

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 17 September 2008

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 17 September 2008

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good afternoon. As always on a Wednesday, the first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Alex McLellan, executive director of Reason Why.

Alex McLellan (Reason Why): "It's like sawing off the branch you're sitting on!" That saying reflects a danger obvious to all, but YouTube suggests otherwise. Click on the link and see teenagers putting the theory to the test—yes, they actually sawed off the branch they were sitting on, with painful consequences.

Do others put themselves in a similarly precarious position, perhaps not physically, but in relation to the claims they make? Consider the following: "There is no truth!" The person who makes that claim clearly believes it is true that there is no truth, so it is a claim that immediately contradicts itself—it is sawing off the branch. "You can't tell others what to believe!" But that person is telling others what to believe and it is another contradiction, like sawing off the branch. And one of my favourites: "You can't talk about religion!" Whoever says that is clearly talking about religion, but denying others the right to do the same. I hope that you get the point—it is sawing off the branch.

Three years ago, I started the company Reason Why to encourage people to think about what they believe and why they believe it, because whatever you believe, there is a reason why. What is the reason why you believe? Know the reason why you believe. I believe that Christianity is true and there is a reason why.

Consider the universe: where did it come from? I believe in God because something from someone is more probable than something from nothing. Consider Jesus of Nazareth: a man who lived in a remote place with little money, no political power, and no military might; he never wrote a book, only taught for three years and yet he turned the history of the world upside down. I believe that the life, teaching and impact of Jesus Christ confirm that he is the son of God.

Consider our experience: a desire for significance in a universe where we are less than a speck, a desire for relationship in a world that is socially broken and fragmented and a desire for permanence in a life that is fleeting. I believe that

the Bible makes sense when it says that we were made by God, which is significance; we were created to know God, which is relationship; and God wants us to spend eternity with him, which is permanence.

As GK Chesterton said, the fact that we do not fit this world is the best evidence that we were made for another world, and Christianity offers the reason why.

Scottish Ambulance Service

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon on the Scottish Ambulance Service. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement and there should therefore be no interventions or interruptions.

14:04

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): In the debate on 22 May, members raised a number of concerns about the Scottish Ambulance Service. I undertook to investigate each and every one of those concerns and, on 4 June, I reported back to the Parliament on the actions that were being taken to address them. I gave a commitment then to come back to Parliament after the summer recess with a further update on progress.

In the interests of consistency, I intend to structure my update around the same four issues that I covered on 4 June. They were: leadership culture; the accuracy and reliability of performance data; concerns about the use of fast-response vehicles; and staffing issues, with particular reference to single crewing.

Concerns about the leadership culture in the Scottish Ambulance Service were first brought to the attention of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Ambulance Service in May, when formal complaints, including serious allegations of bullying and harassment, were made. At that time, the service's board asked Ken Corsar to chair an independent investigation. That investigation has been concluded, and a report has been submitted to the chair of the Scottish Ambulance Service. It remains a matter for the service's board, but I am assured that due process has been and will continue to be followed. Members will understand why I will make no further comment on the issue today, to ensure fairness to all concerned.

Members will recall that concerns were expressed about possible manipulation of performance data and that there was a suspicion that the recent improvement in performance against the category A target might be the result of such manipulation, rather than genuine service improvement. I confirmed that I had instructed a comprehensive review and audit of the performance information that was required for reporting on the target. The review was led by Professor Peter Donnelly, the then deputy chief medical officer, and was supported by representatives of the Scottish partnership forum, the Scottish Government health directorates and

ISD Scotland, and by a director of operations from an English ambulance service trust.

I have received Professor Donnelly's report; copies have now been made available to health spokespeople and placed in the Scottish Parliament information centre. I am pleased to advise members that the report finds no evidence of inappropriate data manipulation in the Scottish Ambulance Service. Professor Donnelly emphasised that he and the group attach a high degree of certainty to that conclusion. He advised that the group received full co-operation from both staff and management of the service and benefited from an external data audit that confirmed the group's findings.

However, the report identifies data-handling, management and audit processes that, in the group's opinion, were not sufficiently robust or were not always applied universally in the organisation. It points to the need for an external validation process to be developed and applied to the data that the service produces before performance information is reported to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Ambulance Service agrees with the report's conclusions and is already taking action to address the recommendations.

If there has been no data manipulation, how has the service achieved the service improvements that are reflected in the category A performance figures? The group concluded that there were credible explanations for the reported performance improvement. The report maps out an 18 per cent category A performance gain by the service between December 2006 and May 2008 and describes the various operational areas in which improvement has been made. The factors that it identifies include improvements in allocation and mobilisation times in the emergency medical dispatch centres and ambulance deployment points; improved basic performance flowing from investment of more resources and the better deployment of ambulances; and the introduction of auto-reporting at scene.

I appreciate that auto-reporting at scene—which, the report estimates, may account for about 4 per cent of the reported performance improvement—causes members some concern. Due to the 200m tolerance of the vehicle location system, it is possible for an ambulance to be recorded as at scene slightly before it is there. It should be pointed out that that was, and is, possible under the manual system and that auto-reporting is used by all ambulance services. Nevertheless, the report rightly recommends that the service identify opportunities to refine the system's tolerance to improve further the accuracy of reporting.

I hope that the detailed, thorough and extremely robust report that has been produced satisfies members' concerns and reassures them that there

has been no manipulation of performance data by the Scottish Ambulance Service. My officials will continue to work with the service to ensure that all the report's recommendations are taken forward and that the required improvements in process are put in place quickly.

In my statement to Parliament on 4 June, I confirmed that I had asked the chief medical officer, Dr Harry Burns, to commission an independent evaluation of the front-loaded model. Dr Burns tasked NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, under the guidance of a reference group, to undertake the review. The QIS report has been published on its website, and copies have been made available to members.

The report is clear that the use of fast-response vehicles for responding to appropriate emergency calls is valid and that the principles of the front-loaded model are sound. It recommends that the Scottish Ambulance Service should continue to develop the use of fast-response vehicles as part of its service to meet the clinical needs of patients. It also makes a number of recommendations on the more effective implementation of key principles, including clinical governance, appropriate training and proactive engagement with the public, Scottish Ambulance Service staff and other parts of the health and emergency services.

Taking forward all those recommendations will allow the Scottish Ambulance Service to deliver clinically effective, patient-centred care while addressing the concerns of staff about safety and governance. In the interests of public assurance, however, I have asked the chief medical officer to commission, in six months' time, a further report on how the service is progressing in its utilisation of fast-response vehicles. That report will of course be published, and I have no doubt that it will be the subject of debate by members of the Parliament.

I have made clear to the Scottish Ambulance Service my firm expectation that fast-response vehicles should always be crewed by a paramedic, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In response, the service has confirmed to me that, by the end of this calendar year, the rostered crewing of fast-response vehicles by technicians will be eliminated.

I turn to staffing and related issues. Members are aware that the Scottish Ambulance Service faces a number of challenges flowing from the introduction of the new agenda for change pay, terms and conditions package. In particular, the implications of the new United Kingdom-level agreement on how staff who work unsocial hours should be remunerated caused some difficulty for the service. In addition, some areas of the agenda for change agreement, such as the provisions on

meal breaks and on-call arrangements, have presented real and significant challenges.

Scottish Government officials have been discussing all those issues with Scottish Ambulance Service management and trade unions. I am confident that all parties will, in the near future, be able to reach agreement on a way forward that is right for the Scottish Ambulance Service and its staff and which is also in the clear interests of patients. I will, of course, keep members fully updated on that set of issues.

That leads me to the final substantive issue that I wish to deal with today: the elimination of rostered single crewing of traditional accident and emergency ambulances. When I last reported on the issue to members, I made it clear that I expected the Scottish Ambulance Service to take action to eliminate rostered single crewing. I asked it to provide me with an action plan demonstrating how it intended to achieve the elimination of single crewing on a sustainable basis. I have now received that action plan, and copies have been made available to members today.

It is clear that delivery of the action plan will require significant additional investment. I am therefore delighted to announce to Parliament that the Scottish Government will provide an additional £4.7 million to the Scottish Ambulance Service over this and the next two years. That investment will support the recruitment and training of an additional 40 front-line staff into the north and south-west divisions of the service. That will result in a significant increase in the relief capacity at which the service is able to operate, and it will ensure that single crewing is eliminated in all but the most exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. The service has advised that, realistically, it might take around two years to have all the staff who are required in post and fully trained. In the medium term, therefore, additional overtime resources will continue to be made available to keep the incidence of single crewing to a minimum.

I am pleased to report that that investment is already making a big difference. When I reported to the Parliament in June, there were 30 or more instances of single crewing every day in the north and south-west divisions. Such instances have already been reduced to single figures. I have asked the service to provide me with monthly reports on single crewing as it takes forward the action plan, so that I and members of the Scottish Parliament can monitor progress on an on-going basis. I hope that members of all parties will join me in welcoming the fact that routine single crewing of ambulances, which has been an issue of deep concern for many years, particularly in rural Scotland, is being decisively addressed by this Government.

When I gave my statement to the Parliament in June, I made it clear that it was important to reassure members and the public about the service that the Scottish Ambulance Service provides. I hope that the progress that I have set out begins to provide that reassurance. It is evident from the work that has been going on during summer and from the representations that have been made to me directly that the service must continue to work hard to improve communication with its staff, other parts of the health service, MSPs and the public.

Change is inevitable and necessary if we are to provide a modern ambulance service, but change must be managed at the right pace and with the full co-operation of staff and the support and understanding of the public. To address that, during summer the Scottish Ambulance Service reviewed its arrangements for engagement with staff, patients and the wider public and developed a comprehensive communications and engagement plan. In the past few weeks, all MSPs have been invited to meet their local ambulance managers to discuss issues of concern. I hope that all members will take up that opportunity.

I record my sincere thanks to the people who worked so hard during the summer to produce the reports that were made available today, particularly given the challenging timescales that were set for them. I hope that members agree that swift action was taken in May to address the concerns that had been raised about the Scottish Ambulance Service. It is time to move on and to support the service in tackling the challenging agenda of improvement that it faces.

The Government remains committed to ensuring high-quality, safe and effective ambulance services for the whole of Scotland. I am confident that the Scottish Ambulance Service will respond to the challenges that it continues to face and ensure that it delivers that high-quality service for all patients in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will take questions on the issues that were raised in her statement. We have about 30 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business—the next item is heavily subscribed, so I have no leeway.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement and for the reports. It is clear that she intends to keep me busy in my new role.

I, too, thank everyone who worked hard to produce the reports. I also thank the ambulance crews who have been dealing with a 12 per cent increase in demand for services without additional resources having been made available. It is

important to acknowledge the context in which we are working. The Scottish National Party Government has given the national health service its worst financial settlement since devolution and health boards are being asked to make efficiency savings.

The cabinet secretary said that a report on allegations of bullying and harassment in the Scottish Ambulance Service has been completed. Although I understand that it would not be appropriate to comment on individual cases at this stage, allegations of systematic bullying and harassment in any public service are of legitimate public interest. When will the cabinet secretary be able to give details of action that has been taken on the general issues that arise from the report?

Secondly, as the cabinet secretary knows, serious concerns were raised about the ability of single-crewed ambulances to deal effectively with emergency calls—indeed, some of those points led Labour to call for a debate back in May. The additional £4.7 million funding is welcome, but the cabinet secretary indicated that the recruitment of additional front-line staff will take a couple of years and that, at the end of the process, single crewing would be eliminated in all but the most exceptional circumstances. Will she be more specific about what circumstances those would be? Would it be only unforeseen circumstances, or would there be other scenarios in which single crewing would still exist?

Nicola Sturgeon: I welcome Cathy Jamieson to her new post. I have no doubt that she and I will have our disagreements, but I hope that we can also have some constructive engagement on a range of issues. The issues that we will deal with are important to the people of Scotland, and I know that they expect both of us to treat them accordingly. I wish Cathy Jamieson all the best in her position.

With that piece of consensus over, I move to the substance of Ms Jamieson's questions. On the financial settlement, I must point out that the health budget is now at record levels—we are spending more on health in Scotland than we have ever done in the history of our country. Interestingly, the most recent figures show that, since the Government came to office last May, there have been 5,000 more people employed in our NHS. That does not sound to me like the cuts or backward moves that Cathy Jamieson suggested; it sounds like solid investment in the health of our nation, which is what people expect.

On leadership culture and Ken Corsar's report to the ambulance service, Cathy Jamieson will appreciate why it is not possible for me to go into detail on the issue today. That is fundamentally an employment issue, and it is right that the board of the Scottish Ambulance Service, which instructed

the report, can now take it forward. I will not put a specific timescale on when the processes might be concluded, but I assure members that the service is taking forward the issues as quickly as possible and in line with natural justice and due process, which everybody would expect.

Cathy Jamieson said that Labour raised the concerns on single crewing. The first thing that I should point out is that members of the Parliament, such as Mary Scanlon, have been raising the issue of single crewing for an awful lot longer than the Labour Opposition has. Single crewing did not just start when the SNP Government came to power last May. It has been a problem, particularly in rural Scotland, for many years. At last we are getting to grips with the problem, and we are on the way to eliminating rostered single crewing. I hope that all members welcome that.

Exceptional circumstances are, for example, when someone phones in sick at the last minute and cover cannot practically be arranged. Those are the exceptional circumstances that I spoke about, but the important point is that the routine single crewing that has caused so much concern is coming to an end at long last.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, welcome Cathy Jamieson to her new post. As the cabinet secretary said, we will no doubt disagree on many issues, but all politicians from all parties are signed up to the best interests of patients in Scotland and I am sure that we can also agree on many issues.

On behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I welcome the cabinet secretary's response today. I thank her for the advance copy of her statement and the various accompanying documents, which will take some time to scrutinise.

I am not alone in welcoming the end of single manning. Patients and ambulance staff across the Highlands will strongly welcome the initiative to tackle an issue that I have raised for many years, often filled with the dread that one day I may be alone in the back of an ambulance while the paramedic is driving. None of us would wish for that.

I welcome the fact that there will be a paramedic rather than a technician in the single-crewed fast-response vehicles, but even the most experienced paramedic needs support in some incidents to provide effective treatment and intervention. Will the cabinet secretary put more emphasis on the recording of the effectiveness of the intervention and treatment, as well as on the time that is taken for the vehicle to turn up?

The cabinet secretary announced an additional £4.7 million for the Scottish Ambulance Service over this year and the next two years. Will she

clarify whether that is a total of £14.1 million, or of £4.7 million over three years?

As a Highlands and Islands MSP, I ask that at least 20 of the additional 40 front-line staff be allocated to the north division to eliminate single manning.

Following the previous debate on ambulances, I spent a shift with an ambulance crew in Inverness. I met someone with 27 years' service who was being handed his 20 years' service medal, which had been found at the back of a drawer. Will the Scottish Ambulance Service ensure that it values its staff as much as people in Scotland do?

Nicola Sturgeon: As I sat down after replying to Cathy Jamieson and praising Mary Scanlon for her consistent campaigning on single crewing, Jamie Stone shouted at me that he, too, had raised the issue. Therefore, it is probably appropriate that I record the fact that many members across the Parliament—Jamie Stone and members of my party, such as Rob Gibson, Dave Thompson and Fergus Ewing—have consistently raised the issue. There have also been national newspaper campaigns to highlight single crewing, most recently by the *Daily Record*. It is to the credit of everybody who has raised the issue that there is now a long-term sustainable solution.

The points that Mary Scanlon made about fast-response vehicles are pertinent. I appreciate that members will not have had time to read in detail the QIS report on the front-loaded model of fast-response vehicle use, but it highlights the issues that Mary Scanlon raises. It states that there is a need for better clinical governance and audit of the outcome of cases in which paramedics treat patients without necessarily conveying them to hospital. The Scottish Ambulance Service is taking that on board. Secondly, in cases in which a paramedic attends in the first instance but considers that conveyance to hospital will be required, there must be certainty for the patient about how long it will take the follow-up ambulance to arrive. The service is working towards ensuring that that will be another 8-minute response time in life-threatening calls. That compares with a 19-minute follow-up target in England, for example. On both those counts, work is well and truly in progress.

On the question about the £4.7 million, while I would like to say that the answer is about £14 million—I cannot do the calculation—over three years, I confirm that, as I hope I made clear in my statement, it is £4.7 million over three years: £1.7 million this year and £1.5 million in each of the next two years.

On staff recruitment, I confirm that the 40 additional staff will be divided 20 and 20 between the north and south-west divisions.

Like the rest of the Scottish population and members in the Parliament, I expect the Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure that its staff are properly valued for the excellent work that they do.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement and the accompanying documentation, and for name checking me in what she just said.

My first question concerns the elimination of rostered crewing of fast-response vehicles by technicians, which is to be welcomed. Is there a possibility that the timescale for elimination could be shortened?

The cabinet secretary talked about single crewing being kept to a minimum in the medium term. The Liberal Democrats would like to know when the practice will be eliminated entirely, if she is able to give a date on that.

A letter to the cabinet secretary from Lairg community council, dated 8 September 2008, states that from Monday 1 September to Wednesday 3 September there was no ambulance cover in Lairg due to staffing problems. How could that have been? That was potentially a life-threatening situation within that vast rural area. How does that sit with the statement that she has just given us?

Nicola Sturgeon: The Scottish Ambulance Service advises me that the rostered crewing of fast-response vehicles by technicians rather than paramedics is an issue only in west-central division and does not happen in other divisions. The service has given a commitment that it will be eliminated by the end of the calendar year, excepting the kind of exceptional circumstances about which I spoke earlier. That is an important commitment.

