

Christian Muslim Forum:

Global Markets, the Credit Crunch and Unsustainable Debt

St Ethelburga's, 24 February 2009

I am delighted to be here and let me start by warmly welcoming this initiative by the Forum – with the opportunity for faith insights to inform the crucial summit of G20 leaders at the beginning of April.

It was possible at first to think the downturn was just a problem for bankers, or for developed countries. I was in Argentina last week, and they told me they thought at first there were clear signs of decoupling – of developing countries being relatively unaffected while developed countries took the hit. But nobody thinks that now, as real economies are shrinking. And around the world, families are struggling, and communities under pressure.

This is an international crisis and it requires international solutions. The London Summit of G20 leaders countries is a vital opportunity to tackle the problems, but also to forge a new, collaborative approach to social and environmental challenges which confront us all. And that new approach

needs to be shaped not just by Governments, but by faith communities, trade unions and civil society too.

The G20 was formed ten years ago, because the Asian economic crisis showed that emerging-market countries were needed in global discussions. We are in a globalised world. What happens in one country affects all the others. Rich countries don't call all the shots any more. We need a more inclusive approach. The G20 will be increasingly prominent in global politics in the future.

Preparing for this year's UK G20 presidency, I have visited India, Korea, China, Indonesia and last week Brazil and Argentina. Everywhere, I have been struck by the willingness to collaborate, and the recognition of our shared interest in rebuilding momentum in the world economy.

Countries moulded by different faiths and cultures have the chance to forge a global new deal – to restore stability, set course for a sustainable recovery, and protect the poor.

The Summit theme is Stability, Growth and Jobs. The UK government priorities for it are fourfold:

- **First, further action to stimulate global demand, to promote growth and protect jobs;**
- **Second, with turmoil in financial markets continuing, international agreement on new rules and structures, to fill in regulatory gaps. Confidence in financial markets is vital for jobs and prosperity. We want the London Summit to boost global co-operation to address tax evasion which has played a part in what's gone wrong.**
- **Third, we need to reform International Financial Institutions – like the IMF and the World Bank. We need them to serve the interests of all countries. The IMF urgently needs more resources to help countries badly affected by the global recession, and to stimulate global demand.**
- **Fourth, world leaders must put the world economy on track for sustainable growth, ensuring the benefits extend to the poorest. The crisis puts at risk recent progress in helping the poorest, and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals and the summit needs to address that.**

Summit agendas can sound far removed from people losing their jobs, or people suffering poverty, or the threat of

climate change. But these challenges can only be addressed through international co-operation. The focus in London will be today's crisis, but we must keep longer term social and environmental challenges firmly in our sights too.

Trade and globalisation have been the engines of growth – and of people being lifted above the poverty line. Progress is now threatened by protectionism. Turning our backs on an open global economy would damage people in every country, especially in emerging and low-income countries. So, at the Summit, we need Leaders to strengthen commitments not to restrict or distort trade. Securing a global trade agreement, if we could do so later on this year, would provide an immense boost to confidence and perhaps do more than anything else could to get us back on the right track.

Governments should also reaffirm commitments to the Millennium Development Goals and to increase support for health services and education in the poorest countries. And a new global economy will be a chance to prioritise environmental sustainability, tackling climate change and starting the transformation to a low carbon economy.

I want the London Summit to be the start of an enduring dialogue – a frank and constructive global debate in which

ordinary people in nations all around the world can work together for a decent future.

Faiths represented in this forum are the source of decent values: generosity rather than greed, honesty, fairness, responsibility, social justice, compassion, strength in families, peacemaking – community values we need to underpin our work. We need inspiration and practical wisdom from faith communities for the Summit to succeed in six weeks time. Faith reminds us we are stewards for a world that we shall one day leave behind. The impulse from faith to care for people today must extend to future generations; to the planet and the resources on which we all depend.

I hope the London Summit will be the start of an enduring dialogue – a frank and constructive global forum in which Christians, Muslims and other faith groups, Governments and trade unions, developed countries and developing – all of us can work together for the future of humanity.

Thank you.