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Title	*The UN's role in Overcoming Development Challenges*
Description	Special Lecture given by former Prime Minister of New Zealand and now Administrator of the United Nations Development Program the Rt Hon. Helen Clark. She is introduced by Director of the Global Economic Governance Program, Professor Ngaire Woods
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Ngaire Woods Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this special address. I'm Ngaire Woods, director of the Global Economic Governance Programme.

It's a research programme here at Oxford devoted to research into how global institutions can work better for people in developing countries.

We're based at University College and I'd like to do a special welcome to the Master of University College, Sir Ivor Crewe, as well as in the Department of Politics and International Relations, and welcome to Professor Neil MacFarlane from the department.

And we enjoy the support, and we're grateful to the support, of alumni of the College as well as the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and Canada's International Development Research Centre.

And my co-hosts this afternoon are Valpy Fitzgerald on behalf of Oxford's Department of Development Studies, whose faculty, including some of whom are here, Frances Stewart, [[?? 0:01:00]], the late [[?? 0:01:03]] have long been involved advising the United Nations Development Programme.

And my other co-host is Sabina Alkire, who is director of Oxford's Poverty and Human Development initiative; a project which is also supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre. You see those Canadians do more than win ice hockey gold medals.

But today we're hugely honoured to have Helen Clark here to speak about the United Nation's role in overcoming development challenges.

Helen Clark has a long and very distinguished career in public service. She's one of the longest serving and, many would say, one of the very best of New Zealand's Prime Ministers.

As a fellow New Zealander working in international relations, I'm particularly proud of the foreign policies that she presided over; not just on contentious issues like Iraq but also on development policies and New Zealand's contribution to the MDGs both within New Zealand and outside of New Zealand.

Now, in 2001 a biographer of Helen Clark wrote in his introduction the following: "To praise any politician invites derision. But I find myself believing that Helen really is in this business for the

greater good. That she's largely without ego or personal ambition and that she genuinely aspires to be that rarest of political animals, the servant leader."

And one year ago this 'servant leader' went global. On 31 March last year the Secretary General of the United Nations announced that the General Assembly had unanimously approved Helen Clark as the new head of the United Nations Development Programme.

It's not an easy assignment. The UNDP sits amidst dozens of UN agencies, each armed with their own budget and mandate. And they were all dwarfed by their big cousins, the IMF and World Bank, and not to mention the bilateral donors like Britain's DFID. The management challenges are huge.

And in announcing her appointment the Secretary General voiced his hope that Helen Clark would bring to this job her well-honed consensus-building skills and commitment to a multilateral approach to addressing global financial and development issues.

But he also expressed his hope that what Helen Clark would bring to this job is a strategic perspective coupled with fresh thinking and an impetus for change.

And that, I'm sure, we're going to hear a lot about today.

So we will have time for questions at the end of Helen Clark's lecture and after the questions I'd like to invite you all to stay for a reception which will take place just at the back of the hall.

But, with that, a hugely warm welcome to Helen Clark for this special Oxford University address.

Thank you, Helen.

Helen Clark Thank you, Ngaire, faculty, students and distinguished guests, including the Secretary General of the Commonwealth who we're privileged to have with us.

And thank you for the invitation to deliver the special address. My topic, the role of the UN and furthering the MDGs and overcoming development challenges, which is obviously a very central interest to me in my current position as Administrator of UNDP, which is the UN's largest development organisation. And, in that capacity, also serving as Chair of the United Nations Development Group, to which some 28 UN development organisations are affiliated.

I recognise fully the enormous expertise in this university. And, indeed, sitting in this room on all aspects of development and global governance, I almost hesitate to speak in the presence of so much expertise.

But I did want to start by saying that we really do appreciate the many thoughtful articles, Op-eds, papers and debates which emerge from the Global Economic Governance programme. We see you generating discussion on many critical issues around A, trade and global governance; issues which are too often left unexamined altogether elsewhere or captured only in politically-charged sound bites.

Even a simple scan of the website for this programme reveals many stimulating ideas, whether we're talking about that of reversing the psychology and power dynamics of aid negotiations by encouraging recipient countries to set aid-enhancing conditions on donors; a reversal of conditionality, if you like, to ways of using aid to improve governance by designing and building incentives and skilled and shared understandings.