On the second question, on the instances of single crewing of traditional accident and emergency ambulances, I said in my statement that significant progress has been made towards eliminating that practice. When I stood here previously and spoke about the ambulance service, there were some 30 daily occurrences of single crewing across the two divisions in which it is a problem—that is now down to single figures. By the end of June, the figure averaged four per day, but it was around eight per day in August. That slight increase was due to summer holidays, for example.

I will monitor the instances of single crewing on a monthly basis, and I am happy to share that information with members. We must ensure that we continue the downward pressure towards the elimination of single crewing. The sustainable solution, in terms of the recruitment of staff, will take time to deliver. In the meantime, the Scottish

Ambulance Service is committed to continuing extra overtime payments to ensure that the practice is minimised.

On the Lairg issue, which I appreciate is of concern to Jamie Stone—indeed, it is of concern to me—there have been specific recruitment and staffing issues in Lairg, but they are being addressed. I certainly reiterate the importance of their being addressed quickly. One new member of staff has recently been recruited. A part-time relief member of staff was recruited and they have now completed training. They started in post on 8 September. Further recruitment is on-going to get more staff into post. The extra resources that I announced today will allow Lairg to get one additional member of staff over and above the plans that are in place.

The Presiding Officer: We come to open questions. I have 12 members requesting and 18 minutes to fit them into. You do the math, as they say.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I very much welcome the £4.7 million investment in the service for the Highlands and Islands and the south-west. That is one of the best pieces of news of extra spending that we have had in the Parliament. Funding has been a long-standing issue, and I am glad that we are starting to tackle it.

I have questions for the cabinet secretary that follow on from two aspects of previous answers. Will the ambulances that are based in the most remote communities continue to be based there and not be withdrawn to serve the needs of large centres at any time, given the distances involved? Will the recruitment and training cash be used to support the placement of ambulance staff in remote areas, where, for example, housing is an enormous problem? Will the cabinet secretary take that into account in her calculations?

Nicola Sturgeon: Clearly, the deployment and placement of ambulances and ambulance staff is an operational matter for the Scottish Ambulance Service. I do not suppose anybody in the chamber or, indeed, any member of the public would be particularly reassured if I started to make those decisions for it. However, in general terms, there are no plans, in light of what I have announced today, to relocate ambulances from more rural areas to larger centres as part of the action plan to reduce single manning.

On the second question, it is important that the additional resources are allocated to areas where they are most needed. The key point about the additional staffing resources is that they will increase the relief capacity of the service, which is running considerably below what is considered to be the correct level. The additional resources will

address that problem, and I am confident that they will address many of the legitimate issues that Rob Gibson and other members have consistently raised.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome all the reports. On the data issue, does the cabinet secretary agree that, notwithstanding her saying that there was no evidence of deliberate manipulation, there were signs that the service was under pressure? For example, the recategorisation of calls trebled in the three months up to the investigation, but the auto-reporting accounted for 25 per cent of all the improvements, so there was a procedural issue. Can the cabinet secretary clarify that, because it involves a matter of public confidence?

Apart from the welcome £4.7 million, the service is under huge pressure from, for example, single manning, increased general demand and new services such as primary angioplasty. Will the cabinet secretary undertake to review the overall funding in light of the service having to address those issues?

Nicola Sturgeon: I acknowledge all the pressures that the Scottish Ambulance Service is operating under, but they are not new pressures—the service was under those pressures when the previous Administration was in office. The difference now is that we are making a concerted attempt to help the Scottish Ambulance Service to deal with those pressures.

As I said, the financial settlement for the health service takes health spending in this country to record levels. In my statement, I have committed to provide to the Scottish Ambulance Service, over and above the financial settlement that was announced in the budget, £4.7 million to help it with a particular pressure or problem. That should tell even Richard Simpson that I am a health secretary who is prepared to listen and respond when legitimate issues are raised. I hope that even he can find it within himself to give today's announcement a much warmer welcome.

Let me deal with the specific points that he raised. I covered auto-reporting at scene fully in my statement. Such reporting accounts for 4 percentage points of the 18 per cent performance improvement. It is important to point out that there is nothing wrong with auto-reporting at scene. All ambulance services use auto-reporting at scene, because it is a more accurate way of recording when an ambulance arrives. However, because of the tolerance, a small time lag can exist between the recording of being at scene and actually being at scene. Manual reporting involves a similar problem, in that the person who presses the button in the ambulance might still have 200yd to run to get to the patient. Such problems are not

new, but the service wants to refine the system to improve the accuracy of reporting.

On the recategorisation of calls, when members read the data report properly, they will see that there is absolutely no suggestion of inappropriate recategorisation or manipulation. There is a process of management scrutiny of calls, the audit of which the report says could be more robust. The service will address that issue.

The Presiding Officer: I must insist that members ask just one question now or we will not get everyone in.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement on single crews and rapid-response vehicles. Such vehicles undoubtedly make a big difference, but in the present climate they basically determine whether a two-man ambulance turns up. Will that situation continue? If so, will it be monitored? Can we be assured that paramedics, rather than people with lesser qualifications, will be used in rapid-response vehicles?

Nicola Sturgeon: In many cases where a rapid-response vehicle is sent to an incident, an ambulance will automatically be sent as back-up. I stress that, in any case where a rapid-response unit is crewed by a technician rather than a paramedic, an ambulance will always be deployed automatically as well.

Rapid-response units are a legitimate response to the changing patient need, given that not everyone—not even the majority—who dials 999 for an ambulance needs to be transported to hospital. There have been great advances in the ability of paramedics to offer treatment and to refer patients to places other than hospitals, but they must be developed with the proper transparency and proper public assurance. That is why my announcement today that there will be a further report is appropriate.

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary propose to review whether and how the appropriate training and upskilling of ambulance personnel is provided, so that we eliminate any possibility of yet more deaths occurring from an epileptic fit, as happened to my constituent Elaine Fotheringham, whose case was outlined in last weekend's *The Mail on Sunday*? When a crew of technicians arrived to attend her, they were not allowed to administer the appropriate drugs. How can we avoid yet more deaths, given that that was the second such death this year?

Nicola Sturgeon: Without going into the details of that case, I assure Helen Eadie that it is the subject of investigation by the Scottish Ambulance Service. The service needs to determine what, if anything—from its point of view—went wrong and

what might need to be done by way of response, which is appropriate.

On the general question, the report into the front-loaded model makes it clear that, as the service develops its ways of clinical working, it must ensure that the training and upskilling of its staff is taken forward in parallel. That is one of the central recommendations of the report into the front-loaded model. When Helen Eadie and other members get a chance to read it in full, I hope that they will be reassured.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I refer the cabinet secretary to the final paragraph on page 36 of Professor Donnelly's report, which states:

"There is, at present, no routine validation of data provided in performance reports before they are received by the ... Government"

and calls for effective external validation to

"enhance public confidence in the performance reported by the Scottish Ambulance Service and, more broadly, the quality of the service that it provides for patients."

Does the cabinet secretary agree with that, and will validation be brought forward?

Nicola Sturgeon: I do agree, and it will be brought forward.

Professor Donnelly's report on data makes the point that most performance data that come to the Government are first validated by the information and statistics division. That is not the case with the performance data on response times in the Scottish Ambulance Service. The report was very clear in its recommendation that there should be external validation. The service is currently examining that, and my officials will work with it to ensure that we have a robust form of external validation.

I know that Christine Grahame did not imply this, but, although the report makes that point, there is no suggestion—in fact, such a suggestion was refuted by the group's investigation—that there was anything untoward in any of the data that were passed to the Government

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Although I welcome much of the cabinet secretary's statement, I am disappointed that it did not address the shortage of volunteer drivers. How many appointments are missed because of the lack of volunteer drivers? When two appointments are missed, does the patient lose their waiting time guarantee? What is the cost to NHS boards of missed appointments and taxi services when the Scottish Ambulance Service fails?

Nicola Sturgeon: I agree with Rhoda Grant that volunteer drivers do a wonderful job in the NHS. They provide a very valuable and important

service. There is great pressure on that resource, and I am keen to see what we can do to encourage more people to become volunteer drivers, and to ensure that we value those who already do the job. In light of increased energy and fuel costs, one of the key concerns for that group of people is the cost of petrol and the mileage costs that they receive. The service is now reviewing that monthly, which is an improvement on the previous position, where it was reviewed much less frequently. However, I take the point that the volunteer contribution to the service is tremendous and should be valued and encouraged.

This is not exactly on Rhoda Grant's point but, in some of the more rural parts of the country, I have been impressed with the development of first responder schemes, which involve volunteers who are looking to contribute to the sustainability of emergency services in their areas. That is to be commended.

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): I refer to Cathy Jamieson's question about the cabinet secretary's remarks on the investigation into the leadership culture, about which she is understandably reluctant to say anything substantive. Can I at least tempt the cabinet secretary to confirm that she has been assured and is satisfied that a comprehensive investigation has taken place and that the outcome is likely to be productive as well as speedy?

Nicola Sturgeon: I am sure that Jackson Carlaw can tempt me in all sorts of directions, but I am not sure that that is one of them.

Members: Steady!

Nicola Sturgeon: I can feel myself blushing all of a sudden, although not as much as Jackson Carlaw.

In all seriousness, I am restricted in what I can say about this issue. I have not seen Ken Corsar's report, and it would not be appropriate for me to see it at this stage. I have been assured that it is robust and thorough, and that the service is treating it seriously. The service will, as expeditiously as possible, take whatever action it has to take as a result of the report. However, individuals and their jobs are at issue, and it is important that due process is followed.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Three months ago, on 19 June, I suggested to the minister that a practical solution to the problems caused by withdrawing the ambulance service from the Braemar community in my constituency and locating the ambulance 17 miles away in Ballater was to place an additional fast-response vehicle, with a paramedic, in the Braemar community. In response, the minister said:

"I am more than happy to consider any practical suggestion, and I give Mike Rumbles an undertaking that I will do so."—[*Official Report*, 19 June 2008; c 9982.]

Has she done so?

Nicola Sturgeon: The Scottish Ambulance Service is actively considering innovative solutions to provide the right kind of cover and sustainable services in rural areas. I gave Mike Rumbles that undertaking. I give him a further undertaking to come back to him with a report on the progress that has been made on the point that he raises and to give him an indication of whether the service considers what he suggests to be a feasible way forward.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): Like other members, I welcome the statement, especially the cabinet secretary's comments about tackling the issue of the accuracy of the performance data. The cabinet secretary will be aware of my concerns, which I expressed in response to her statement on 4 June, about the fact that the operational research consultancy targets do not take into account the outcome of an ambulance responding to a category A call—success is measured against a stopwatch rather than according to the success or failure of treating the patient. In the future, will there be scope to consider the outcome for patients in measuring the success of our Scottish Ambulance Service in responding to patients' needs?

Nicola Sturgeon: I appreciate that point of view, which I know is held by many people, and I have some sympathy for it. I think—and the evidence suggests that the public also think—that, especially in life-threatening cases, speed of response is important, which is why I will always defend the eight-minute target. It is right to expect the service to strive to respond within that time.

However, as I said when Michael Matheson raised the issue previously—I have no hesitation in repeating this today—response time targets are not and should never be the only measurement of the success of the service. The outcome for the patient is critical, and patient outcomes are increasingly what the service looks at. It is no longer the case that the service's only job is to take a patient to hospital. We now have the see-and-treat service, and in many cases the Scottish Ambulance Service is beginning to refer patients to other areas. As I said in response to Mary Scanlon's question, one of the key issues that the report highlights is the need to ensure good clinical governance and audit of the outcomes in all the cases that are dealt with by the service.

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): What measures will be put in place to ensure that standards of cleanliness are maintained in vehicles? Will the cabinet secretary guarantee that those standards will not be compromised by the

funding squeeze that is taking place, whereby settlement increases are being reduced from 6 per cent to 3.15 per cent?

Nicola Sturgeon: No matter how often Labour members say that there is a funding squeeze, it does not make it true and it does not mean that anybody outside the Parliament will believe them. It would be much more appropriate for members to focus on the issues that are of concern to people. In fairness to James Kelly, he has done that, as he has raised the issue of the cleaning of ambulances, which, like the cleaning of hospitals, is incredibly important.

The service has in place a cleaning and disinfection policy, which forms part of its infection control policy. In addition, it is working to implement the NHS Scotland-wide national cleaning services specification and monitoring framework. It has done some successful trial work on that in Edinburgh and Paisley, and resources have been allocated to roll it out across the two health board areas. That will not be appropriate in every area, but it is important that it is being progressed.

Cleaning is paramount in the Scottish Ambulance Service, as it is in every part of the health service, and it will continue to be monitored. It may interest James Kelly to know that, over the past few months, the infection control team has conducted random vehicle cleaning audits in ambulance stations throughout Scotland, and I expect that to continue.

The Presiding Officer: If the remaining two members are brief and the answers are brief, we will manage to fit them both in.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I welcome the £4.7 million to help to eliminate rostered single crewing. That brings funding into focus—

The Presiding Officer: Straight to the question, please, Mr Doris.

Bob Doris: Has any thought been given to using the polluter-pays principle to fund demands on the Scottish Ambulance Service during peak times, for instance on Friday and Saturday nights in town and city centres or when major football games are taking place?

Nicola Sturgeon: Bob Doris will be aware that, as part of the consultation on alcohol, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice is considering—to use the colloquial term—the polluter-pays principle. That will continue to progress through the consultation. I am pleased to reiterate the fact that the service is receiving record funding from the Scottish Government.

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the decision earlier this year to merge the north-east

and north and west divisions of the service was taken with absolutely no consultation? Does she recognise that the partnership information network guidelines for the NHS say that staff and their representatives should be involved in the design and planning of change, not merely told about it afterwards? Will she now call a halt to the merger process and allow any change to proceed on the basis of full, prior consultation?

Nicola Sturgeon: That was an operational decision. PIN guidelines are being followed. I suggest to Lewis Macdonald that he should think seriously before spreading undue concern about this issue.

I will explain exactly what the merger of those two divisions will mean—or, more appropriately, what it will not mean. There will be no impact on front-line ambulance staff, no impact on the location of ambulances, no changes to staff numbers in the Aberdeen and Inverness headquarters and no changes to staff locations. The only implication in staffing terms is that there will be one general manager rather than two. The location of the general manager has not yet been determined. This is an operational change for the Scottish Ambulance Service. If it thinks that it will help to deliver a more effective service, it should be supported.

I appeal to members to stick to the facts and not to scaremonger.

International Development

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-2466, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on behalf of the European and External Relations Committee, on its report on its inquiry into international development.

14:51

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): I welcome this opportunity, on behalf of the European and External Relations Committee, to open what I am sure will be a constructive and informative debate on a matter that is of huge interest to many colleagues in the chamber.

Like others here, I was on the make poverty history march in Edinburgh in July 2005, and the sheer numbers of people who participated on that gloriously sunny day demonstrated the depth of empathy that many people in Scotland have for the developing world. Moreover, the range and diversity of groups that were represented signified the extraordinary amount of activity within Scotland's civic society in support of addressing global poverty. It was also a reminder that Scotland has a rich historical tradition of working with some of the poorest countries in the world, not least Malawi.

It is, therefore, appropriate that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament should take a lead role in Scotland in continuing to highlight the needs of the developing world while building on those historical traditions. It is also appropriate that we do so in partnership with the many organisations and individuals from across Scotland whose skills, expertise and sheer determination have contributed so much to the developing world.

The inquiry was conducted on a cross-party basis and in a spirit of constructive engagement with both the international development sector in Scotland and the Scottish Government. That engagement included seeking the views of key organisations in deciding the inquiry remit. It was agreed that we would aim to take a strategic overview of international development issues within Scotland and report on the role of the Scottish Government's international development policy and on how value can be added to the extensive work that is already on-going in that area across Scotland.

On behalf of the committee, I thank all those organisations and individuals who contributed to the inquiry, and particularly the schools that participated in the Europe day conference on 9 May. I also thank the clerking team and other

parliamentary staff for their support throughout the inquiry.

On the committee's findings, I emphasise that we strongly support the Scottish Government's international development work and its commitment to continuing the good work that was begun by the previous Administration. In particular, the committee welcomes the increase in the international development fund to £6 million in 2008-9, rising to £9 million in 2010-11.

Nevertheless, the committee was disappointed that the Scottish Government's newly published international development policy focuses primarily on the administration of the various funding programmes that the Government has established. Consequently, the committee recommended that the Government should develop a more holistic approach to its international development policy and be "concerned"—as the World Development Movement puts it

"with far more than how to spend a discrete pot of money."

The two specific areas that I wish to highlight in that context are the benefits of awareness raising in addressing the needs of the developing world and the need to mainstream the policy across all Government departments.

A core concern for many of our witnesses was the importance of awareness raising, and in particular development education, in enhancing the effectiveness of the Government's development policy. The committee is concerned about the policy's lack of reference to awareness raising. One development education body stated:

"from an education and awareness-raising point of view, there is not a lot in the international development policy to be positive about."—[*Official Report, European and External Relations Committee*, 13 May 2008; c 648-9.]

The committee welcomes the Government's commitment to supporting development education through the curriculum for excellence and lifelong learning. We hope that that commitment will be reflected in the international development policy and that it will be extended beyond the education sector. We call on the Scottish Government to take the lead role, with the support of the Parliament, in ensuring that the Scottish public are fully informed about the challenges that the developing world faces.

