

Transcript of the address given by Sir Bob Geldof to the Naace Conference in Scarborough on 1st March 2005.

The session took place in the Grand Hall of the Spa Complex in Scarborough. In opening remarks by Steve Bacon, General Secretary, a warm welcome to the UK was given to the headteachers of Zakhele Primary School, and Meetse A Bophelo Primary School in Mamelodi. Steve then welcomed the guest speaker, Sir Bob Geldof.

I think I've played here but it was full then! *(Laughter)*

This isn't going to be long - back of an envelope. *(Waves envelope.)*

It is extremely odd for someone who failed so magnificently, so utterly in school to be involved in so many ways in the business of education. Indeed I have actually probably be more involved in education than any of you lot no matter how old you are and all put together. You are actually, besides, looking at a failed Leaving Certificate, as we called it in Ireland, student, ex- teacher (English language school teacher in Franco's Spain spending most of the year in the desert, drunk, and gave up and went home). I've been involved in schools in Africa. Band-Aid through your money has built many, many schools - I say that with intense pride because I've revisited some of them. And indeed I see on the table Band-Aid 20. For those of you who think that children are indifferent or bored by this, over Christmas we made £13 million in four weeks. Those people with whom you are involved know, and still care.

I've also just been involved in the launching of the first ever television station entirely geared towards the business of education, Teachers TV, which was actually made by my company on behalf of the government and is absolutely completely brilliant. *(Laughter)* And I'm here because of Groupcall which I was instructed to say is the largest parental communication system solution in the entire country - whatever that might mean – but it is! And of course I go to endless parents' evenings and hopeless talent shows, sports days and dreadful, dreadful school plays - God help us.

But tonight that sort of swims into view focused around what you are doing in Mamelodi. And I've spent more or less the last three months in Africa in about 13 or 14 countries. I'm making a six part series for the BBC for June. And this is the 20th anniversary of Live Aid - it is also the year when the Prime Minister is chair of the G8 and President of Europe and so it makes Britain possibly the most politically influential country in the world for a brief moment of time. And it seems to me apt to get a man who oft professes passion for that beautiful, luminous continent so often and a Chancellor whose rhetoric rises whenever he talks about the need to spread justice around the world and focuses primarily on Africa. We should focus on that. And the essence of the problem is the business you're involved in. It comes down to three factors: the ability to feed yourself through agriculture, and once you are fed then to create life through education and health, and none of this would be possible without concomitantly good governance instead of the pervasive crime of corruption that is systemic throughout the African political class.

And there is a change in Africa - it's not something I have just noticed in the last three months, it's been going on for a while. Governments are becoming more accountable and transparent, which is vital. The African Union has revived itself and renamed itself and made very interesting, mature proclamations and these all give hope. And in giving hope we in the rich world must come to the party because it's not possible for Africa to do this by itself. In the 20 years since Live Aid it is the sole continent in economic decline and you must stand back and asked the question – Why? In an era of an unprecedented wealth, why are 800 million people the most poor in the planet? And I asked the Prime Minister just about a year ago to ask that central question - to stand back and ask why is it that whatever they try, whatever we do in a system that is trying, why does it fail? Why do these programmes to help education or sanitation or AIDS prevention, why are they not getting traction or purchase? In this 20th anniversary, which people still remember, in the period when he and his Chancellor can

control the agenda of the world's wealth, why does this country not make the decision to ask that singular question - Why Africa? And bravely enough, against the advice of Number 10, he accepted that and created the Commission for Africa of which I am a member and which will report a week or two. And I can't divulge its contents, but what is required is radical remedial action. And the continent is full of brave people, two of whom are here tonight, brilliant people, and we need to expand that opportunity into the totality of the continent - out of self-interest certainly, out of moral obligation absolutely. The fact of the matter is that the poorest people on the planet live in one continent and they will not progress unless they have the tools to do so.

And yet, simultaneously, I have never seen such a hunger for learning. I was saying to Steve earlier that when you go to Africa, don't bother bringing sweets or presents or stuff like that for children, bring pencils because that is all they ask for. And they pretend to have schools. Now all children *play* schools; *they* pretend that they actually *have* a school. I'm not sure if there is some generic compunction within us to expand our minds - it certainly exist in my case I have to say - but there seems a clear understanding that the interface between modernity and poverty is education. And it's through such symbols such emblems as Mamelodi that that is achieved. And while I reprimanded Steve about 'one isn't enough' - he took it is a reprimand, I think and I hope it was a challenge that it needs to be reproduced every where. Clearly Naace is not capable of doing that - it is only capable of setting an example. But the fact of the numbers in just one of these schools gives some indication. We're talking about a dump. We're talking about a squat. We are literally talking about a dump - humans dumped, irrelevant, unwanted into this area.