So clearly there are many synergies between the work of UNDP and this programme and so much else which happens in this university. And we need to explore ways that we could interact even more than we do.

So coming to my particular mission at this time, I guess it's an understatement to say that it is not an easy time for the UN development system, or anybody else, to be pursuing a development mission.

We're all grappling with the fallout from the largely concurrent crises: the global recession; anticipated impacts of climate change and very real ongoing impacts in some cases; the lingering effects of the food and fuel crises; the spread of deadly diseases; the impasse on world trade negotiations also does nothing for development.

Our increasingly multi-polar world is struggling to come to terms with what it will take to address these complex and multifaceted issues in the face of divergent perspectives, fragmented institutions and abundance rivalries.

While personally I'm always an optimist, the question which must at least be asked if whether we, as human beings, do have the collective capacity and will to deal effectively with these challenges.

And that is a proposition which is explored in a fascinating new book by two Australian academics, Joe Camilleri and Jim Falk entitled 'Worlds in Transition: Evolving Governance Across a Stressed Planet.'

I mention it not only because I launched it in Sydney a couple of weeks ago but also because it's important that voices from the Antipodes make it all the way across the oceans to be listened to here.

In terms of setbacks to development, one must also mention the heartbreaking consequences of natural disasters, like that in Haiti in recent weeks, where hard-fought progress and the aspirations of millions have been so undermined by the earthquake. And we've seen Chile also hit very hard by nature's destructive forces within the past week.

Reflecting on these tragedies, they leave us not only immensely sad but also with an appreciation of how compassion can transcend borders. And it was certainly humbling to me to see the world's least developed countries dig deep in their pockets in solidarity with Haiti.

Overall, the international community reacted quickly and continues to do so.

I think in our globalised world we're becoming more conscious of our interdependence as we need to be.

We've seen how the financial collapse in the markets in the north affected countries across the south. We've seen how the heavy carbon footprints in industrialised counties have led to changes in our climate, which affect the least developed the most. We've seen how unsanitary farming practices in one community can start a global pandemic. We're all exposed to unmanaged risk in our globalised world.

And our interdependence demands, in my view, that the developed world pays attention to the countries and the populations which are least able to recover from recession, adapt to rising sea levels and drought, combat the epidemics and deal with a wide range of other disasters and shocks.

Of course the case for a renewed multilateral approach to development is not just about risk management. Over the long term, surely we are all the winners if developing countries are then able to have vibrant economies, be well-governed and peaceful, have educated and healthy populations and be able to play their part in the fight against climate change by pursuing low-carbon routes to development.

There simply will not be a stable world economy when so many continue to live in poverty, severely constrained in their efforts to build a better life for themselves and their children.

The fight against poverty and hunger has undoubtedly become harder in this era of multiple crises. And it demands a stepped up response at the very time when the traditional donor countries to development are the most hard pressed; from London to Washington DC, from Madrid to Tokyo, the squeeze is on government budgets. And the issue will be to what extent the support for development can be corralled off from the exit from stimulus packages and higher spending that probably most are planning in due course.

If we look back to 2007, just before the global food crisis hit, the number of chronically hungry people - chronically hungry people - in developing countries was estimated at around 850 million. For last year the FAO now estimates that the number had risen to exceed 1 billion.

And I think everyone here would appreciate that there are many long-term consequences of chronic hunger. Children may feel the effects of poor nutrition well into their lives, both because of the impact of cognitive skills and on their ability to be productive and contributing members of society.

We know that many families cope with economic setback by drawing children out of school. Governments may cut their budgets, including on education. In developing countries that may mean that the children affected never get a second chance of education.

It's also an unfortunate truth that many of the countries least responsible for the global recession were hit by a double blow. They bore the heaviest burden and had the least ability to respond.

Without the ability to stimulate spending and protect the most vulnerable, the consequences of the global recession in such countries could take many years to remedy.

And long after we stop talking about the global recession in the developed world, there's likely to be a lingering impact on these countries' ability to progress because of the impact on human development. Ultimately at a much greater cost to the international community than if there was timely support right now.

Like the recession, we see climate change also hitting the poorest the hardest; whether they are dwelling on the dry lands of Africa, on the great river deltas of Asia, in the world's small atoll nations or elsewhere. One example, it's been projected that in countries with per capital annual income below US $6,000 a year, the burden of diarrhoeal disease from climate change alone is likely to increase by up to 5% by 2020, to say nothing of the effects of protracted droughts of more regular cyclones and flooding.