The committee emphasised the need for the international development policy to be mainstreamed across all Government departments, and that it should not be viewed as a standalone policy. It is therefore to be welcomed that the Government has indicated in its response to the committee's report that the policy

"is at the heart of government and integrated into the wider policy making process."

It would be useful to hear from the minister specific examples of how the policy is to be mainstreamed in practice, and for a commitment to that to be explicitly stated on the face of the policy.

The committee identified health policy and procurement policy in particular as two domestic policy areas that can have a significant impact on international development. For example, we heard evidence on the potential harm of recruiting health care professionals from developing countries. It would be unfortunate if we supported the training of nurses and doctors in Malawi, only for them to end up working here. We therefore encourage the Government to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the code of practice for the international recruitment of health professionals, which lists a number of countries, including Malawi, that should not be targeted for recruitment.

The committee heard from a number of witnesses who argued for the attachment of ethical and fair trade criteria to public sector procurement, which the Scottish Fair Trade Forum suggested amounts to £8 billion a year in buying goods and services. The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum both argued that there is greater scope to interpret European Union law in ways that are more favourable to fair trade products. It was mentioned, for example, that the Dutch Government has decided to include fair trade criteria in all its contracts by 2010.

In response, the minister has stated that the Scottish Government

"will continue to do as much as possible within the limits of EU legislation."

Although the committee welcomes that commitment, we have sought further clarification from the minister on the scope for interpreting EU law as suggested by SCIAF and the forum. Furthermore, the committee has sought the minister's comments on the Department for International Development's response to the House of Commons International Development Committee, which stated:

"there are no legal reasons why public authorities should not include fair and ethical trade criteria in their procurement practices."

I turn to the geographic and thematic aspects of the revised international development policy. The committee heard conflicting evidence on whether the policy should continue to focus on a single country—Malawi—or should have a wider geographic focus. Although some witnesses suggested that we should continue to focus primarily on Malawi, others pointed out that Scotland's development organisations are heavily

involved in many other developing countries. The majority of witnesses agreed, however, that if there is to be an extension, it should be focused on the sub-Saharan region. There was a good deal of concern that, given the limited resources involved, any attempt to widen the focus might reduce the impact and effectiveness of the policy. It was also pointed out by a number of witnesses that Scotland's non-governmental organisation sector already has a great deal of development expertise and experience within sub-Saharan Africa.

Although the committee broadly welcomed the new Government's approach, especially its continued commitment to Malawi, we sought clarification on the reasoning behind extending the policy to include the Indian sub-continent. Given the evidence that the committee considered during the inquiry, the rationale for extending the policy in that direction appeared to be unclear. The minister might wish to respond to that in her summing-up speech.

With regard to the thematic focus, the committee heard conflicting evidence about what the priorities should be. Some witnesses suggested that limiting the focus to a specific area such as health or education would maximise the impact of limited resources. Economic development involving Scottish businesses—for example, through partnership with civic society organisations in Scotland—was emphasised. There was also substantial support for prioritising the development of civic society within developing nations, especially through support for indigenous groups. The committee welcomes the minister's commitment to continue to focus on those areas in relation to Malawi.

I began by referring to the make poverty history campaign. I am sure that it inspired many Scots to volunteer to work in developing countries. Although such altruism is broadly supported, some witnesses cautioned against short-term volunteering, which can be resource intensive without adding a great deal of value. To put it in perspective, it was pointed out that the cost of one volunteer's air fare is the equivalent of a Malawian teacher's salary for a year. It was recognised that longer-term volunteering schemes can be much more beneficial, and the committee encourages the Government to examine ways of promoting volunteer schemes, including through pension support for volunteers.

The committee very much welcomes the Government's commitment to continuing the co-operation agreement with the Government of Malawi and to ring fencing at least £3 million to support it. It was clear throughout the inquiry that there is substantial support across Scotland for building on our links with Malawi. We heard

numerous examples of the effectiveness of the partnership between our two countries. For example, we heard from a Malawian schoolteacher, who was on an exchange visit to Penicuik high school, who emphasised the benefit of school partnerships. Perhaps the minister could look again at the recommendation about the publication of new guidance on school partnerships, possibly utilising Oxfam's excellent booklet on the subject. The committee also examined the possible benefits of having a Scottish representative in Malawi, and has invited the minister to keep an open mind on the matter.

The committee warmly welcomes the efforts of both the Scottish Government and Scottish civic society, and it is hoped that the committee's report will be useful in developing the Government's international development policy and in helping to ensure that the hardships and challenges that the developing world faces remain topical and firmly in the public mind. If that is not the case, there is always the danger that the make poverty history event may simply be remembered as a great day out.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the conclusions and recommendations contained in the European and External Relations Committee's 3rd Report, 2008 (Session 3): Inquiry into International Development (SP Paper 134).

15:02

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I congratulate the committee on securing the debate. The depth and breadth of the committee's inquiry was extensive and like the Scottish Government's public review—given the holistic approach that the Government takes in all that it does—it has engaged many sectors of the international development community in Scotland.

Without a doubt, there are many views on what we should and should not be doing, but there is one genuine aim: the fight against world poverty. We all share that desire and many of the committee's recommendations have been addressed in our new policy and our revised funding approach.

International development is a complex issue. There are no quick fixes or easy answers because conditions and circumstances vary from country to country, from region to region and from community to community. That is why we took time to ensure that our policy focuses on the priorities of the people who are in greatest need and that it is supported by a robust and transparent funding process. Without that, we cannot deliver the measurable and sustainable outcomes for which we all strive.

The sector has recognised and acknowledged that the Scottish Government has listened through each stage of our policy development. A number of inputs have informed our new policy. Those include consideration of the responses to the public review of the existing policy; the experience to date of the Scottish Government in operating the previous international development policy; the intelligence that has been gained from an independent review of Scottish Government funded activity in Malawi; and, of course, on-going discussions with the Government of Malawi.

The independent review that I mentioned was undertaken by LTS International. Its purpose was twofold: to look at Scottish Government funded activity in Malawi and to consider our related procedures and processes. We will publish information on the findings of that review shortly. That is an important piece of work, which is informing on-going programme implementation. I want to take time to ensure that the final document is useful for a wide range of stakeholders and that it can assist in the development of best practice in the international development sector in Scotland. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland and the Scotland Malawi Partnership.

Members will recall that when I gave evidence to the committee in May, I stressed that the new policy adopted a very different approach—an approach that has been welcomed by NIDOS, the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the Government of Malawi. The process has been challenging, but necessary. Having considered all the evidence, we were clear on what we needed to do to build on progress to date and strengthen the approach. In that respect, I commend the sector not only for rising to and meeting this challenge but for its collaborative approach.

Our international development policy forms part of the wider international framework and illustrates the Scottish Government's commitment to Scotland's place as a responsible nation in the world, ready to play its part in tackling the global issue of poverty and facilitating economic growth for all. Since my appearance before the European and External Relations Committee in May, much has been done. We have undertaken a funding round for the Malawi development programme, launched a funding round for the sub-Saharan Africa development programme and participated in a joint permanent commission for co-operation official review meeting in Malawi. Our policy reflects our desire to listen and to ensure that the recipient country's needs and priorities are paramount and form the basis for Scottish Government engagement.

As I said, in August officials attended the joint permanent commission for co-operation official review meeting, which built on the discussions of my visit to Malawi in February. Our new funding approach and focus, which were outlined by officials, were warmly welcomed by Government of Malawi representatives. There was a particular welcome for the inclusion of the cross-cutting themes of vocational education and training, gender issues and equality, enterprise development and strengthening the context for enhanced human rights and civil society development. Those themes reflect the priorities in the Malawi growth and development strategy, and help us to focus activities within the strands of the co-operation agreement and develop a stronger programme.

The Government of Malawi welcomed our commitment to continuing to work closely with it and, as a reflection of that ethos, colleagues in Malawi are commenting on short-listed proposals. We have implemented a new requirement for applicants to provide evidence of consultation with the Government of Malawi—an approach that that Government has strongly supported.

In July, we opened a funding round for the Malawi development programme. Although I appreciate that some of the changes to the application process were challenging, I believe that the increased rigour was necessary and has already led to an increase in quality. The sector has certainly risen admirably to the challenge.

We received 65 applications for work in Malawi, which is more than in any other funding round. Moreover, the quality of applications was noticeably higher than in previous rounds, which suggests that the new process did not present a significant barrier to the majority of the sector.

Members will recall that during my appearance before the European and External Relations Committee I announced that I had agreed a three-year contribution to the core funding of NIDOS and the Scotland Malawi Partnership. That funding is now in place and both organisations have received their funding allocations for this financial year, which fulfils our policy commitment to supporting networking and information exchange in Scotland.

We have made good progress on the sub-Saharan Africa development programme. After a call for concept notes in June, we received 26 such notes, covering the four countries that had been identified. Again, applicants have risen to the challenge: the quality of the concept notes was very high. We have invited 15 organisations to submit full applications, which will be considered by our independent assessors and reviewed by the Scottish Government. We will announce the results later this year.

The newest element of our policy is the Indian sub-continent development programme, which is being developed. Decisions on the funding process will be informed by discussions with the relevant communities in Scotland to assess the focus, to inform us where Scotland can add value and to examine the mechanism for operating that aspect of the policy.

On fair trade, I was pleased that the Scottish Fair Trade Forum had the opportunity to contribute to the evidence sessions during the committee's inquiry. Much of the work in establishing the forum has been done and it is now carrying forward the fair trade nation campaign. The forum also continues to build strong ties with many high-profile stakeholders.

Fair trade is a complex issue, particularly with regard to public sector procurement, so I will continue to pursue ways in which we can strengthen the guidance to encourage the use of fair trade goods where appropriate. As many members do, I care about the issue and I remain committed to keeping it on the agenda. The Scottish Government is committed to Scotland achieving fair trade nation status and will continue to work with the Scottish Fair Trade Forum on that. It is essential that when Scotland receives fair trade nation status, that status is meaningful. It should not be a matter of paying lip service to it.

In a debate that we had on fair trade in March last year, I said to the then Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Patricia Ferguson—who is also committed to Scotland having fair trade nation status—that the issue is far too important to argue over, that we ought to work together to get things sorted, and that we ought to take the appropriate advice from where we can get it. I stand by what I said. I think that we are all committed to achieving fair trade nation status for Scotland and can work together to achieve it. I know that the chair of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, John McAllion, has been dealing with Patricia Ferguson to get a cross-party group on fair trade issues up and running. I hope that we have constructive dialogue on moving that forward.

I look forward to hearing what colleagues have to say on the report. Whatever our differences in approach, we all have a common aim in our international development work: the eradication of global poverty. I look forward to continuing to work with the committee and Parliament and, of course, I look forward to continuing to work with Pauline McNeill who will, I understand, have a central role on international development issues for the Labour group, because we all care about ensuring that our international development work supports those who are in greatest need to help themselves and to contribute to the long-term aim of establishing sustainable and vibrant communities.

15:11

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I thank the minister for her welcome as I take on a new role in which international development issues will be among the responsibilities. I also thank the European and External Relations Committee for its report and for the chance to debate it. I whole-heartedly support many of its recommendations—in particular, I support the idea of ensuring that an holistic approach is taken to international development. Such an approach is fundamental.

Like other members, including Malcolm Chisholm, I have marched to make poverty history and campaigned for the G8 leaders to take action on world poverty. The increase of £28 billion a year in aid by 2010 and full debt cancellation for the world's 18 poorest countries represent progress, but it is clear that there is still more to argue about.

As a strong supporter of devolution, I have no hesitation in supporting the idea that Scotland has, as a devolved nation, a crucial role to play in developing the economies of poorer countries. Credit is due in that context to the former First Minister, Jack McConnell, who grasped the opportunity to develop Scotland's first international development policy. The strategy was rightly based on complementing the United Kingdom Government's work while capitalising on the nation's moral conscience and the belief of many Scots that they should make a difference around the world and that we can use our skills as a nation to transport our knowledge to other countries that need it.

The former Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Patricia Ferguson, who is now chair of the cross-party group on international development, has said that what Scotland has to offer is unique. That is best demonstrated by our relationship with Malawi, and other members will address that point. Scotland would not be the nation it is if it did not have a comprehensive strategy to help poorer nations.

I welcome the increased funding for the international development fund and the broad continuation of the previous Government's policy, but I also note the committee's analysis of the argument on whether, in determining the international development policy, we should concentrate on one country or broaden our concentration and consider others. I also note the committee's suggestion that if we broaden our consideration, we should think about countries in sub-Saharan Africa. I would like time to digest the Government's policy, but would welcome a rationale from ministers on including the Indian sub-continent in the expansion—Malcolm Chisholm asked for that. I am not arguing for or

against the approach that has been taken, but we need to hear why the Government has chosen to expand the policy to include countries there. When will we hear details about that? I say to the minister that it is important to hear about those details.

Any international policy must be comprehensive and should not concentrate simply on distributing funds, as the report says. The minister spoke about fair trade. As we develop our efforts to become a fair trade nation, we should be conscious that we do not simply tick boxes; rather, we must do more challenging things. We could do more by challenging the international organisations in which we have influence—such as the European Union—to do their bit to ensure that development is a key priority of international trading. One advantage of being part of the United Kingdom is that we are part of a significant trading nation that is influential in our trading bloc. We must do more to ensure that Britain uses its power and influence for the greater good.

There are many obstacles to economic progress for poorer nations. Sadly, among them are conflict and war. I have a strong personal interest in the middle east and have seen for myself the appalling consequences of the war in Lebanon and the Israel-Palestine conflict. This year, I visited Gaza, which is now under permanent blockade. It is not well known that Gaza is the beneficiary of the largest food-aid programme in the world, with 80 per cent of the population receiving United Nations assistance.

I draw to members' attention a motion that I have lodged on the conflict children campaign, which is run by *First News* in partnership with the UK Department for International Development and the children's charity Save the Children. Where conflict arises in the world, children are often the first to suffer. They also often suffer the most, be that through enforced conscription as child soldiers; because they cannot access schools or health services in a war-torn area; as a result of threats to their personal safety by the realities of war, particularly landmines; or, tragically, as a result of death or injury to those around them, as family units and wider social communities are destroyed. Campaigns such as *First News's* conflict children illustrate that we can do more to assist with international solidarity than simply send money abroad. I am pleased to announce that the campaign was launched yesterday and that three Scottish schools have signed up. I truly believe that more Scottish schools will get involved. I hope that the minister will get involved, too, and that she will discuss the issue with her colleagues in education.

It is important that the Scottish Government's international development work does not focus on

an alternative international programme. It should instead complement and add value to the excellent work of the UK Department for International Development. By offering practical support for Scotland-based agencies and by using our expertise in Scotland, taking that knowledge abroad and using our devolved competencies, we can do something in the world through the international development policy. I look forward to discussing the policy and getting details on it in the future.

15:17

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): The Scottish Conservatives agree with the general principles of the European and External Relations Committee's inquiry into international development. We welcome the Scottish Government's international development policy and are keen to engage in a review of it. The committee consulted widely in its inquiry and attempted to identify where value can be added to on-going work here and abroad.

Because of time constraints, I will limit my remarks to issues related to the Scotland Malawi Partnership and fair trade, which has such an impact on international development. I might then say a few words on climate change, which is likely to have a disproportionate effect on poverty levels in third world countries.

We must accept that, although the Scottish Government's decision to double international development funding to £9 million during the current session of Parliament is to be applauded, it is a mere pittance in international aid terms. Given the amount of money that we can devote to overseas aid, we will never be big players in that respect. Instead, we must consider how to get best value for the money to improve the lot of some of the world's most impoverished people. Although the amount of hard cash that we can donate is limited, we have much else to offer in areas such as skills development, education, advising on good governance, manufacturing know-how and agronomy expertise.

In Parliament, we have an agency that does excellent development work—I refer to the Scottish branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, of which I am proud to be an executive member. I have long supported the Malawi initiative and was fortunate to be a member of the first cross-party group to visit the country in 2005. Since then, the CPA has been involved in several initiatives involving members and officers in Malawi and Scotland. Through the technical assistance programme, the CPA is helping the Malawi Government on issues such as scrutiny and its committee system. I pay tribute to Dr Sylvia Jackson, who did much good work in setting up the initiative.

The latest CPA initiative is to set up pilot twinning arrangements between the Malawian and Scottish Parliaments. Other such initiatives are in the pipeline. I understand that a member of the CPA Scotland branch will, as is entirely appropriate, attend meetings of the Scottish Government's newly established international development advisory group.

The CPA does not limit its assistance to Malawi. Over the past 12 months we have arranged full study visits for officials and members from other Commonwealth Parliaments, including South Africa, Nigeria and Uganda, with an upcoming study visit due from the clerk of the Parliament of Botswana. That said, I took the view in committee that the bulk of our overseas aid should continue to go to Malawi, where we are developing close links and expertise. Therefore, I agree with others who have said that aid should continue to go to sub-Saharan Africa, particularly to countries that are neighbours of Malawi and where our expertise would be most relevant. Given the size of our budget, it makes no sense to spread scarce resources even more thinly.

The Government appears to have rejected the committee's view that the appointment of a permanent Scottish parliamentary officer in Malawi should be considered. It would be a shame if the excellent work of so many organisations in Malawi was to founder because of lack of direction. With so many valuable initiatives under way, the committee heard that there is already evidence that there is some duplication and lack of co-ordination of effort. I hope that the minister will keep a careful eye on the situation.