South Africa is not really a paradigm for the rest of the continent. It is a robust country with sensible economic and governmental structures. It will make it. It will make it big. It is making it right now. It is the regional superpower by a million miles and it will get there. And it will get there because they've invented some sort of superior humanity as manifested by Nelson Mandela where grace and forgiveness seem to determine whatever you do in life. And that's why we so admire that great man. But it has affected and infected that entire country and in turn it has altered the psychology of Africa in the same way that 9/11 altered the psychology of America. And great things have happened in the world in the last 20 years. The status of terror that was the Cold War that kept us locked in ideological deadlock fell apart within six months - who could have guessed? And while I was first in Africa and first engaged in the problem, all we *could* do was feed the world. That was all we *could* do. You couldn't make advances in Ethiopia when it was undergoing one of the most vicious and indeed are longest-running war in the 20th century manipulated as a proxy state by competing interests. Those competing interests disappeared and in the place of political power blocs we now had the unipolar world with its manifest mistakes and competing trading blocs. And as a result we got globalisation which happened along and was made possible because of ubiquitous computerisation. So the rise of IT, the demise of the Cold War and now competing trading blocs gave us 24/7 of money, an expansion of trade - some excellent news for some of the poor viz China and India - and less good news for the most wretched people, the most mute, the most helpless and the most put upon - and they live in a singular condition in what to my mind is the most singular continent of Africa.

So how we get them to join in the process? How do we get those people eight and a half miles from the continent of Europe to join in the process? One thing's for sure, we're going to need them soon. Our demographic in Europe is flat lined. We grow older and there are fewer younger people amongst us and within my lifetime there will be a huge bulk of the old being supported by the tiny rump of the young. What then? As I said to Steve earlier, "it's pension deficit disorder". We need Africa. We need its skills and people and the horrible truth is that the National Health Service would fall apart were it not for the doctors and nurses of Ghana. But meanwhile there are 400 Ghanaian doctors in Ghana - there are something like 2000 in the UK alone. 70% of all African intellectuals live outside Africa. The result is weak institutions. If we succeed with the Commission for Africa in unlocking massive increases in aid - and let me straightaway tell you that aid works. Whatever you read about aid not working, aid works. When debt relief happened in Uganda, Museveni (quite a responsible man but he's going a bit mad now that he wants to be president for life as usual, that has to stop) he still invested it according to the instructions of the people who relieved the debt into

health and education. The result was a crash in AIDS figures, an increase in earning power and a massive increase in those going to school. Kenya promised free education. We were going to assist to pay for it. Immediately numbers obviously increased but girls were kept at home. And they were kept at home not because of any ingrained discrimination, although that too has to be dealt with, but because boys obviously were the ones that were going to progress and they were sent to school. But it wasn't economically viable for the family unit to send the girls to school. It was of more benefit to the family to keep them working at home or on the farm or doing jobs. As soon as they introduced free lunches at school the girls went as well because it was economically beneficial to send them to school and not have to grow that amount of food. And its these cultural tricks that you have to learn when you try and assist people.

Africans must dictate what they want, how they want to spend it and the pace at which they want to do that. Part of the disconnection between our world and theirs is that we've never truly understood that we work in different ways - in effect our very successful world has worked very successfully for us through the notion of individualism. But the paradox of individualism is of course that it only works when it works communally for the common good and collectively for the common good. Africans in total work in a collective manner and that's because the family, which is the clan, which is the tribe, is the social safety net and that's why you have to know whom everyone is. And that equally is what's driving mobile phone technology in Africa which is the largest expanding area for mobile phone use in the world. And it's being driven out of cultural need. If you are dependent on knowing who all your family members are, who all your clan is, where are you tribal group is, where are they all over the country, you need to know who is alive or dead. And I think these fantastic teachers in front of you will probably agree with me that death is an important cultural phenomenon. Obviously it's important for us, but it goes beyond that as a manifestation of culture in Africa and the thing that's driving many of the mobile phone sales as a virtual infrastructure where none exists is the need to know who is dead. And as a result older people in villages are being given phones by their children in the cities and then connecting and then sending virtual currency through that phone line. So you've seen bizarrely in Africa an advance of where we are in the technology. People are buying credit and sending it over the phone because they don't trust their institutions, the banks. In Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire and francophone Africa in general people trust the tam-tam society much more than they trust their banks. They don't put money into it. The African diaspora, so hugely important and so very different to the Irish, Italian or Jewish one can fly home every weekend should they so choose simply because of modernity. But in general they send their remissions home and the African diaspora remissions is equal to the total amount of aid sent to Africa every year. So they are a highly important and influential part of what is happening in Africa today. But by being away they weaken the very things they wish to make good and by sending back some of their wages to their families they weaken it further in effect because those families hide that money. They do not invest it in small to medium business enterprises which is the root of an economy because they don't trust the banks and because there is an overweening or corrupt bureaucracy that makes you wait 167 days on average in Ghana before you can register a company and it will cost you as a base level around £7,000 in a country that is bereft.