Yet the climate agreement the whole world needs remains strangely elusive, despite, I would say, the UN's own best efforts and commitments to getting one.

Least developed countries have done the least to cause climate change and can least afford the cost of action to adapt to, and mitigate, its impacts. It's widely acknowledged that such countries will need support to build greater resilience to climate change as well as to follow a low-carbon route to development, which is not business as usual economic development.

Developing countries are also bearing the brunt of the stalemate in the WTO's Doha development round. They have the most to gain from accessing the markets which are still protected; They have the fewest cards to play in bilateral trade negotiations. There is that emerging patchwork of bilateral agreements which risks laying many extra layers of complexity in the trading system and increasing transaction costs.

The fairer trade of the future needs to recognise and allow for the very different starting points of developing countries, in particular the least developed. And a renewed commitment to multilateralism is very badly needed on trade.

I think these many challenges to development represent just some of the many reasons why we need a reinvigorated multilateral system which reflects the realities of the 21st century and not of the last.

That means strong support for the United Nations and its funds, programmes and agencies, which, taken as a whole, enjoy unparalleled legitimacy.

The UN does need reform, for example to its Security Council; reform which would enhance its ability to lead. There is, in my view, no substitute for a strong UN to be found in informal multilateralism.

In terms of the practical work of the UN development system, a great deal is being done. Take the work of my own organisation during the recession where we've been supporting many countries in analysing what the human development impacts are, advising on how best to preserve budgets for basic services, to maintain traction on the MDGs and other development goals.

In Jamaica we even helped, for example, negotiate the country's crippling debt burden, which was taking around 65% of the government's budget each year and we've managed to help them negotiate a little below that. There's been many, many such initiatives across many countries to support people through the recession.

On an ongoing basis we support countries on redesigning their governance, to endeavour to make it more accountable, more transparent, more responsive, helping countries to expand the rule of law, access to justice, strengthen the functioning of their parliaments, their national human rights institutions etc.

We work to support recovery from crisis and natural disaster, with the particular niche for UNDP being to help build that bridge out of humanitarian phase and assistance into development. In Haiti, that's meant, for example, launching a large-scale cash-for-work programme which gives people the dignity of working for the money which they need to support their families.

And it has the dual benefit of doing essential tasks as well, like clearing rubble and looking for what is salvageable for reconstruction. There are tens of thousands of jobs already created with an aspiration to go into the hundreds of thousands should the funding for it be available.

We also work on the climate agenda with so many developing countries. It might be helping a disaster-prone region in Uganda adapt to the change in climate there. It might be work on exploring the potential of climate-resistant crops for Africa. It might in identifying new sources of carbon finance. And, indeed, we're very clear that as climate finance becomes an increasingly important part of the development finance infrastructure, many countries are going to need support to access it.

So much of the resource available from the clean development mechanism under Kyoto has gone to those large emerging economies with the specialised bureaucracies which connects the excess and the report on the money, not necessarily to the most deserving.

But, of course, the work we do is not enhanced by the absence of global deals in all these areas on climate change, on development financing, on trade. But we have to work within the setting that we have.

From its outside, the United Nations has been seen by many as an incubator of great and good ideas with global application. The UN Intellectual History project has just completed its many years of work with the publication of a summary volume on those ideas. And the most powerful of them over the years have both changed and shaped policies at all levels, including on development , the environment, human rights and on gender. And two of the big ideas which Professor Jolley and colleagues specifically identify are those in development.

The UN's push for development with a human face in the 1980s drew attention to the hardship imposed by structural adjustment measures and led to the now widely embraced human development approach which emphasises that development is about much more than increasing gross domestic product per capita and must be shaped by an effort to improve people's ability to shape their own lives.

I'm conscious that we have with us today a number of people who contribute very directly to the compilation of UNDP's human development reports, and thank you so much for the support that you give that programme.

It is the 20th year of the human development reports and this one will be one which looks back and reflects on where the concept has come from and where it might go to.

The second big idea which Professor Jolley and Co in the UN Intellectual History project associate with the UN is the Millennium Development Goal Project. Those goals are simple but very powerful targets which attempted to capture a global consensus around the need to reduce poverty and hunger and improve gender equality and access to health, education and improving environment.