I welcome Scotland's aspirations to be a truly fair trade nation. There is much that the Government and local authorities can do in procurement to expedite that. It is interesting to note—we heard evidence on this last week—that the Welsh Assembly Government makes free bananas available to all children of primary-school age. There is food for thought there for the Scottish Government, perhaps, when it comes to the Commonwealth games in Glasgow. I also understand that in its bid for the Olympics, Madrid included a tender for the supply of fair trade T-shirts—another idea for the minister.

As Malcolm Chisholm suggested, there is a strong argument that European Union policy on non-discrimination has meant that Scottish and UK Governments have interpreted EU procurement rules too conservatively. We must be extremely diligent in that area and ensure that we press for every opportunity. Although fair trade procurement in the UK has increased by 40 per cent over the past 10 years and now tops £500 million, it is a sobering fact that fair trade currently counts for

less than 1 per cent of Scottish groceries. It is clear that we have a long way to go.

Nor can we avoid the fact that although fair trade helps millions in the developing world, a wider understanding of trade justice would help many millions more. If Africa, east Asia, south Asia and Latin America were each allowed to increase their share of world exports by a mere 1 per cent, it could lift nearly 130 million people out of poverty. The agricultural industries of countries in such regions have been undermined by global competition, particularly from the EU and the United States of America. The Scottish Parliament must be prepared to raise its voice against the unfair practices of those trading blocks and remind them of their global responsibilities.

It is a sad fact that although industrialised countries are responsible for most damaging emissions, the poorest countries will be hit hardest by climate change. Scottish Conservatives support a climate change bill. We support the Government's target of making an 80 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050 and accept that mandatory annual targets are essential. Scotland's share of international aviation emissions must be factored in, but under the Scotland Act 1998, aviation is reserved to the Westminster Government and has to be tackled on a UK basis in accordance with EU policy. I stress that Scottish parliamentarians must be prepared to take such arguments forward if we are really serious about tackling the underlying causes of poverty and injustice.

15:24

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): I am pleased to lead for the Liberal Democrats on a subject that not only has reaching implications for the fight against global poverty, but crucially aims to build sustainable and successful communities in the long term so that, in the future, communities that suffer from poverty can become empowered rather than rely on aid packages alone. Scotland has a moral obligation to play its part in delivering the UN's millennium development goals and we Liberal Democrats welcome the committee's detailed report as a helpful indicator of Scotland's progress in helping to tackle global poverty through international development policy. Organisations such as Oxfam support that approach.

We welcomed the publication of the Government's international development policy in May. As Malcolm Chisholm did, we acknowledge in particular the increase in funding from £6 million to an eventual £9 million in 2010 to help Scotland to meet its commitment to the millennium development goals. However, the IDP is about more than simply allocating funds. The strategic

aim of the Scottish Government should be to support delivery of the goals, with a particular commitment to poverty eradication. Account must be taken of transparency and of how money is spent: for example, is it being used to best effect on the right project or initiative? The report recommends that the Scottish Government consider a more holistic approach and that there should be greater clarity on the strategic aims of the policy. Further detail from the minister on that would be welcome.

There are other key aspects that need clarification. The committee recommends a thorough review of previous international development policy, with a view to informing the expansion of the current policy. Today the minister stated that she would undertake such a review to inform future decisions, as recommended in the report. I look to her to ensure that the review is carried out thoroughly.

The rationale behind the extension of the geographical focus of the international development policy should be set out in much more detail. The minister should clarify the reasons for extending the policy to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa and to the Indian sub-continent, as there are many other regions in the world that would like to engage with the Scottish Parliament. Will the minister give more detail of how the Government will support volunteering schemes that relate to international development? Does the Government remain open to the possibility of establishing a full-time Scottish representative in Malawi, as the report recommends? I declare a past family interest in Malawi, but I will not bore the chamber with stories of my great-great-great-uncle, Mr Livingstone, of whom I presume members will know.

Ted Brocklebank: Dr Livingstone, I presume.

Jim Hume: Yes.

What steps will the Government take to engage more with the business sector on its international development policy?

Putting other countries on a fair footing when it comes to trade is hugely important and is the key to ensuring that economies are sustainable. That has probably never been as true as it is at present, when the economic downturn presents us with a significant challenge. The report noted broad support for fair trade, which other members have mentioned, but emphasis was also placed on the importance of trade justice. The committee recommends that the Scottish Government seek to promote trade justice, as well as fair trade, and that it should set out how it intends to promote the fair trade agenda in all Government departments. That is a huge challenge, and it is made all the more complex by the current economic situation,

but I hope that today the minister will set out in more detail the Scottish Government's approach to trade justice, fair trade and procurement in relation to international development policy.

Fair trade for local food procurement in Scotland is a subject that I have championed for some time, but we are still waiting for Government action in that area. Fair trade in the world should be at the top of all our agendas. I am glad that the minister stated in her speech that she would work towards Scotland becoming a fair trade nation. My region, the South of Scotland, has done well on fair trade and in East Lothian, North Berwick has done a lot of work on becoming a fair trade town and is just waiting for the local authority to pass a resolution to that effect. Ayr and Ayrshire and Peebles and Tweeddale have become fair trade areas. Perhaps the minister should look to the South of Scotland region for inspiration.

Scottish Liberal Democrats believe that Scotland, as a small but successful economy, should play an effective and significant role in the on-going fight to make poverty history. We look to the Scottish Government to meet that substantial challenge. Foreign affairs are not fully devolved, but the Parliament has a duty to the world to concentrate its efforts on where they will be best placed. I look forward to hearing the Government's and the minister's full response to the committee's recommendations.

15:29

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): As a new member of the European and External Relations Committee, I have not played a part in assembling the report that is before us. I have, however, read it and commend it to Parliament.

It is clear from the committee's report that any modern approach to international development should be informed by a desire for justice. Global economic justice has been a modern rallying cry around the globe, with the make poverty history campaign demanding fairer trade, debt cancellation and more and better aid as the building blocks of that economic justice, using the United Nations millennium development goals as the benchmark by which we can judge progress in these early days of the 21st century. Any international development strategy that is adopted by the Scottish Government or by Parliament needs to have the millennium development goals embedded within it. Those goals are not ends in themselves, but provide the idea of a bare minimum and give inspiration to look beyond what they promise. That thought is expressed clearly in the committee's report and serves as the basis for exploring some of its other themes and issues.

Central to the report is its grappling with how best the Scottish Government can use its limited formal opportunities to promote an international development agenda. There is a clear message that there is no need for the Government to reinvent the wheel—there is already great expertise among Scotland's aid agencies, academic departments and community initiatives. We should continue to encourage and foster those efforts and build on the good will and understanding that already exist in wider society.

Scotland does not yet have a fully fledged international development Government department, as many of our similar-sized neighbours do. That means that we are not in a position at this time to commit 0.7 per cent of the value of our country's gross domestic product to the purposes of international development assistance. Incidentally, that target has not been met by the overwhelming majority of countries in the developed world, although it is one that we should work towards.

We are in a position to find ways of showing solidarity with people in developing countries, supporting their calls, advocating for justice and, above all, adding value to the work that is already taking place in Scotland. I welcome the Scottish Government's increasing of the level of international development fund investment to £21 million over the coming three years. It is clear from its report that the whole European and External Relations Committee does, too.

One of the clearest ways in which we have sought to foster international development has been through the links that we have built with Malawi in recent years. I strongly welcome the Government's efforts to expand Scottish international development efforts elsewhere in the world, but it is with Malawi that our international development is most closely associated. The historical roots of Scotland's links with Malawi run deep—indeed, they run very deep in Jim Hume's family, it seems. We should rightly acknowledge those links, but we should not gloss over the legacy of Europe's imperialist past in the continent of Africa—a legacy with which many African countries are still coming to terms. Today, nearly half of Malawi's population struggle to get by on less than \$1 a day, infant mortality rates are among the highest on the planet, and there is an AIDS pandemic.

It is right that we in Scotland seek to develop links with Malawi. One visible manifestation of those links lies in the many school partnership arrangements that have arisen in recent years. The report deals with that to an extent. Earlier this year, I was privileged to offer a tour of our Parliament to students from Nkhamenya girls secondary school in Malawi, who visited Scotland

under their partnership with St Maurice's high school in Cumbernauld. I was delighted to give the students and teachers a brief tour of the Parliament and to explain some of the work that goes on here. Above all, I was pleased to learn more about their school and their links with St Maurice's.

Nkhamenya is located in Malawi's vast Northern Region. The girls secondary school was founded by the local Catholic diocese and is funded by a combination of school fees and a grant from the Malawi Government. That gives the school more stability and resources than many other schools in the country, but it does not bear comparison with schools in Scotland. The resources that are available to staff and students at St Maurice's high and other schools in our country are significantly advanced beyond those that are available to their counterparts in Malawi.

The committee report rightly notes the importance of ensuring that any schools partnership project is indeed a partnership and does not simply become an exercise in philanthropy or a simple donor-beneficiary relationship. Visits from either side must be handled with care. Students and teachers coming from Malawi should, I believe, have the opportunity to learn about the poverty and deprivation that affect some parts of Scotland, as well as experiencing the more commercial aspects of our culture. In this materialistic age, it is important to demonstrate to citizens around the globe that our country is not without problems and is far from being a land of milk and honey where every road is paved with gold.

Learning should be a two-way street. Schools in Scotland must be able and willing to learn not just about, but from, their partners in Malawi. Students from Scotland who visit Malawi should not come back just wanting to take part in acts of charity, important and necessary though that is; their experience should not have reinforced the stereotypical view that everything here is rosy and nothing works over there. We have to move beyond instilling a sense of charitable good will in Scottish students, to ensure that students have the desire and opportunity to take action for justice.

I would have loved to talk about fair trade, but I do not have time. I welcome the report and look forward to hearing the minister's response.

15:35

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw (Lab)): I welcome the committee's report and recommendations and I commend the way in which the committee conducted its inquiry. I draw members' attention to my voluntary work on international development, which is set out in my entry in the register of members' interests.

I associate myself with members' comments on the millennium development goals, the importance of fair trade and the importance of our understanding the colonial past, as Jamie Hepburn said. It is important that we understand the significance of the period of slavery in the east and west, which continues to have an impact on the populations of central and sub-Saharan Africa.

I will concentrate on the people of Scotland and Malawi. Among many wise sayings, Nelson Mandela said:

"education is the great engine of personal development."

I witnessed that for myself yesterday in the Highlands, when I visited Speyside high school, where staff and pupils are developing a twinning programme with a school in Blantyre. The school is hosting a Malawian teacher, who is enjoying her first week in the school—unfortunately, she is also experiencing our Scottish weather. I think that she might be in Edinburgh today. Pupils and members of staff at Speyside high school are gaining as much from the twinning relationship as the pupils and staff at the school in Malawi are doing.

I then had the opportunity to go to Nairn academy, where staff and pupils have just returned from a summer visit to Malawi. Not only had staff and pupils taken goods and equipment with them, which they donated to a school, and not only had they made friendships that I hope will last a lifetime, but the teenagers from Scotland had coached teenagers from Malawi. In doing so they had achieved sports coaching certificates and they had transferred skills in a way that was already happening between Scottish and Malawian adults but which might be a first between Scottish and Malawian teenagers. I found that heartening.

One of the youngsters from Nairn academy, Mark Bain, who I think is in secondary 5, kept a diary during the visit, in which he said that he would love to go back to Malawi and meet everyone again, to see how they were getting on and how the school was using the equipment that the Nairn pupils donated. He also said that he had found out that although there is much poverty in Malawi, the people are great. He could not get over the amount of work that the people put into everything that they do and in particular how Malawian people will do anything to please visitors. In some ways, he has summed up the terrific friendship that has developed during the past three years.

Last night in Aberdeen I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Malawian Initiative for National Development, which has been set up by a group of Malawians who live in the city, in particular Dr Matthews Mtumbuka, an executive with Shell UK who has lived in Aberdeen for some time. He and his colleagues have established an

organisation whose aim is to enable not Europeans but Malawians who are resident in Scotland and perhaps elsewhere in the UK to return to Malawi to volunteer. The organisation will encourage the Malawian diaspora to go back to Malawi and volunteer in their communities, to help development. That is an interesting new development, which builds on the tradition of volunteering among Scots and is about the people-to-people exchanges that we have tried to encourage.

The most telling comment yesterday came from a girl who is in sixth year at Nairn academy. When asked to describe how she had changed as a result of her visit, she said that she and her colleagues would, for the rest of their lives, be less greedy and more appreciative and have a greater understanding of the rest of the world.

That is why I want to highlight the importance of the people-to-people relationships, whose role is central to ensuring that we make the most of the resources and effort that we put in. The role of the official organisations—governmental and non-governmental—is obviously crucial, and their work over the years has been central to efforts to help countries in Africa in particular escape from poverty. However, the relationship that we are developing between Scotland and Malawi is also about individual people. We should not lose the added value—to repeat an earlier phrase—that comes from those relationships. When people want to develop those individual or community-to-community relationships, which are so special, educational and beneficial for us in Scotland as well as being directly practical and beneficial for colleagues in Malawi, they must have the support of Government.

Let me say on record that I wish that the minister had waited until the committee reported to publish her policy. I also wish that, in light of the committee's report, she had amended the policy and responded a little more positively. If we are to send out the right signals to all the Scots who wish to volunteer, who are looking for somebody in Malawi as a contact for advice and support, who are looking for further support in schools to ensure that the development education that we have started in Scotland can continue to expand, or who are looking for assistance to send much-needed goods to alleviate problems today in Malawi—rather than waiting for them to be produced in Africa—it is essential that they receive support from the Government.

Our Scottish Government should be about empowering the people of Scotland to make a difference, not just here in their own lives but elsewhere in the world. I hope that, in light of this afternoon's debate, the minister will reconsider her response to the committee's report and in

particular address the issues of volunteering, transportation and co-ordination in Malawi and of development education. If she does that, we will be able to take forward the partnership between the people of Scotland and Malawi and ensure that we have not only a stronger Malawi but a much better Scotland in the years to come.

15:42

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): Like others, I welcome the committee's report. I believe that it is the first ever committee scrutiny and detailed consideration of Government policy on international development, and it makes a number of important recommendations.

It is fair to keep in mind the fact that international development policy in Scotland, as the responsibility of the Scottish Executive or Government and the Scottish Parliament, is fairly new. The G8 summit in Gleneagles proved to be a major catalyst for the Scottish Executive in considering what form of international development policy it could shape and the role that the Scottish Parliament could have in that.

Like Ted Brocklebank, I think that recognition should be given to the role that our Parliament's external liaison unit has undertaken in the partnership with Malawi through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association branch in Scotland. It largely led the way on the issue, and I had the pleasure of being a member of the first delegation from the Parliament to visit Malawi in 2005.

When the Scottish Executive published its international development policy and proposals, considerable criticism was thrown at it not just from this chamber but from another chamber in London. It was stated that this Parliament had no responsibility for international development, so I welcomed the comment at the time from the then Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn, that international development is everyone's responsibility—Des McNulty will recall that.

Jack McConnell, then First Minister, faced down the criticisms, including those from elements within his own party, because a bigger agenda had to be recognised. Some of the criticism was misconceived—the debate that we are now having demonstrates that.

One of the policy's strengths is its broad base. It is not simply a pot of money but reaches into a range of areas, as the committee's report highlights. Our international development policy is not just about the Government dishing out money to different organisations, because it involves voluntary organisations, schools, church groups, hospitals and local authorities in a range of different ways.

However, SCIAF's evidence highlights one of the problems that come with such a broad-based approach to international development policy: it is a challenge to keep the policy focused on doing what it is meant to do. It would be easy for the policy to be drawn in a range of different directions, and I have no doubt that the minister is keen to continue to ensure that it is driven forward thematically to tackle particular problems in countries that are regarded as priorities.

The committee highlighted the mainstreaming of international development policy, which has not been effectively addressed over the past four years in the international development policies of both Governments. I have long been of the view that it is okay for the Minister of Justice from Malawi to come over here and meet Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Justice. However, engagement involving, and the exchange of ideas and working practices between, their ministries are not happening as effectively as they could—that could also be said about our health directorates and a range of other directorates. Engagement on education has developed quite a bit, but more could be done at Government departmental level to engage with Malawian departments to help them implement ideas and exchange a range of opportunities.

I believe that a considerable amount of work could be done at a more localised level within our health boards and local authorities to engage much more with different bodies in countries such as Malawi and to implement different plans. Some hospitals, and medical teams within hospitals, have done that—for example, staff from the Simpson memorial have done quite a bit of work on child mortality and different training practices at Bottom hospital in Malawi. Such work could be rolled out across different health board areas in Scotland.

Several members referred to public procurement. I was a member of the fair trade working group that Patricia Ferguson set up. Significant progress has been made in Scotland on promoting fair trade and I still hope that we can become a fair trade nation. Falkirk is now a fair trade town and, this year, will host the first fair trade Mòd, which I hope members will support.

I was interested in what the committee's report said about the Dutch Government's approach to ensuring that ethical and fair trade procurement criteria were included in its contracts by 2010. That is positive. If there are problems with that under EU law, we should examine what the Dutch are doing that we cannot do and consider whether we can learn from them and take the issue forward. If there is a problem with EU law, I urge the Government to make representations to the European Commission—in particular the

European Commissioner for Trade, Peter Mandelson—to determine whether the Commission can relax some of the laws to allow us to include ethical and fair trade considerations within our public procurement criteria.

