (UK). Other prominent figures have called recently for global development reform, including World Bank President James Wolfenson, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and the rock artist Bono.

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