Back in 2000 I was one of a great many heads of government who travelled up to New York to the UN General Assembly, signed the Millennium Declaration, inherent in it, of course, the Millennium Development Goals. I must say when you sign a declaration like that and goals like that in 2000, 2015 seems a very long way away and not in my wildest dreams would I have thought I would end up in this position with the particular responsibility for promoting them. That is life. And it was certainly the opportunity to make a contribution in areas like this which motivated me to come forward for this particular position.

But we're now up against some very real time constraints. 2015 is not 15 years away; it is five. And clearly the UN and its funds and programmes and agencies cannot achieve those goals on their own. But we do have a leadership role and a convening power which can help to focus international attention on what might be done.

Right now there's a lot of activity going on and preparation for the high level summit on the MDGs in September and there the progress made to date will be examined. We will look at the gaps which remain and hopefully agree on an accelerated approach to reach the goals by 2015.

Of course there has been progress and I am one who believes that the MDGs are achievable and we should look at what has succeeded rather than focus necessarily on where we're falling short and think that nothing can be done.

Things can be done.

The worldwide target of reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015 can be achieved, greatly assisted, of course, by the fact that China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and that, of course, helps me to global average target.

The world is also getting closer to meeting the universal primary education target, although, at this time, a little too slowly to meet the 2015 timeline.

The latest figures on child mortality, which UNICEF released, estimate that the number of child deaths in 2008 was down to 8.8 million from 12.5 million in 1990. It's a significant drop but we would need to go faster to meet the target. And, of course, it is utterly unacceptable that so many children die before their fifth birthday.

The sobering challenges, clearly in sub-Sahara and Africa there are many, with no country there on course to achieve all the MDGs at present.

Four years after the target date which was set for achieving gender parity in education, we're not there.

And the goal to which there has been the least progress is that which seeks to improve maternal health which, to me, speaks volumes about the too low priority given to the status of women and meeting the needs of women in so many countries and, in particular, to meeting their sexual and reproductive health needs.

UNDP believes that, from experience, with adequate resources and concerted effort the MDGs can be achieved. And we see many remarkable successes.

At random increased agricultural productivity in Ghana contributed to a 50% reduction in hunger between 1991 and 2004. Ethiopia, since 1990, has reduced the number of out-of -school children by around 3 million. The under-five mortality rate has fallen by at least 40% since 1990 in Malawi, Mozambique, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Niger; all poor countries but considerable success in that area.

So how to accelerate and widen the progress. We think at UNDP that we need to apply what we've learnt about what has made for the successes and expand the global partnerships behind progress.

On the first score, we offer the following insights into what our organisation thinks it's learnt since the signing of the Millennium Declaration.

Firstly, that well-targeted assistance will help deliver development results.

We have been working closely with the IMF and a number of African countries on what we call 'Gleneagles scenarios' which show the development results which could be achieved if ODA were scaled up to the levels pledged by the G8. I say "If it were" because the pledges to Africa by the G8 in 2005 of doubling ODA by 2010 over 2004 levels are very far short of delivery. Depending on what inflation indicator we use it could be between 80% to 90% short of delivery. Money isn't everything, but, of course, it does help.

Secondly, we do think that development particularly thrives on good government and wise leadership; on making the right investments in people, institutions and infrastructure and on fostering growth trade investment which, in the 21st century, should be both green and inclusive, and, to add to the conversation we had at lunch, job rich as well because markets don't necessarily deliver jobs without some help.

To make the most of scarce ODA, and I've mentioned that there are pressures on all the traditional donors, we think that development agencies should be increasingly striving to see the use of aid as a catalyst which enables countries to make step changes to development on a systemic level.

That means supporting access to the best strategic and policy advice and the best institutional and delivery system design available. We don't think a small project approach to development can produce the systemic and transformational change to which developing countries aspire.

So often we see developing countries with great strategies and plans but not enough capacity to implement them fully. So the development partners need to take on the not so visible and the highly complex work of supporting the strengthening of the local institutions and governing systems which can help make development happen.

An example. Hiring more teachers is clearly a critical intervention for meeting development goals. Yet sustainably improving the retention of students and improving their learning and achievement requires an education ministry with the capacity to back the teachers, with the classrooms, the equipment, the curricula and, not least, adequate pay, training and professional development.