As the co-convener of the cross-party group on Malawi, I welcome the £3 million that has been ring fenced for Malawian projects. We are due to hold the Commonwealth games in 2014, and I hope that the Government considers that there is an opportunity to ensure that the games in Glasgow will be fair trade games, given the nations that will participate in them. I hope that the minister will take that forward with her policy in the weeks and months to come.

15:49

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): I thank the committee and the clerks for all their work in providing the Parliament not only with much-needed, quality information but, more important, with a critical analysis of the Scottish Government's strategic policy on international development. It is clear from the committee's inquiry that the Government's policy concentrates first and foremost on the administration of various funding programmes and, therefore—according to the report—fails to develop an holistic approach to international development.

To be sufficient, an international development strategy must do more than distribute funds; it reaches into many portfolios, so it must be coherent and precise. The report tells us that the Scottish National Party Government wants to expand the geographical focus of the international development policy. I believe that that would put at risk the prospect of having deeper and more focused engagement.

By emphasising two points from the report, I feel that I will help to emphasise two key issues. Gemma Welsh, of St Ninian's high school, reported back in this chamber from the workshop in which she participated at the Europe day conference. She said:

"Our workshops made us realise that all members of the EU need to come together and organise their aid-giving to avoid overlapping projects. That would result in aid being more efficiently distributed and would make the EU's contribution to aid fairer."

I pay tribute to Gemma for raising that issue and for opening at least my eyes to an important issue on which we need to press the minister and her colleagues so that they will raise it with other EU countries and campaign vigorously for it.

The second key issue in the report is public procurement, to which a number of colleagues, including Michael Matheson, have referred. The issue is so important that I make no apology for

restating the point that Malcolm Chisholm made. The Scottish Fair Trade Forum told us that an holistic approach to mainstreaming the international development policy would include public procurement. We are told that the Scottish public sector spends £8 billion a year buying goods and services. Historically, ethical and fair trade clauses in contracts have frightened ministers, civil servants, councillors, local authority officials and others so much that they have simply frozen and done nothing about it. They have cited EU laws, saying that they cannot make the changes that, if made, would make such a colossal difference. This Government continues to do nothing on that key issue.

As Michael Matheson highlighted, SCIAF produced a paper for the committee that looked at how the Government could interpret the EU's procurement laws in a way that would be more favourable to fair trade contracts and products. The paper argued that several contracting authorities had already included a wide range of fair trade products in tenders for supply contracts and service procurement, including the local authorities of Utrecht and Zuid Holland in the Netherlands, the public authorities of Rome and Settimo Torinese in Italy, the city of Madrid in Spain, the Lyon public authority in France, the Austrian Government, as part of its EU presidency, and the European Commission. In addition, as Michael Matheson said, the Dutch national Government has decided to include ethical and fair trade procurement criteria in all its contracts by 2010. If that can be done in all those places, I ask the minister why the SNP Government cannot do it here. SCIAF supported the view, which I too support, that the Government could do that.

I have been involved with Remploi and the GMB, which only two or three years ago had a major campaign to highlight how article 19 of the public procurement directive, which had been introduced into EU law, clearly allowed for specific social assistance for disabled people, fair trade and all kinds of ethical instances. Article 19 means that ministers and local authorities could, in fact, move forward in those areas without breaking the law.

Linda Fabiani: I take on board everything that Mrs Eadie has said. However, given that that campaign happened three years ago, can she tell me what the previous Government did about the situation so that I can perhaps build on it?

Helen Eadie: The minister is in the driving seat now. I said that, historically, the fault belongs to all local authorities of all political persuasions right across Scotland. I am not here to defend all those local authorities; nor, indeed, am I here to defend what happened previously. I am here to ask why

the current Government, which is now in the driving seat, is not doing something about the issue, because it is time that we addressed it.

I was pleased to read the Deputy Presiding Officer's report on his visit to Malawi, which he produced for the inquiry. I found it enlightening and I congratulate him on it. Everything that he said in it focused on how difficult it is for us to choose between health and education—both such major challenges.

I congratulate all the pupils who attended the Europe day conference on the important dedication and commitment that they showed then and which they continue to show across Scotland. They highlighted a figure that will remain in all our minds as we deal day by day with this important area of work, which is that 5,700 people die every day from HIV and AIDS. That figure reminds us how critical this area of work is. We cannot stand idly by and watch while so many people suffer.

15:55

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): This has been a good debate, and I congratulate the European and External Relations Committee on its report. I want to highlight one concern that is almost entirely missing from the committee's report. I will also comment on two issues that, although they have already been addressed comprehensively by other members, are extremely important matters to which the minister must pay attention.

Missing from the report is the issue of human rights. Arguably, a lack of engagement with human rights approaches is one of the main reasons why development has faltered, especially in Africa. Alliances between big business and local and national Governments regularly conspire to sideline human rights and to thwart attempts to introduce them. Has the Government read the Ruggie report? Will it consider the environmental and human rights impacts that multinationals and big businesses have in developing countries where we are working alongside such organisations?

To give an example, after decades of campaigning the victims of the Bhopal gas disaster are at last within reach of a realistic level of compensation for their suffering. If a human rights-based approach to development had been taken, such assistance would have been available within months, if not immediately, since the company's responsibilities would have been clearly established from the outset. Bhopal is a dramatic example of the abrogation of poor people's rights by multinationals, but there are many other such examples from around the world. I draw the Government's attention to that omission.

The second issue that I want to highlight is fair and ethical trading. Oxfam has communicated to me that it would like the review of guidance on fair and ethical trading to be completed and published. I believe that the review has been on the go since 2006, so I would welcome the minister's response on that subject.

The third issue is development education. The International Development Education Association of Scotland—IDEAS—represents a huge number of organisations and has worked successfully for almost 30 years to help schools with development education. I have been lucky enough to have been invited to several schools in Scotland that have taken a whole-school approach to the issue. The development days that have been held at Currie high school, Penicuik high school, Inverkeithing high school and others have ensured a huge level of involvement by the pupils. Development days are about not just trade but music, culture, art, cooking and even engineering. Every school department is involved in those all-day experiences. Of course, the development days that I was privileged to attend were the culmination of a whole year's work, which included a great degree of involvement with the pupils in the schools with which our schools had been twinned.

Although I would be concerned about the idea of unrestricted levels of air transport between Scotland and countries such as Malawi or South Africa in support of such links—we need to take a sensible approach, and I am not saying that we should not fly our students to Malawi or that students from Malawi should not fly here—I believe that huge benefits could come from the one-to-one personal experiences that our pupils and the other pupils could gain. Equally, pupils can gain huge experiences through the internet, through writing and other means of communicating and through study when a whole-school approach is adopted.

Those links will not stop. They will carry on, as they are already up and running. However, such links are not available in every school in the country. I hope that the minister will share my ambition that every school will begin to develop that approach, which sits well alongside the eco-schools approach. Many of the schools that we are linking to, particularly in South Africa, are themselves eco-schools. I visited an eco-school in South Africa from which every school that I have been to in Scotland could learn. It took a thorough approach to everything to do with conservation of energy, recycling and so on. It had its own gardens and used them as science bases, for example.

I urge the minister to give some sign that there will be some support for IDEAS and for the sustainable development network, and, perhaps,

support to link that with the eco-schools network for a fully holistic approach to development education here and in the countries and schools with which we interact.

I remind the minister of my request for a response to Oxfam's request on the review of guidance on fair and ethical trading. Given what I have heard so far, I do not understand why the minister cannot write to DFID to say, "I am going to issue guidance to all schools and Government departments on fair and ethical trading. I invite your response to that." She could get on with it and put out the challenge. Why not?

16:01

Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP): When I first heard that the Scottish Parliament was embarking on a course of international development, I was not a member of the Parliament, and I was struck by the small amount of money that was to be deployed. Of course, since then, the Scottish Government has committed to doubling the amount involved. I agree with Ted Brocklebank: in the global scheme of things, even if we doubled or trebled the new amount of £9 million, the total would still be relatively small.

However, few contributions from other places have made such a spectacular impact as have those from the Scottish Parliament. The previous Government and the Parliament are to be congratulated on the initiative. Credit should go to the Government for developing the initiative in the first place and to all those who were here at the time, with the initiative receiving total support from across the political divide. The Scottish people's imagination was caught, and in one moment, the Scottish Parliament was lifted on to a pedestal by a single policy initiative.

Although, as I have said, the sums of money that were involved were small, their impact brought great benefit, not only to the people of Malawi through direct application, but to the Scottish people by making them aware of another country's situation. In turn, that created a climate in which not only individuals but schools, churches, businesses and a host of other sections of Scottish society wanted to do something positive. They all wanted to be associated with the Scottish Parliament's international development initiative.

It would be worth while to work out how much it would cost to promote the Scottish Parliament to the positive levels that it achieved through the initiative. I am sure that it would take much more than was spent on the initiative in the first place. Dare I say that it was a positive double whammy: good news for Malawi and for Scotland?

During the evidence-taking sessions, we heard from many people who made extremely good contributions and helped to shape the committee's report. Most participants were conscious of the sums involved and that we wanted to make the most of what we had at our disposal. Some favoured the idea that, in the future, all the money should be spent in one country under one heading, such as education; some preferred the idea of spending it in one country, but focusing on two budget headings; some wanted to spend it in one country but over a wider portfolio mix; some were for spending it in two countries; and so on. The models were well made and proposed with vigour and informed argument. I found it very difficult to make up my mind because each strategy was able to stand on its own and workable.

I was impressed by the evidence from the Fair Trade Forum, which was given by John McAllion. He called for active participation on fair trade, and highlighted the fact that the Scottish public sector spends £8 billion a year buying goods and services. He told the committee:

"The attachment of fair trade and ethical criteria to the contracts that are involved in the buying of those goods and services would make a massive impact, not only on how Scots think about themselves but on many poor producers all over the world who might be able to get into that chain."

In another response, Mr McAllion said—:

"there is a strong case for including fair trade and ethical criteria in contracts issued through the public sector".— [*Official Report, European and External Relations Committee*, 13 May 2008; c 660, 663.]

The documented evidence that the Scottish Fair Trade Forum submitted gave many examples from throughout the rest of Europe of ethical and fair trade procurement—including procurement in the European Commission itself.

I believe that we in Scotland can step up to the plate on fair trade. We can do something positive to help developing countries, and councils have an influential role to play in that. To that end, I have written to West Dunbartonshire Council, encouraging it to increase the number of towns in the area that are fair trade towns. I believe that West Dunbartonshire could be a fair trade county. We should do all that we can to support developing countries. That is only one way, but it is a tangible and workable way, to make a difference.

It was a pleasure to be involved in taking evidence for the report. The commitment and enthusiasm from throughout Scotland were humbling and should encourage us all to take positive action to help developing countries.

16:06

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the debate. As members may know, I had a long-standing interest in international development even before my four years as deputy to Claire Short at DFID—exciting times, as one might imagine. I welcome the report, which is balanced and excellent. Sadly, the Scottish Government's development policy does not match the report. It does not reflect the report's priorities and it does not pick up most of the report's recommendations.

I listened to what the minister said in her introduction. It appears that, unlike previous Administrations, the SNP Administration sees its international development policy as part of a campaign for independence as much as a development policy. Although international development is a reserved area, I accept 100 per cent the important role that the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament can play. Des McNulty will confirm that, when I was a minister at DFID, I encouraged that. I encouraged the setting up of the cross-party group on international development and came to its first meeting.

Nevertheless, that role is complementary, not competitive. It is not about pretending that we are an independent nation. DFID has a budget of £5 billion and rising—nearly 1,000 times the Scottish Executive's budget for international development. Moreover, that budget has been doubled by the Labour Government and is moving towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. Civil society organisations receive £274 million from DFID, which is distributed by a department that is based in East Kilbride, where DFID has 40 per cent of its staff in one of its two headquarters buildings. So, through DFID's department in East Kilbride, Scotland is contributing a huge amount to international development. Oxfam gets £19.6 million from DFID, which is three times the Scottish Executive's development budget.

However, development is not just about assistance; DFID is also involved in trade justice and debt cancellation. I would point out—particularly today—that it is Gordon Brown personally who has given a lead to debt cancellation and trade justice throughout the world. The Scottish Government should not try to replicate or duplicate the UK programme. I was disturbed to see plans for development in Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Darfur and the Indian sub-continent as well as responses to international humanitarian crises—all out of £6 million. That is absolute nonsense.

The Malawi programme is exceptional. It builds on our special relationship with Malawi and it is unique. Any financial contribution that we can make to sub-Saharan Africa will not even scratch

the surface of the first problem in any one of those countries. Further, anything that we could do in a humanitarian crisis would be almost meaningless.

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): Will the member give way?

George Foulkes: No.

It is almost laughable to suggest that a meaningful contribution could be made to countries such as India or Pakistan, which are both vast countries, with great riches along with abject poverty. It is much better to concentrate our limited resources on a meaningful development programme in Malawi and on really making a difference in that important country.

As others have said, the Scottish Government could be doing a great deal more. Assistance should be channelled through our voluntary and civil society organisations, over 70 of which are affiliated to the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland. They have the necessary experience, contacts and expertise, and there is no point in trying to duplicate that.

I support the calls for incorporating fair trade and ethical criteria in purchasing and procurement policies. What the minister said about that was disappointing, as Michael Matheson and others have rightly said. I hope that the minister will hear Michael Matheson's call and take up the matter.

We should think about the secondment of staff to developing countries. That is something that the Scottish Government, local authorities and health boards can do. We can provide technical assistance in health, engineering, finance and accountancy. That is important work, which can be done in co-operation with DFID.

I also support the idea of school twinning. That can be done electronically as well as physically, which will make it reasonably cheap. The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture and the Minister for Schools and Skills should, as Robin Harper said, be going around schools to talk about the importance of development.

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt): Will the member give way?

George Foulkes: The minister will have an opportunity later.

I ask the minister to tell us, when she winds up, whether she will take up Oxfam's suggestion that £180,000 should be spent on development education centres, which would make a huge difference.

I agree with Ted Brocklebank about the CPA. In that context, I mention the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, of which I am a governor. It does a great deal of work in

developing democratic structures in developing countries. The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government have played an important part in working with WFD in that regard.

The minister is chatting away as she usually does—yap, yap, yap—but I urge her to listen instead of talking and to reconsider her policy in the light of the report and the debate. It would be sad if the vital work that is being done were to be sacrificed because of the SNP's preoccupation with pulling Scotland away from the rest of the United Kingdom.

16:13

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I apologise to you and to the convener of the European and External Relations Committee for not being here for the start of the debate. I informed you and the convener as soon as I could that that would be the case. I am, of course, delighted to take part in the debate as a substitute member of the committee.

Just 10 years ago, the suggestion that Scotland would by now have an international development policy to debate, let alone one that is generally supported by members across the political divides—with the exception of Lord Foulkes—would have been met with scepticism and disbelief. Unlike George Foulkes, I believe that we have come a long way towards global citizenship as a country. I am glad to have this chance to take a moment to pause and consider, now that we have begun to shoulder the responsibilities that come from that global citizenship.

The report has two themes. One is the review of how the international development programme has worked so far and how it can be improved; and the other is the much wider issue that has been raised of mainstreaming international development practice across all Government activity.

Ted Brocklebank, Jack McConnell and others have mentioned Malawi and, during the evidence-taking sessions in the committee, the importance of infrastructure and capacity building in particular was emphasised by those with most direct experience. With regard to the idea of helping others to help themselves and ensuring that projects are sustainable beyond the end of aid, I agree with Jamie Hepburn's point about the need to move beyond the straightforward donor-and-beneficiary relationship. The evidence from Lloyds TSB—perhaps soon to be Lloyds TSB HBOS—and the Hunter Foundation was particularly interesting because of the way in which they had, in a way, bypassed the operations of the governmental organisations in order to do their own thing. The question of *cui bono*—who

benefits?—is borne in mind by people on the ground more than it is by Government officials. It is interesting to note that DFID spends more on consultants than does any other Whitehall department; by some estimates, it spends up to £700 million on consultants, compared with the £9 million and rising for our entire international development programme. From the evidence that we took, I understand that that is exactly what the organisations that do the most valuable work seek to avoid.

The success of the programme, the huge funding increase from the Scottish Government, the cross-party support, and the expansion to the Indian sub-continent and to sub-Saharan Africa were all appreciated, which brings me to the second, broader matter. The saying in the medical profession “First do no harm” is a worthy principle that is as valid for the treatment of the global problems of poverty and underdevelopment as it is for the treatment of the sick and the dying. It comes as no surprise to see in the report that the charities and civic organisations that I have mentioned have pushed that to the top of the agenda.

We have heard about the procurement situation. The Scottish public sector spends around £30 billion per year of which, according to the report, around £8 billion is spent on goods and services. As Alex Neil, the deputy convener, pointed out in the committee, not all of that £8 billion can be used in the way that has been suggested, for practical reasons, but it is clear that not enough progress has been made in that area.

However, there is a double jeopardy for the Scottish Government. The UK Government has to look over its shoulder at what the European Commission might examine, and we have to look over our shoulder at what the UK Government might say. Robin Harper asked why we do not just write to Westminster. However, why has Westminster not said, “You can do this”? That would be a simple thing to do. Why has no Labour member said that Westminster should have given the lead?