So you have monumental problems and the way out of it is twofold. We double our aid which currently stands at about £25 billion and make it £50 billion. That still makes Africa the lowest recipient of aid of any continent in the world and yet it remains the poorest. It is the work of seconds to conjure up £50 billion. It wouldn't make much of a dent in the UK national economy never mind the United States. It is in fact the equivalent of half a stick of chewing gum each per day for every person in the developed world. That's what it is. Once we provide this aid we need structural change in debt relief and trade barriers must be lifted and the small economies protected. Not what the neo-liberal economists say: that we live in the free trade world and they must open their markets to us. We do not live in a free trade world. The EU is in effect a protectionist racket and we've just extended the fences right out to the east. We subsidise each cow in Europe, each unwanted cow in Europe, to the tune of two dollars per day and yet the average African earns one dollar a day. What are we saying? That an unwanted cow is double the value of every human life in Africa? I think not. So that needs to be looked at.

Once we have dealt with that in our part of the world we then need to look at Africa. It starts with governance. There is no use building a school if there is no way of administering the funds that go to that school. Mamelodi shouldn't need you guys. Mamelodi should get its funds from the State. And how much is the State or local governance giving to it? F**k all. I asked Steve the numbers but he wasn't quite sure because it's kind of academic. They don't have the tools to do what they so visibly try to do. The answer to that is governance. And you must have accountable transparent governance. This isn't a clarion call for a crusade for democracy. We just know that once people are free to live a life their potential dynamism is unleashed and they go and make that life. How do we know that? Well West Germany - East Germany, North Korea - South Korea. Freedom allows a country and their individuals to grow. That has to happen in Africa. But to allow some sort of elected representative government with freeish and fairish elections to be transparent and accountable, you need effective institutions of state. You do need bureaucracy, not the mess that they have there now where they're trying just to keep their friends employed or other people with backhanders. No, an interested and impartial bureaucracy that knows how to manage the modern state because if a citizen gets no benefit from the state then they will give their allegiance to another identity like the tribe, ethnic grouping or a super national identity, let's say for example, Islam which is rampant all over the north part of sub-Saharan Africa paid for by the Saudis. And if you're a woman in northern Nigeria who has been beaten up by her brute of husband for 12 years and civil law allows you no outlet and you go to Sharia Law and they allow you to divorce, who then do you owe a loyalty to? If the state cannot deliver benefits to its citizens it not exist, it is purposeless, it is simply an elite looting a state into paralysis. Governance. We need to pay for those people to be educated to be effective managers so that when aid flows *in*, it flows *down*. And flows down in manageable transparent accountable structures to the companies who will take the trucks and skilled workers with concrete and steel to build the schools. It needs a civil service that can hire the teachers. It needs money that it can give free education to its people. That's why we need governance first. And then that aid that should flow immediately in order to do this will go to the 50% of Africans who are under 15. 50% of an entire continent – does that not ring alarm bells? And this is in our interests. Within 10 years the United States will take 25% of its oil from Nigeria and Angola. But because Angola is a rampant kleptocracy which charges parents 10 times the amount that is stated on a schoolbook - 10 times - so the man selling it can pocket it. Nigeria is trying and in many ways successfully to get its act together - it probably will make it through. But America isn't taking any bets so is investing all its infrastructure in South Africa. Well good for South Africa. it is an immense problem and it is a grave problem and I would suggest that it is it is possibly the gravest one of all because every other thing we think is important - climate changes etc - impacts directly upon the poor in Africa. When it gets hot they die. And they die in unbelievable numbers. Still more people in Africa die of hunger every year than of AIDS, TB, malaria, polio and war combined so those 50% of the continent under 15 go to bed hungry every single night. Every night, right now, tonight, an entire continent is lying down to sleep hungry. How? How do we put up with that? In a world of surplus to die of want is not only intellectually absurd it is morally repulsive. And we can stop it.