We find that so many governments have a good sense of the interventions which they would like to have to get good results but that they very much welcome support to identify and address the constraints and bottlenecks which are preventing full implementation of their plans.

We see sustainable development results being best based on consultation rather than decree. Good leadership can turn great ideas into lasting results where the local population is engaged, empowered and motivated.

If the objective is to enhance local populations' capabilities to improve their own lives, then they must be a part of shaping, designing and sustaining development efforts.

We see development assistance as needing to be much more about working with partner governments and societies, sharing experience and knowhow and playing that catalytic role of helping make development happen, recognising that developing countries must be the drivers of their own development goals and solutions.

We can help by supporting the networks which link resources and expertise with the country requirements for development solutions. And we should always be informed by what works.

Progress towards the education MDG, for example, we see as much stronger in Malawi, while progress towards the maternal health MDG is rather weaker. In Zambia, not so far away, not so different, the opposite is true. So each has lessons to share about what works.

We're also emphasising the central importance of addressing the gender issues. Women are most responsible for growing the world's food, caring for most of the world's sick people, raising the world's children.

Research suggests that if a woman receives just one extra year of schooling, her children will be less likely to die in infancy or suffer from illness or hunger. Research suggests that enabling and empowering women to own homes, businesses and have more control over the home budget has a very significant development impact.

I'm told that after the Tsunami in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu in India many women, rather than men, were given the legal titles of the newly rebuilt homes and were able to contribute to the rebuilt and successful villages that resulted.

On the climate change issues, what we are emphasising is the central importance of mainstreaming considerations around adaptation and mitigation into the very centre of national development planning. Not as some separate silo of things to be done, but needing to be brought into the centre of the whole project.

By some estimates, 40% of development investment from ODA and concessional lending is sensitive to climate risk, which means that if we're not building, for example, climate change adaptation into that national development planning, scarce resources could well be wasted, which is never a good principal.

So we see human development and environmental sustainability in climate change considerations as needing to be very much tackled hand in hand in development right now.

And that was the core of the message that we, as an organisation, took to Copenhagen. Also that while climate change clearly presents great challenges, the process of tackling it also presents opportunities for developing countries.

In the last hours at Copenhagen, developed countries did undertake to provide additional financial resources, amounting to around $30 billion for the period 2010-2012 and figures substantially larger than 10 billion per annum in the realms of discussion should there be a climate change agreement, which I sincerely hope there will be in due course.

But that point on funding leads me to elaborate of expanding global partnerships for development.

We have seen international development cooperation undergo profound changes: more development financing options exist; the role of foreign direct investment, trade flows and remittances have become increasingly important; so many international NGOs are truly global development players; the regional integration institutions have become more important; the private sector is more engaged; and South-South cooperation is growing exceptionally fast.

The rise of the emerging economies and their growing geo-political importance is putting some real weight behind South-South cooperation. More and more of the expertise and financing which developing countries need is likely to come from within the south in the future and I believe that UNDP and the UN development system overall are well positioned to facilitate that transfer of knowledge and relevant experience.

Partnerships and networks which offer not only expertise but also opportunities for exchanging experience will become very important. And fragmented development institutions and players must be able to learn from each other's experiences more easily.

So, for the UN development system, this means being able to move our interventions from the small scale to the catalytic and the systemic; having a strong country presence which is linked into global knowledge networks and expertise; being able to maintain impartiality in the face of clearly competing development paradigms; and being able to partner with countries of both the north and the south as well as with the range of other players, whether they be philanthropic, civil society or private sector.

The United Nations' universality and impartiality and the comprehensive approach it takes to development mean it's well placed in this emerging environment. Yet the global development challenges increasingly also involve global governance challenges and that question again arises, "Does the international community have the collective will to build governance structures and agreements which are fair and just and legitimate and effective?"

Of course, no single actor can achieve the MDGs or promote sustainable development or tackle the global problems we face. In overcoming the development challenges many actors need to work in partnership: developing countries, by making MDG achievement and sustainable development central to their development strategies, and the multilateral system, the donor countries, the NGOs and the private sector.

The role of the United Nations as a convenor of nations, a contributor of bigger ideas with global reach and a mobiliser of collective international will and commitment to act for development is simply indispensable to overcoming those challenges.

Thank you.