The UK is the member state in this regard as it carries out the negotiations between Governments, and it could have given a very simple lead. If the issue is so pressing, why has it not been taken up by the Westminster Government? Guidance issued by that Government would have been ideal. Throughout Europe, people say that the UK Government gold plates legislation instead of taking the most practical approach, which is why the Dutch have moved so much further ahead than we have.

In recent years, equality and non-discrimination have become a thread that runs through every organisation, but we are now also beginning to

consider the environmental impact of action. In the Scottish Parliament, any laws that are passed must, as Robin Harper mentioned, include a statement that they comply with human rights. The Scottish Government is also bound by that legislation. In the longer term, a big change would be to add global social impact as another criterion to the list, rather than sitting in a corner that we have marked off as fair trade. We could then take that into account in all our work. As far as I know, the Scottish Government is open, as we all are, to that idea.

As a country, we are teaching the importance of citizenship as part of the curriculum for excellence, and we are open to that idea as a country. It is important to take two lessons away from the report: how the programme works, and how we can embed it throughout society and in government. Scotland's actions to fight poverty and relieve suffering on the international stage are one of the many reasons to be proud of this country.

We perhaps find most evidence of that in schools, as Robin Harper said. Kinross school, which Jack McConnell visited when I mentioned it to him, and Dunblane high school both have relationships with Malawi, as does the school from East Lothian that appeared before the committee. There is passion and meaning in those relationships when children are involved and have direct experience of the lives of children in Malawi; it motivates them in a lifelong way.

The potential for Scotland's contribution to the world would expand a thousand times over if we moved from being treated as little more than a province as we are now—as we heard eloquently from Lord Foulkes—to being a proper member of the global society of independent states. Before the partisan hackles start to rise, however, I will say that, whatever we might be able to do to help international development under a different constitutional situation, I am glad that we seem to be making quite a good job of what we can do here and now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): We move to the winding up speeches, and I call Hugh O'Donnell. Mr O'Donnell, you have seven minutes.

16:19

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): Thank you, Presiding Officer—that is very generous.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is your lucky day.

Hugh O'Donnell: I congratulate the committee members and those who gave evidence on the

detail of the report, which is comprehensive. It explores and identifies a number of notable gaps in the approach to international development. It makes a considerable number of recommendations and suggestions that, if adopted by the Government, should begin to tackle some of the shortcomings in how we do things in relation to international development. As other members who are much more knowledgeable on the issue than I am have said, we know that some of those present a challenge to Governments of all shades. It is not quite the challenge that we are still waiting for the Labour Government in Westminster to meet in respect of the UK's contribution to abolishing debt, but that is a matter for George Foulkes to take up with his former colleagues.

It is not acceptable for Governments to hold their hands up and say that they cannot do anything because there are barriers. In many instances, even in the case of this SNP Government, to take policy forward Governments can press hard to change rules and can even circumvent rules and laws. All that it takes is the right level of determination. In particular, as other members have said—we cannot say it too often—it is important, if we are serious about playing a role in international development, to address fair trade and procurement rules and the inclusion of social labels in the criteria, which Keith Brown mentioned. Any amount of money that we can contribute to international development will be welcome. To belittle the work of the previous Administration by saying that it pales into insignificance undermines and demeans that work and any continuation of it by this Administration.

On the gold plating of European regulations, all members know that there will be elections to the European Parliament next year. I hope that all members of this Parliament who have an interest in international development will urge the campaign teams and candidates to make issues such as social labelling and fair trade rules part of the campaign. I will certainly try to do that with the Liberal Democrat team.

We are all rightly focused on the domestic impact of the current financial crisis, but we would do well to remember that—as several members have said—sadly, as is often the way with these things, those who are most in need are often the ones who suffer most when such events happen. We should be at pains to point out to Governments that, notwithstanding the difficulties that the developed world faces, many of which are driven by the greed and avarice of the financial world, our problems should not be an excuse to draw back from our commitment, both moral and financial, to less fortunate parts of the world and to the millennium development goals that were set by the UN.

I turn to the comments on education in the report. Few things that we can do are more useful than ensuring that development education is built into the fabric of the curriculum for excellence, given the potential that that has for improving pupils' understanding of the long-term impact that our behaviours in the western developed world have on the developing world. Robin Harper referred to a number of those behaviours, in particular in relation to human rights and the dealings of multinationals.

As Jack McConnell said, it is important that our young people engage with communities. Otherwise, the stereotypes about what it means to live in a developing country will be sustained. We should ensure that as many young people as possible have the opportunity to engage in that way. It is all very well to say that these things can be done electronically, but that is a bit difficult if the country at the other end does not have a telephone line or a computer in the school. However, such engagement is only part of what is needed, as it will not necessarily improve the awareness of the vast majority of the population who are not at school. As we saw during the make poverty history marches, the people of Scotland have a great deal of power when it comes to international development as information sharers, voters, campaigners and consumers.

To paraphrase much of the evidence that was given by the World Development Movement, Oxfam, NIDOS and IDEAS, I think that the Scottish Parliament and Government, which also have the power to legislate, should lead by example and promote these issues through educating and raising the awareness of not just those in our education system but our whole population. By doing so, we will equip the people of Scotland to make positive contributions to international development.

The Scottish Government must devote more resources to creating an environment of learning and action around global justice issues in schools, communities and businesses. Such an approach should focus strongly on the issues, structures and institutions that, for better or worse, shape international development.

With apologies to the Presiding Officer for not quite using the time that I was allocated, I conclude by thanking the committee for its report and endorsing its recommendations. I now pass over to those who are more knowledgeable on these matters.

16:26

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): The debate has been interesting, reflective and—I hope—productive with regard to the matter in

hand. I am usually to be found ruminating on the health portfolio but, as a substitute member of the European and External Relations Committee, I am delighted to be summing up for the Conservatives in this debate.

In doing so, I recognise my own pride in being a unionist. By extension, I take pride in the exceptional role in international development played by the UK, led by the Government of whatever day at Westminster. My party has proposals that it will seek to take forward when in government. Those proposals build on what has gone before and, indeed, on the contribution that the noble Lord Foulkes was very keen to remind us he had made. I say to Lord Foulkes that, although I appreciate that the red leather benches must miss his gentle and tender caress, I am sure that when in government he supported with gusto our joint objective of seeking to increase to 0.7 per cent our contribution to international development as a percentage of gross national income.

The role of the Scottish Parliament, which was neatly addressed by Michael Matheson, is of necessity complementary and, given its limited scale, the spend that is involved is best used in a focused and targeted way. It is certainly instructive that more than one member with a business background made that very point.

The previous Administration, which on this matter was led with singular purpose by Jack McConnell, alighted on Malawi—and with reason and good judgment. As Pauline McNeill made clear, doing so added to the new Parliament's moral authority. I was, from a distance, delighted that the Administration was taking that approach. As it so happens, my wife's late uncle, George Paton, was for many years the dedicated chairman of the governors of the David Livingstone centre in Blantyre, which seeks to promote and celebrate that remarkable man's work, not least in Malawi. I know that George Paton would have been delighted at the amount of Scottish public participation in the life of Malawi and in extending and building on the work of Jim Hume's not-so-distant ancestor in a modern context.

That illustrates one successful aspect of the Scottish Government's effort. By focusing primarily on Malawi, the Government—within a relatively short time, it must be noted—ensured that our association and contribution were widely recognised by the Scottish public. That is of enormous value and, indeed, is not always the case when aid is given. Moreover, the people of Malawi have appreciated this engagement, which has genuinely strengthened the links between the two countries.

Like many members, I have met those who have volunteered their services. The rewards extend in

both directions and some fairly useful people believe that their efforts have made a difference. In that respect, I believe that Jack McConnell produced the goods and that, having set out to achieve that wider public engagement, he can be pretty satisfied with the outcome as he contemplates his next challenge.

The report identifies some of the lessons that have been learned. Obviously, as the Scottish Parliament sought to develop a programme within the reserved margins, lessons were going to have to be learned. The report generously recognises that and makes various practical recommendations that members have alluded to in the debate. Indeed, Malcolm Chisholm opened powerfully with reflections on the widespread public engagement with international development and with some force detailed the report's key recommendations, particularly those with regard to ambitions for a more holistic approach that would build more public awareness of international development and on fair trade. Mr Chisholm also made some powerful points about fair trade to which the minister responded in warm and general terms, although she probably did not address them as directly as the committee might have wished.

Pauline McNeill asked the pertinent question about the choice of the Indian sub-continent, the case for which, given the committee's views, will need to be substantiated by the Government. Given what I have said, it would be a great pity if we not only failed to engage Scottish public opinion behind a completely new and fresh challenge but diluted awareness of the focus on Malawi and the committee's preference for extending our focus into sub-Saharan Africa. That issue was directly addressed by Jim Hume and by my colleague Ted Brocklebank, who expressed concern at the potential route of future Government thinking. He also drew the chamber's attention to the CPA as an example of a non-hard-cash link that can make a contribution.

Obviously, I was particularly interested in hearing from Jack McConnell. The thunder and drums of battle leave our respective sides unreconciled—indeed, they seem to be almost unreconcilable on most, if not all, issues—but I think that he spoke directly about engagement for people's benefit, which I have touched on, and how that is branching out in many ways. He illustrated what he said with practical examples, as I think most of us could do. The legacy is genuine, and he can be proud of it; I know that he will continue to encourage such a legacy, and we should all join him in that task.

Robin Harper brought to life some of the opportunities that exist, although asking the Government to instruct from the centre

undermined the argument, which has succeeded, that persuasion should be used. We should encourage people to participate actively through choice rather than necessarily seek to issue directives.

Many other interesting speeches have been made in which members made similar points to those that I have mentioned or additional points.

In conclusion, I repeat our welcome for the report and encourage the Government to respect some of its conclusions, which might require a change from the advertised tack—Jack McConnell encouraged it to do so, too. Our view is that, by focusing on an appropriate and worthwhile objective and offering a complementary programme of support in Malawi, we have not only made a significant difference but successfully engaged the wider interests of Scots. We should not lose sight of that achievement or be injudiciously tempted to embark on other ventures that are beyond our ability and will not secure similar engagement in the future.

16:32

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): Back in 1999, when George Reid and I set up the cross-party group on international development, we could not have thought that we would go from setting up a forum for bringing together elected members and organisations with an interest in international development issues to having not only a policy, but a funded initiative and a broad discussion on how to progress it. I am grateful that we have gone through that process, and acknowledge the significant contribution that several former members made to it—I refer to the contributions of Sylvia Jackson, James Douglas-Hamilton, Mark Ballard and others, as well as to that of George Reid. I also acknowledge the significant contributions of Patricia Ferguson and Karen Gillon, who would, I am sure, have liked to have been here for this debate. Many people have been involved in the process. In that context, I pay particular tribute to Jack McConnell for seizing the day—members across the chamber have highlighted the fact that he did so.

Hilary Benn, who was the first person who was not a member of the Scottish Parliament to speak in the chamber—he did so even before the Queen—said that there was more than enough for everybody to do, given the scale of the challenges. Michael Matheson referred to that in his speech. We have progressed the initiative in question on a broad cross-party basis. Initially, Jack McConnell led on that; we now hope that the Scottish National Party Government will progress it.

The report is valuable, because it provides an opportunity to look back at where we have come

from and to look forward at what we need to do. There is a great deal to be proud of. A lot has been achieved in recognising Malawi, involving ordinary Scots and organisations in Scotland in improving the situation in Malawi and generating greater awareness not only of Malawi, but of poverty and related development issues in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

However, we need to work out how to make best use of the available resources. I do not want to get into party politics, but it is fair to say that Scotland's contribution is not just the Scottish Government's development activity; our contribution is also part of the UK's expenditure on international development. We should maximise what comes out of both budgets on behalf of the people who are the recipients. We should also maximise our influence on doing good in the world. That is not just about debt or aid; it is about transforming the economic arrangements in the world and dealing with issues such as the superabundance of arms in Africa. We must try to get some kind of moral compass as well as take practical measures to make things better. International development is not just about making us feel better; it is about making things better in the countries that we try to assist.

We need to work with the UK Government and encourage it to work with people in the United Nations and the other economic and political agencies that have a bearing on the big decisions that will help or hinder Africa and other less-developed parts of the world. That sense of common purpose and obligation is felt strongly by Scots, who want us to work together to try to achieve things. They are not really interested in squabbling or disagreements about unrelated issues; they want us to make progress.

As members have said, we have a choice about whether the international development programme should focus only on Malawi, on Malawi and sub-Saharan Africa, or on Malawi, sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian sub-continent. I acknowledge the dilemmas—they existed right at the beginning when we talked about international development policy and funding mechanisms. I was involved with the funding mechanism at the start, as an assessor of how the initial funding could best be used. My personal view is that Malawi and sub-Saharan Africa should be the focus. Malawi should be given the primacy, but it does not make sense to stick within the boundaries of Malawi if an excellent project in Zambia, Rwanda or Darfur can be assisted. However, the proposal to go beyond that and take up the problems of the Indian sub-continent lacks justification, at least in the evidence to the committee that I have seen.

I caution strongly against using part of the available resource for international humanitarian

assistance, however tempting that might be. All the evidence from various organisations that are involved in disaster relief and emergency assistance was that they want to deal with fewer agencies. They want funding to be better co-ordinated and available immediately. If we impose extra bureaucracy at our end, that will help nobody, so that is not a particularly sensible use of resources.

Many excellent speeches have been made. It is invidious to pick out individuals, but I highlight Jack McConnell's comments, which were based on his practical experience. He emphasised the theme of volunteering. Our great task is to unlock the potential among Scots and among those whom we are trying to assist in Africa. Michael Matheson made an excellent speech and Robin Harper's point about human rights was well made—I certainly want human rights issues to be emphasised. I do not agree with Keith Brown that the UK Government should not gold plate legislation. For the kind of assistance that we want to provide through international development, we want the best possible safeguards and processes to help people. Maybe we can have a debate about specific issues. I am keen to speak to Keith Brown and find out exactly what he meant, but I do not see an argument for anything other than the best in taking forward international development.

We should proceed by taking the approach with which we started: working on a pragmatic, cross-party basis; assessing what is needed and how we can provide it; and working in partnership with Westminster and others. That is what the people of Scotland expect and it is certainly what the organisations that are involved in development want. I hope that, following today's debate, we will take that approach into the future.

16:40

Linda Fabiani: The Government's approach to international development has been consensual from the start. We have always said that we want to build on what happened before, to review what happened before, and to move things forward in the spirit of consensus. In general, that has been taken on board by everyone, even though there are naturally some issues on which we will disagree.

The European and External Relations Committee's report is valuable, as are our review of the previous Government's policy and our listening to the relevant organisations and the public about how to formulate our forward approach to international development.

Many points were made in the debate and I ask members to excuse me for not mentioning everyone who spoke. However, I want to mention

Lord George Foulkes, because within the misguided rant that we heard from him was a little kernel of truth. DFID is indeed a huge player in international development, and that is why everything that we do is done in consultation with DFID. As I have said, the issue is far too important for people to run away on their own with it. When I went to Malawi, I visited the DFID representative, and my officers have constant contact with officials at DFID to ensure that what we do is complementary.

Let us recognise that the Scottish Government's contribution to international development is additional to what the Scottish people contribute within the UK set-up. Scotland makes a huge contribution. That brings me to the recurrent theme of whether the Scottish Government intends to establish a Scottish representative in Malawi. The Scottish Government's interests in Malawi are represented by the British High Commission in Malawi, and we pay our share towards that office.

We are certainly keen to expand capacity in Malawi as far as governance is concerned, and we want to ensure that civil society in Malawi can look after the issues that arise and take an overview in conjunction with the Government of Malawi. That is why, in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, we fund the civil society organisation CONGOMA—the Council For Non-Governmental Organisations In Malawi. We have also funded the Scotland Malawi Partnership to investigate whether there is a need for a corresponding presence in Malawi to support the development of civil society links. I will let the committee and the Parliament know the outcome of that work when the results are available.

Another recurring theme in the debate was the expansion of our focus to include Zambia, Tanzania, Rwanda and the Darfur region of Sudan. Let me be clear about that. As I told the committee when I gave evidence to it, we have not expanded our focus in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, we are narrowing the focus of our policy from the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, which was covered by the original policy that was launched in 2005.

Pauline McNeill: What I heard in the chamber this afternoon was not a challenge to explain an expansion of the policy in sub-Saharan Africa but a request for clarity about why the Government has expanded it to include the Indian sub-continent. I would like hear the justification for that.

Linda Fabiani: Absolutely. I am just about to move on to that. However, it has been said that we are expanding in sub-Saharan Africa and that we should keep everything focused on Malawi. In fact, we are focusing in on sub-Saharan Africa. For the first time, there is a ring-fenced fund of a minimum of £3 million for Malawi. That fund recognises the special relationship that we have.

The Indian sub-continent was selected to recognise its links with Scotland, to build a strong, fair and inclusive national identity, and to express solidarity with communities that are represented in Scottish society. Members agreed that it was right for the previous Government to put in place a humanitarian response to the awful events in Sri Lanka, so the inclusion of the Indian sub-continent in the international development policy is not completely new.

Des McNulty raised the issue of humanitarian assistance. It is clear that we will respond to humanitarian crises through the Disasters Emergency Committee. During the Burmese crisis, I had meetings with the committee, which made it clear that we could contribute if the committee believed that we could add value to what it was doing.