And what Naace is doing in a small way, but in a magnificent way, in an exemplary way in the literal sense of that word is trying to stop it. And you people with your skills particularly in IT may just have some sort of answer here. Because what the mobile phone suggests is that it's a leapfrog technology. What happened in Ireland was we weren't allowed to have an industrial revolution. We were supposed to be the breadbasket for the mother country. So we avoided the deconstruction of that infrastructure and we scabbled along for a while and the real Celtic Tigers, Celtic Lions really, where the Irishman who lived over here and built the roads and canals in the 1850s and sent back to Ireland every year the equivalent of the National Health budget to keep us healthy so that we could go to school and get educated. But when the time came and we had a hugely young population, extremely well-educated either going into agriculture or emigrating, those were the two options, we were ready for high-tech. We spoke English, we were educated, we were young and we were next door to Europe and we joined the greater the greater politic outside Ireland called Brussels. So we had leverage. That is what happened. Now Ireland isn't Africa but Africa is still beside Europe. We need them - they need us. How much better to have a vibrant trading partner out of self-interest never mind theirs. IT might just do it. I had an IT seminar on the subject

about a month ago in London. I saw the latest whiz-bang stuff. I saw how they were using IT in Africa brilliantly. I saw a man on a tricycle cycling around like the knife sharpeners who used to cycle round my neighbourhood in Dublin. He was cycling around with a VSAT radio wireless ting, rang his bell, out came people with their laptops, plugged in and downloaded their e-mail for the week, back inside, and he cycled on. Fantastic! Most villages that I visited in Africa had massive satellite dishes just pointing straight up in the sky – no messing around trying to find the thing. They were mainly watching Manchester United whenever they played. Beckham is the without question It's just Beckham everywhere. It's just David Beckham. I was in that most, most, most remote part of Africa and this kid with amazing looking hair and weird clothes came up to me and he said, in pretty good English, "Where are you from?". "England", I said. "David Beckham", he said. "Yes", I said, "I know". "He missed goal Europe 2004....." "YES, I KNOW!!!" We were at the Blue Nile Falls up in Ethiopia way out of the way – you have to get a helicopter there and one of the kids came over waving a piece of paper in Amharic which did not seem very promising. I asked him what it was. It was the Premiership fixtures. He opened it up and pointed saying Rooney ... Shearer ... Beckham ... It's a phenomenon and its fantastic because they are connecting with us. They're not drifting further from us except economically. They are connecting back up to the world after having this enforced separation for so many years. And it seems to me again that what is vital in connecting back is that we learn to speak a shared language. And the only mechanism for doing that is education and that hunger to know, to learn, to fulfil their potential and all things that your headteacher says to you. They want so much and who are we to deny them. In fact we need to ensure that they are not denied. And it could just be that in the way they adapt things to be culturally appropriate, not just education but also IT that they're going to leapfrog us with this virtual infrastructure that they are creating as none exists in reality and show *us* a thing or two.

But it starts here. It starts in meaningful profound projects that resonate out further than a squat camp on the edges of a governmental town like Pretoria. That's how it starts. It starts in windblown wintry seaside towns like Scarborough. And it starts when you go back to the schools and you talk about it. It starts with people like Tom Hunter the Glaswegian multimillionaire who first started trading on the back of his barrow selling shoes in the week that Band-Aid came out in 1984. 15 years later he sold his business for £300 million and he now owns JJB Sports and other retailers. And it starts with him putting a third of his fortune into education in Africa and giving Band-Aid £7 million just to spend on building schools in Africa. It starts with that stuff. It starts with you pathetically being asked to spend money on a little record or a T-shirt which is only emblematic of how much we have and how very little there is in that luminous continent, just down the road from here.

Thank you.

(A short pause followed by prolonged applause.)

Steve Bacon: Notwithstanding the fact that Bob hasn't slept for the last three nights he is willing to stay to take some questions so would anyone like to kick us off with a question.....?

(Total silence)

Yes, colleagues, you are right - follow that! Does anybody have a question or comment?

(Silence)

Bob Geldof: Well, it's straight to the bar then I think Steve!

Steve Bacon: Patrick (Sikhumbana) has a question

Patrick: Actually it's not a question it's a comment. We are really touched, myself and Fikile (Manzini). Truly all of us who are here, including Sir Bob and Steve, are really partners - we need each other. We are faced with a huge task of imparting knowledge to the young ones who will be the leaders of our future, the leaders of our country tomorrow. While we are trying to do that there are so many challenges and truly it will be quite difficult for us to face those challenges alone. We need you as partners and truly we see a road ahead being successful and being open if we

have people like Sir Bob and all of you who will make sure that you buy those T-shirts, who will make sure that you buy those CDs and you will be making quite a huge improvement. Steve has pictures of my school. There are 2456 learners. When I was introduced to the school on the 14th of January this year I was told that it is the biggest school in the province. And I could not believe my eyes - that so many learners, so many teachers, so many parents had been dumped somewhere in a corner of the township and they needed someone to lead them. And I said yes I will do it and accepted the challenge. And when I was invited I saw an opportunity to expose my school to help other people to understand that here is a school that was initiated by parents themselves. Immediately after our democracy in 1994, parents in a squatter camp put up shacks and started a school because we know as Africans that the only way to freedom is through education. I thank you so much.

(Applause)

After concluding remarks from Steve, and thanks to Bob Geldof, the session ended. Colleagues had an opportunity to talk to Bob before he joined delegates for further conversations in the bar.