The transportation of goods to Malawi was raised. It is very tempting to say that people in Malawi could do with this or that, but we must focus on what we are funding. The new policy adopts a focused approach. Where the transportation of specific equipment is an essential and proportionate part of the activities of a specific programme, and where there is evidence that the equipment cannot be sourced in the country or in other parts of Africa, we will consider funding it as part of the programme allocation. However, we will not consider applications for funding solely for the transportation of equipment. The Scottish Government's resources should be used to fund its priorities, which are additional to the work that DFID is doing.

Jack McConnell: Will the minister take an intervention?

Linda Fabiani: No—I do not have time.

The issue of international education was raised. In the recent debate on international education that Maureen Watt brought to the chamber, in which I made the closing speech, we set out an holistic approach to the issue. I am working closely with colleagues in education, health and climate change to ensure that cross-cutting themes are addressed. An holistic approach is important, but targeted and focused work must be at the centre of what we do. The International Development Education Association of Scotland already receives funding for development education from DFID.

Robin Harper mentioned human rights, which is an extremely important issue. When the joint commission on Malawi met recently, it welcomed the inclusion of the following cross-cutting themes: vocational education and training; gender issues and equality, which are part of human rights; enterprise development; and strengthening the context for enhanced human rights and the

development of civil society. The last of those themes has been included because we deem human rights to be extremely important.

Ted Brocklebank and Michael Matheson mentioned the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which is hugely important in addressing the issues that Robin Harper raised. Michael Matheson also spoke about the importance of developing relations between departments in Malawi, Scotland and some of the other countries with which we will start to work more closely.

Civic society has a great role to play—it is not all about Government. Organisations throughout Scotland—charities, aid agencies, schools, education departments, local authorities and professional organisations—are playing their part. We can get too bogged down in saying that Government must lead. I believe firmly that Government should add value to initiatives to which people are committed. We should not pretend that we are the experts. That is why everything that we do is led by people in the field, who have the necessary knowledge and experience.

Fair trade is hugely important. The UK is the member state, but there have been discussions between my officials, officials in the procurement directorate and officials responsible for procurement at UK level. At First Minister's question time, the First Minister has stated that we are committed to those discussions. There seems to be cross-party support for upping the ante on the issue. I am happy to take up the matter with Jim Murphy, the Minister for Europe, and with the European Commission, which has a representative here in Edinburgh. I will press Jim Murphy to raise the issue with Peter Mandelson, as has been suggested. I will also have dialogue with Douglas Alexander—when he gets back to me—on how we can move the agenda forward.

We are committed to fair trade and to the international development work that the Parliament does, in conjunction with its other partners. We are listening and will move forward.

16:51

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am the deputy convener of the European and External Relations Committee and, in winding up the debate on behalf of the committee, I shall be my usual consensual self.

Although there may be differences of detail among us, members of this chamber are totally united in believing in our need to be able to make a contribution—as a Government and as a Parliament—to international development. I commend Jack McConnell for his work in setting

up the Malawi project and—as Michael Matheson pointed out—for his defying people from other places who would rather that we were not involved in this kind of activity.

I also commend the Government—Linda Fabiani, Alex Salmond and others—on doubling the budget allocated to international development. The budget is modest in the international context, but it nevertheless sends out a clear signal—not just from the Scottish Parliament but, more important, from the Scottish people—that we are keen to do what we can, whenever and wherever we can, to help relieve poverty in the international community.

I begin by placing in context the committee's report and the committee's role in international development. The first thing to understand is the global scale of the challenge. We all know the figures on international poverty, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. We also know about poverty in South America, in Asia, including the Indian sub-continent, and in many other parts of the world. We must consider not only poverty but its consequences.

AIDS has been mentioned, but we can also consider many diseases that can be cured, such as tuberculosis. Far too many children are dying of TB—a disease long since wiped off the map of this country.

Across the world, many children have no educational opportunities, and rates of infant mortality are high. Although we have made substantial progress in recent years, certain events make the future challenge even greater. Two of those events are population explosion and climate change.

The population of Egypt is growing by a million every year. We do not often think of countries such as Egypt when we think of poverty, but the poverty figures for Egypt are not that much better than those for many other African countries that receive aid.

The real irony of world climate change is that the people who will suffer the most from its impact are those who have contributed the least to its cause.

The debate has been primarily about aid, but we should not forget the importance of trade. The European Union has estimated that a 1 per cent improvement in the terms of trade between Africa and Europe would benefit the African economy more than all the aid that Europe—both as the EU and as individual countries—currently gives to Africa every year. The collapse of the Doha round of trade talks is more detrimental to the interests of people in Africa than it is to the interests of people in Europe.

As members have said, although many promises were made at the Gleneagles summit, particularly on the millennium development goals, many countries that signed up to the agreement at Gleneagles have failed to deliver on their promises. It is fair to say that the UK Government is not one of those countries and has been exemplary in following up the Gleneagles agreement.

Scotland has a long history of showing concern for our fellow human beings. I think that all members support Rabbie's mantra:

"That Man to Man the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

Members have talked about David Livingstone's contribution, in particular to Malawi and the countries that surround it.

In considering a way forward for Scotland, the committee wanted to get across three or four key themes. First, because we are dealing with a small amount of money, our role should be to add value to international development where we can, not to compete with or cut across what DFID or anyone else is doing, as Linda Fabiani said. We should work in partnership and collaboration with DFID, aid agencies and international bodies. A budget of £8 million—or £9 million when we reach that figure—represents a drop in the ocean compared with DFID's budget, let alone the global budget for international aid. It would be counterproductive to try to use our budget other than to add value to work that is going on.

Secondly, the committee grappled with what we should do with the money: should we try to spread the jam more thinly across a bigger piece of bread or should we focus on a particular geographic area or on sectors such as education and health? We recommended geographic and thematic focus, given the amount of money in the budget. There has been a debate about whether we should focus on wider sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian sub-continent or whether our focus should be narrower. Our view was that a policy of putting money exclusively into Malawi will benefit neighbouring countries, because Malawi does not have closed borders. We should more proactively help such countries, as part of our contribution, but it would be absurd to try to focus on the rest of Africa, wider Asia or the Americas, given the resources that we have.

Thirdly, as members have said, the issue is not just how we use the money that we have set aside but how we can use wider resources in Scotland, in particular human resources, to make a greater contribution. We can punch above our weight. For example, the youth enterprise programme that is starting up in Malawi used about £68,000 of public money from the Scottish Government's fund to

leverage in substantially more money and—perhaps more important—expertise from the business community in Scotland, with a view to setting up in Malawi the equivalent of the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust. That is a good example of how we can get a much bigger bang for the buck.

There is always a dilemma in international development policy: should we put our resources into the immediate crises, such as a tsunami, or into long-term growth, particularly economic and agricultural development? The answer is not an either/or; we have to do both. When there is a humanitarian crisis, we must be able to play our part in relieving and ameliorating the situation. Simultaneously, we have to keep our eye on the long-term ball, which is to make the Malawis of this world economically proficient and able to feed their own people, to play their part in international trade and the international community and to ensure that their children do not die needlessly at the age of three, four or five. At the end of the day, that is what it is all about.

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-2551, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 24 September 2008

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate:
Scuddamore Report into Foot and Mouth

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 25 September 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Independent Business

11.40 am General Question Time

12.00 pm First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Health and Wellbeing

2.55 pm Stage 3 Proceedings: Judiciary and
Courts (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 1 October 2008

2.15 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body
Question Time

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 2 October 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

11.40 am General Question Time

12.00 pm First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm

Themed Question Time
Justice and Law Officers;
Rural Affairs and the Environment

2.55 pm

Scottish Government Business

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business.—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): There is just one question to be put as a result of today's business. The question is, that motion S3M-2466, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on the European and External Relations Committee's report on international development, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the conclusions and recommendations contained in the European and External Relations Committee's 3rd Report, 2008 (Session 3): Inquiry into International Development (SP Paper 134).

2014: Scotland's Year of Sport

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-2506, in the name of Jack McConnell, on 2014: a year of sport for Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises that 2014 will be a significant year for Scottish sport; notes that, in addition to the annual sporting events taking place that year, Scotland will host the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Ryder Cup in Gleneagles; acknowledges that each event will bring international athletes to this country and will focus worldwide attention on Scotland; welcomes the variety of sporting opportunities that 2014 will present to Scotland, and believes that 2014 should be designated "Scotland's Year of Sport" in order to highlight the benefits that sport and physical activity bring to the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.

17:03

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): I convey to members the apologies of Patricia Ferguson, who originally lodged the motion. She cannot be with us today, so I was happy to accept the offer to relodge and speak to the motion on a concept that she has promoted regularly and consistently for a year or two now. I hope that members will welcome it and discuss it constructively.

Patricia Ferguson was a key figure in bringing the 2014 Commonwealth games to Glasgow, in doing much of the initial groundwork to promote Scotland's and Glasgow's case and in putting together the documentation that justified Glasgow's selection. As a result of that work, she became committed to the idea that we could link the Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup, which will come to Gleneagles in 2014, with the other sporting events that year and use the focal point of 2014 to promote health, wellbeing, participation and excellence in sport up to, during and after the year.

What a summer of sport we have had this year: we have seen events in tennis and other sports, and the phenomenal performances of Scottish and British athletes in the Beijing Olympics. The Scots medallists in the Olympics have been congratulated in the Parliament before and I do not need to mention them again. Today, which is the last day of the Paralympics in Beijing, I congratulate Aileen McGlynn, who won two gold medals. As a blind cyclist, she has perhaps overcome greater challenges in the velodrome than Chris Hoy will ever have.

Aileen McGlynn and the other Scottish medallists represented Scotland and Great Britain

in Beijing and won medals for their country and themselves, but I also congratulate the Paralympians whose participation in the Great Britain team is as significant as some of the headlines about sporting excellence in the Olympics and sporting championships the world over all year round. In particular, I mention Jonathan Paterson from my constituency, who trains with Glasgow Rangers Football Club. He captained the GB seven-a-side football team at the Paralympics. They were seventh, unfortunately, but they beat the hosts and will come back feeling proud of their achievements.

The Paralympians humble us all. We should congratulate them and look forward to their further achievements in years to come. *[Applause.]*

We should also wish well the Ryder cup team, who are representing Europe in America this week, and the Scottish team who will go to the Commonwealth youth games in the weeks ahead. In those games and in the contest in Kentucky this weekend, we will see yet again how much sport can galvanise the interest of the nation—even those who are unfit and unhealthy.

The summer's events in Beijing show how sporting excellence can provide us with role models who inspire youngsters to take to the tennis court, to take their cycling a step further, to jump in the swimming pool or to take up rowing—perhaps in Strathclyde park in my constituency. When people from Scotland achieve the heights that some have achieved this summer, they inspire youngsters—and, indeed, others—to take up sports and physical exercise, which leads to a healthier lifestyle. That is why 2014 gives us a unique opportunity to improve, to extend and to make comprehensive participation in sport in Scotland and to drive forward the fantastic achievement that can come from taking part in competitive sport.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Does Jack McConnell agree that we can make the most of the inspiration that has been provided through the summer's activities only if facilities are in place, and that if facilities do not exist people will go back to being couch potatoes?

Jack McConnell: I was just coming to that point. If we designated 2014 as Scotland's year of sport and focused on three areas in particular, we could achieve higher levels of participation and greater excellence in advance of, during and after that year.

The first of those three areas would be participation and excellence in schools. I strongly believe that all parties in the Parliament should strive towards the objective of every child regularly having two hours of physical education in school—which the Parliament has stated on a number of

occasions. By 2014, it should also be perfectly possible for all Scotland's school pupils to enjoy at least one competitive sporting opportunity during that year—because competition in sport extends participation to another level and gives youngsters another sense of achievement and opportunity.

Secondly, in the run-up to 2014 and during the year itself, we can improve and extend our programmes and facilities—which Margo MacDonald mentioned. Many facilities are already under construction, but many more are still aspirations. Providing facilities and programmes to operate in them would give more people opportunity, but to achieve the legacy of facilities from 2014 we need greater support from the national lottery.

Thirdly, I believe that the opportunity afforded us by those who have achieved the highest level in their sport this summer, such as Chris Hoy, to act as their sport's ambassadors for healthy lifestyles and living give us an opportunity to get more and more Scottish youngsters to take part in sport and adapt their lifestyles. Amid all the challenges of the 21st century for them, that would give them a better opportunity to lead healthy lives, be less obese and, ultimately, take part in the sporting challenge that 2014 will provide.

17:10

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank Patricia Ferguson for lodging the motion for debate, and I wish her a speedy recovery. I also thank Jack McConnell for opening the debate. It is important that the matter is being debated fully in Parliament.

I signed and support the motion, which calls for 2014 to be designated Scotland's year of sport, but I hope that Parliament's and Scotland's ambitions will go beyond that one year, and that we can look forward to every year being a year of sport that benefits the health and wellbeing of Scots.

I and others, including Jack McConnell, have called for all political parties to come together and make representations to the Westminster Government regarding funding for the Glasgow Commonwealth games, including lottery funding. I am pleased to say that all political parties in the chamber have agreed with us, even though Andy Burnham, Labour MP and Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has said no. Will the Minister for Communities and Sport assure me in his summing up that cross-party representation will be made to the Westminster Government about the important issue of funding to ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of funds and is not penalised, as is happening at the moment, by having lottery funding taken away from community

sports and their further development and given to the London Olympics? I think that we all agree on that, so I hope to get an answer on it from the minister.

We should remember that the Commonwealth games in Manchester received £112 million of lottery funding for revenue costs and infrastructure. However, no lottery funding is forthcoming for the Commonwealth games in Scotland, which are being funded entirely by the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council.

I want the 2014 games to benefit Scotland and Glasgow so that children are encouraged to take up sports and physical activities and communities are unified. I want the games to promote Scotland as being a great place in which to live and work and I want the games to include tourism, as well. Most important, I want the games to involve and help the people of Glasgow.

On that note, I want to ask the minister two specific questions on training and jobs. Perhaps he cannot answer them; they might be better asked of the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism. However, will representations be made to employers who will be involved in building the Commonwealth games village and the sporting arenas to ensure that local people will be given the first, or any, opportunity to get training and jobs? It is important that we take such people with us. We want to leave a legacy from the Commonwealth games that will benefit the lives of the people of Glasgow and Scotland as a whole. It is an important issue, but if the minister cannot answer my question, I hope that he will pass it on to the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism.

Another issue that I want to raise is volunteering—an important aspect of the games and other sporting activities. I ask the minister to ensure that volunteering opportunities are offered not only to the people who regularly do a fantastic job in other areas but to others, such as disabled and disadvantaged people and the elderly, who may not be aware of the fact that they can take up the opportunity of volunteering. Will there be a project or a media campaign to encourage such people to come forward and volunteer to help with the games?

We have a fantastic opportunity for Glasgow in the Commonwealth games, so we must ensure that we secure the moneys. I agree with Margo MacDonald that we must ensure, too, that the games leave a lasting legacy for the health and wellbeing of our children and Scottish people in the future.

17:14

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): I join other members in thanking both

Patricia Ferguson for initiating the debate and the former First Minister, Jack McConnell, for making the opening speech. Obviously, I have a scheduling issue this evening because of the champions league match later on. Although the past 24 hours have been fairly traumatic, given the coverage on the airwaves and in public print of the division between our two biggest football clubs, if one of those clubs can put out the team that put out the team that put out Rangers, the commitment across sport in Scotland might be a bit more positive.

To be fair, this evening's debate is about the opportunities that 2014 will provide. Although we may have differences of emphasis—depending on our general political affiliation—on how to arrive at our desired outcomes for the 2014 games, I want to put on record the fact that lottery money will be included in much of what is combined within the 2014 commitments. Many of the major facilities will include an element of lottery contributions; the debate is about how much more we can receive in such contributions rather than whether we will get any lottery money.

As Jack McConnell said, the three issues on which we need to focus in the coming period—I am tempted to reframe the debate by calling this our version of PSP—are physical education, sports facilities and pathways. First, we need to ensure that the level of professional and educational development of PE in schools is of a quality that is commensurate with what people perceive was the case in the past. Secondly, we need to ensure that people have access to sports facilities that are fit for purpose, as was highlighted in one of the briefing papers that was sent to all members. Thirdly, we need to ensure that we provide pathways for people to participate in sport, whether that participation is at a very basic level or allows people the opportunity to excel and develop.

All of us who have been involved in sport over the years have experienced the extent to which volunteering behind the scenes makes a difference. Following my experience of sport as a teenager—despite how I might look nowadays—that level of expertise and knowledge is now used in the community, as is the case with many of the volunteers who take part in the football and athletics clubs in the community I am from.

I can also see that in the development that I see in my teenage son, who recently had the privilege of representing Scotland as part of the under-18 rugby league squad in the European championship challenge. Scotland was runner-up in that tournament, behind Wales. I have not quite managed to grasp the Scotland jersey from his back, and I know he was perfectly proud to represent his country. I advise the minister that he

is keen to make progress in that sport and would be delighted to represent the Great Britain rugby league team—he would be happy to represent both Scotland and Great Britain if that experience were to be allowed him. He often responds to me by saying, “At least I can show you some medals, Dad.”

Finally, as an elected member whose constituency covers the east end of Glasgow, I concur with comments about the need to use the Commonwealth games for regeneration. However, although I am partisan and partial about the east end of Glasgow, I believe that the games provide an opportunity for a Scotland-wide legacy in the dialogue that we will have with local authorities, sports organisations and funders at different levels. The 2014 commitment should provide a scale of commitment to sport that is markedly better than has been the case in recent years, although we have made progress on the issue over recent years. Barack Obama once said that all politics is local; we need to ensure that much of that sports development is local as well.

I hope that the debate this evening and subsequent debates will show that we can make a significant difference. Therefore, I agree with the commitment to make 2014 a year of sport for Scotland.

17:14

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): I congratulate Jack McConnell on securing today's debate and agree with him that 2014 will be a very special year in sport for Scotland. I take this opportunity to congratulate all the medal winners in the GB Paralympic team on their hugely successful performance in this year's games. Like their Olympic colleagues, they have done the United Kingdom proud and have been an inspiration to many of us back home.

The Scottish Conservatives are looking forward to the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth games. We recognise the huge opportunity that the games present both for focusing global attention on Scotland and for encouraging Scots of all ages to become involved in sport. I am sure that many Scots youngsters will have been truly inspired by the performance of our Olympic heroes, such as Chris Hoy, and that many more will be inspired by our elite athletes in the 2012 London Olympics and the 2014 Commonwealth games and, indeed, by our top golfers in the Ryder cup.

The Scottish Conservatives are passionate about getting our young people involved in sport and physical activity of all kinds, as can be witnessed in our recent policy announcement on securing Outward Bound education for all children in state schools.

However, the correct infrastructure must be in place to ensure that children's aspirations can be met. The other day, I received a letter from a constituent in Lochgilphead in Argyll, who is in despair. She has three children who are members of the Mid Argyll Athletics Club and who have excelled at long and middle-distance running. However, this term, they have had to abandon training altogether because there is no longer a suitable venue since the brand new high school was built with no track and field facilities. That is hugely ironic as many Lochgilphead residents, led by Hugh MacArthur and Bill MacAllum, founded a trust to build running facilities for mid-Argyll youth on the ground where the new school has now been built. It is hugely frustrating to have young people who are dead keen on athletics and a dedicated coach but no local facilities.

We need to address such issues if we are to ensure that our youngsters receive the health benefits from sport that we all want to see, and to provide medal-winning sports people for the future. Perhaps the minister will want to comment on those points in his speech.

As a sports enthusiast from Lochgilphead said to me, a kid from Lochgilphead is likely to become a champion hurdler because he has to jump so many hurdles to get any training facilities. Lochgilphead's nearest running track is now at Scotstoun in Glasgow, a 200-mile round trip. Sportscotland helps urban areas but seems to take no account of rural needs. Now that sportscotland has a new director, I will write to him to try to secure a more equitable approach to rural areas, especially in funding for track facilities. Why should a Scottish child be disadvantaged in athletics because he or she does not live in the central belt?

We all recognise the massive and unprecedented opportunity that 2014 offers Scotland to be a global sports hub. We also know that investment and support need to be put in place now to allow Scots of all ages and in all places who wish to become active in sport to be able to do so. I commend Jack McConnell's motion, and I look forward to the minister responding in a positive fashion.

17:22

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I congratulate Jack McConnell on bringing the motion before us, and I wish Patricia Ferguson a speedy recovery.

In a way, my speech follows on from what Jamie McGrigor said. I quote from a letter from my constituent, Christina Raeburn:

“I am a parent of a 16 year old son who like a lot of young people in Caithness has a passion and a great talent

in his field of sport. As a parent I have experienced many frustrations from a local and a national level of the lack of support in a financial aspect of my son having to travel to compete at a national level. We as a community have many young people who commit themselves to train hard, compete for their club and country at competitions."

That is the same problem that Jamie McGrigor talked about. In our case, it is about the sheer cost of young people accessing sports facilities down as far as Inverness. That is a problem for the far north, which I am sure that all rural members recognise.

In the far north, we experience underinvestment of capital in sports or leisure facilities, sometimes called leisure centres. The problem is historic; I am not having a go at the SNP Government at all. Fortrose, Dingwall, Alness, and Ullapool—all, it might be noted, in John Farquhar Munro's constituency—enjoy well-equipped leisure and sports facilities. There is one facility in my constituency, in Invergordon, but after that, they die out as one heads north. I have written to the minister about that.

That situation arose because, back in the 1980s and 1990s, the then Ross and Cromarty District Council, under the leadership of Douglas Sinclair, decided to invest heavily in the towns that I mentioned. Douglas Sinclair then became chief executive of Fife Council—he is known to many members here—and that groundbreaking policy followed. Other councils, such as the one in Caithness and Sutherland, chose not to do so. In the period immediately before local government reorganisation, the then Inverness District Council decided to invest similarly, and we have facilities such as the aquadome in Inverness.

The net result is that such facilities consume a large proportion of the Highland Council's sport and leisure budget. It is very difficult for the council to address in capital and revenue terms the historic underinvestment in places such as Caithness and Sutherland. I am having constructive dialogue with the minister on that matter. To give credit where it is due, the Scottish Government has been listening. I do not know what the solution is—I suspect that it is difficult to find, as resources are finite. Nevertheless, we must address the matter if we are, as Jamie McGrigor suggests, to afford sporting opportunities to our youngsters regardless of where they come from in Scotland.

I pay tribute to a constituent of mine, Mr Billy Manson, from Halkirk. Tomorrow, he and I will meet the minister to discuss a project that he has brought forward at his own hand to develop a pretty serious sporting facility in the village of Halkirk, in Caithness. It is people like Billy Manson who can make such things happen. I look forward to a constructive and, I do not doubt, thoughtful meeting with the minister tomorrow.

The year 2014 will be hugely significant for Scotland. We should be very proud that the Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup are coming to our country. However, I would like to see, in the years after 2014, young people with talent in my part of the world—which is very far from here—enjoying the opportunity to take part in the games and the Ryder cups of the future, following training in suitable facilities not far from their homes.

17:26

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I thank Jack McConnell and, through him, Patricia Ferguson for having lodged the motion and for the work that she has done in this area over the years. I agree that the year 2014 should be marked out as Scotland's year of sport. However, we should not wait until then—we should do it now.

I particularly take to heart Sandra White's remarks about funding. That is all important, as all sorts of strictures will be placed on local councils for the next few years, given the present economic situation. The year of sport will showcase Scotland, will bring benefits in terms of health and community development and will, we hope, raise the bar in our sporting prowess. I make no apology for making a special case for Scotland, but members will be pleased to hear that I will not make too much of a special case for Edinburgh on this occasion.

It is important that there should be community access to the facilities that are provided. I have news for Jamie Stone. At the weekend, my husband attended an athletics meeting in Dingwall to watch one of our granddaughters take part. The minister should look at those outlying areas, as they are deprived of the sort of facilities that we are beginning to see in and around the central belt. Having said that, I must criticise a bit the facilities that are attached to the new schools and that double as community facilities. They are often of a minimum standard. That is not raising the bar. We must be a bit more ambitious than that.

Jack McConnell talked about the requirement for volunteering, which is the second big requirement that we have in moving towards the year of sport. We need properly qualified coaches, who, by and large, will come from the ranks of volunteers. We must make it a bit easier for them to gain qualifications in their sports. We tend to forget that it costs money to get qualifications. We might encourage more people to take part in sport, but we will not raise the standards unless we have very good coaching. Therefore, the minister should seek out the best ways in which to quickly increase the number of coaches that we have. It is not good enough to look only to PE teachers; parents, grandparents and so on must be drawn

upon. I have some ideas about that, and if the minister wants to talk to me about them after the debate, I can tell him how they might be put into effect. I do not have the time to go into that just now.

Sportscotland is doing a grand job, although it could do better. Unfortunately, its attention will be distracted from the task in hand because it is having to move to Glasgow—but that is another topic.

My final remarks concern the provision of PE in schools. It is an utter nonsense to continue to talk of the aim of having two hours of good-quality PE in schools. That is not happening, and I would like an audit done soon of the number of PE teachers who are unemployed, teaching other things, working in leisure centres and so on. We are not meeting that target and doing so will require much more than the lip service that it is paid in this chamber in debate after debate.

I am given one opportunity every parliamentary session to have a motion debated in the chamber and I am using my upcoming opportunity to deal with the subject of sport. I hope that every party will take part and support my suggestions—the motion has been supported by representatives of every party. The debate will take place next Thursday; I will see members here.

17:30

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): Like other speakers, I welcome the opportunity to speak in this evening's debate and to support the motion that was so ably moved by Jack McConnell. I also reiterate the comments made about Patricia Ferguson. She was an excellent minister and is a great supporter of Scottish sport—I have seen her at a number of sporting events in recent times. She is a great ambassador for Scottish sport, and I wish her well.

The year 2014 will provide an excellent platform for showcasing Scotland and sport, and we have a lot to celebrate in terms of sport. I wish the European team all the best in this week's Ryder cup. I hope that the players bring the cup back from the United States of America. It will be tremendous to have the event in Scotland in 2014, as it will focus on Gleneagles and our other golfing venues. St Andrews is very much the home of golf and is a great visitor attraction throughout the year. People go there to look at a course where the likes of Tom Morris, Tom Watson, Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods have strolled up the fairways. The course is a terrific venue and St Andrews is a terrific town.

It is right that the Ryder cup should come to Scotland in 2014 because that will be the first time that it has been held here since 1973. One of the

disappointing things about this week's Ryder cup is that, for the first time in the history of the cup—I think—there is no Scottish representation on the European team. I hope that that is put right for the contest in two years' time. Holding the Ryder cup in Scotland in 2014 will galvanise Scottish golf, contribute to golf in communities throughout Scotland and, hopefully, produce professional golfers who are able to compete for a place in the 2014 Ryder cup team.

We have seen great successes in the Commonwealth games, such as Lachie Stewart's famous victory in the 1970 games—I do not remember that, of course, but people have told me about it. I remember Liz McColgan's win in 1986, and I know that, when she was interviewed recently, she said that that was her greatest success, because she won in her own country. The joy that we saw on young people's faces when we won the Commonwealth bid last year showed that they know that they have a chance to compete in their own country.

I concur with what other speakers have said about the work of volunteers. In that regard, I pay tribute to the work of Cambuslang and Rutherglen sports council.

Making 2014 a year of sport fits in with many of the policy challenges that we discuss in this chamber. We often talk about improving the skills infrastructure in a way that will support sport and getting that right will help in 2014. Last week, we debated the obesity action plan. Having more people participate in sport will contribute to a healthier nation, which will in turn contribute to economic growth, and 2014 also offers an opportunity to boost tourism in Scotland.

I look forward with optimism to 2014: it is an opportunity to celebrate Scotland, to build on the success of the events and to ensure that we contribute to the success not only of sport, but the economy.

17:35

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): Like other members, I congratulate Jack McConnell and Patricia Ferguson on their work on the motion and on securing today's debate. I also welcome the many constructive comments that members from all parties have made. I add my congratulations to our Paralympians, who will return home with another tremendous haul of medals. Jack McConnell mentioned Aileen McGlynn. Libby Clegg won a silver medal and Jim Anderson won four medals. Those are tremendous achievements, and I pass on my congratulations—as Mr McConnell did—to all the athletes who took part in the games.

Sport contributes to our strategic goals of making Scotland a wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger, smarter, and greener place to live. The sector employs more than 47,000 people and generates some £2 billion. Record numbers of visitors to Scotland are expected in 2014. The health benefits of participating in physical activities are well evidenced. Sport also plays a role in building safer and stronger communities through diversionary programmes, such as those that are supported through the Government's cashback for communities initiative.

In order to become a sporting nation, we need strong club structures throughout all our communities—clubs that are easily accessible and ready to embrace all abilities, and which have strong links to the wider community infrastructure.

Margo MacDonald: I have heard rumours about fiscal fines. I wonder if the proceeds of those could be diverted to develop sport in communities, like the other source of revenue to which the minister referred.

Stewart Maxwell: I am sure that Margo MacDonald will not be slow in bringing that idea to the attention of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice.

Sport should be an inherently fun activity that gives everyone the opportunity to enjoy themselves and those with talent the opportunity to realise their potential so that they can become the next Chris Hoy, Katherine Grainger or any of our other Olympians. We are committed to achieving our twin ambitions of increasing participation and improving performance, as set out in the national strategy for sport. The Government endorsed the reaching higher scheme, and it has backed that up with record investment in sportscotland of £133.9 million over the next three years.

As is the case for many members, the provision of sports facilities figures prominently in my correspondence. As a nation, we need to address the generally poor state of many of our sports facilities. We have some world-class sporting facilities, and we are delivering more, such as the facility at Ravenscraig and the new national velodrome for the Commonwealth games. At a local level, we must work more imaginatively to ensure that we maximise investment in facilities and make the most of existing facilities, such as the school estate. We will, of course, work with local authorities to achieve that, and we are happy to offer support through sportscotland in that respect.

I look forward to working with colleagues from all parties to ensure that 2014 is not only a great year for sport in Scotland but a catalyst for change and improvement in sport and throughout civic society in general. However, the Government's ambitions

should not be limited to 2014. We should not settle for one solitary year of sport; we should ensure that every year is one in which our top sportsmen and sportswomen succeed on the international stage.

Bringing two of the world's prestigious sporting events to Scotland in 2014 confirms our country as a place to host major international events, and others are on the way. In 2009, Murrayfield will again host the Heineken cup final and rugby league's magic weekend. In 2010, Edinburgh will host the archery world cup final. In 2011, Lanarkshire will host the international children's games, and the women's British Open is to be held in Scotland on at least five occasions between 2011 and 2020. That is just the tip of the iceberg. We aim to build on those events. We are developing our strategy to ensure that Scotland can continue to enjoy the many benefits that such events bring, locally and nationally.

We want to capitalise on the interest and enthusiasm that has been generated by the recent successes of our Olympians and Paralympians, and keep the momentum going through to the next Commonwealth games in Delhi, London in 2012, and beyond Glasgow in 2014.

Margo MacDonald: I appreciate what the minister said about keeping the enthusiasm going, but does he agree that he would now meet hardly anybody in the street who could tell him who won the rings gold medal for Scotland at the Manchester Commonwealth games? It is necessary to keep providing facilities to get people into sport—it is not only Olympians who do that.

Stewart Maxwell: I am happy to agree with those comments. We are doing exactly what Margo MacDonald suggests. We are trying to build a legacy between now and 2014 and beyond. We want to do so by capitalising on the interest and enthusiasm that have been engendered by the recent successes, but that is not the only way that we will do it.

The 2014 games present us with an opportunity to raise our sights as a nation, to make real improvements to people's lives and to regenerate communities. Scotland is not unique in wanting its legacy, but we are unique in starting to plan so early. It is recognised that it is imperative that we deliver lasting legacies from hosting major events. There need to be significant benefits from the investment that is made.

Volunteering is a key area that we want to develop. The potential of the games to bring social change throughout Scotland is of massive importance. The games will require between 12,000 and 15,000 volunteers. I support the aspirations of the organising committee and acknowledge the plea of Volunteer Development

Scotland to explore the wider possibilities of volunteering.

The games have the potential to give Scotland's most disadvantaged the opportunity to rebuild their lives, regain respect and restore their confidence through volunteering. The games can inspire people of all ages to act in ways that benefit themselves and their communities. The spirit of the games can do so much to increase the number of volunteers across Scotland and the range of activities that they undertake. Sandra White and other members mentioned the legacy in respect of volunteering. I could not agree more, which is why we will take that forward in Government and with our partners in Glasgow City Council.

I volunteered at the 1986 games in Edinburgh, and I still remember the experience with great pleasure. The games were difficult in respect of the organisation and the problems that they faced, but for the many volunteers who took part it was a pleasurable and memorable experience. I would certainly recommend volunteering to anyone who is thinking about doing it in 2014.

I am delighted that cross-party momentum is now building behind the view that we should receive financial support from the lottery to secure the legacy of the 2014 games. It is fundamentally wrong that our good causes should be penalised to pay for London 2012. In order to deliver Scotland's legacy ambitions for the 2014 Games, the £150 million that was diverted from Scotland must be returned. With those funds, we can capitalise on the inspiration, ambition and levels of engagement that have been generated throughout Scotland by our winning bid. I agree that there has to be cross-party and non-party representation if we are to succeed in that plea.

Sandra White raised the issue of training, jobs and upgrading skills. I welcome Glasgow City Council's announcement that it will include community clauses in tenders for games-related contracts. That will be helpful in developing new skills and creating new jobs for local people.

In response to Jamie Stone's comments, I look forward to tomorrow's meeting. I am sure that we will have a thoughtful discussion of the issues that concern people, particularly in rural areas.

I say to James Kelly that, if my memory serves me right, the last time that there was not a Scot in the Ryder cup team was 1937, so it has happened on one previous occasion.

There is a problem with the school estate. The situation has improved in many areas, but there are access problems. The view of the Government and probably all members in the chamber is that we want as much community access as possible and we want facilities to be available for as long as

possible, so that not only schoolchildren but the community can benefit from facilities.

I look forward to enjoying the sporting spectacular that 2014 will bring to Scotland but, more important, I want to see a new sporting era for Scotland, of which 2014 will be but one highlight—albeit a very important highlight—over many years of major events and major sporting activity. I hope that we all take part in those events by providing support, by volunteering or by ensuring, as parliamentarians, that our constituents are aware of the opportunities that will arise over the next few years leading up to 2014, and that we build a true and lasting legacy for Scotland beyond 2014.

Meeting closed at 17:44.

Correction

Official Report, 11 September 2008; c 10706, for "**Elizabeth Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)**" read "**Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)**".

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