

Africa needs to "future-proof" itself against future challenges

The UK's International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt has pointed to the "incredible power of technology" to provide relief across Africa and help tackle Africa's greatest challenges and build a modern economy for the future.



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"We need new ideas to future-proof against Africa's biggest challenges," Mordaunt said on her first official visit to Kenya.

During her visit, Mordaunt saw how UK aid is supporting vulnerable communities in the north of the country devastated by East Africa's drought. In Kenya's capital Nairobi, Mordaunt also heard how UK support for innovative programmes is helping to create jobs for a rising population.

Mordaunt was also in the country to hear from British businesses about how new technology has helped them tap into the Kenyan market. The UK is the fifth largest exporter of goods to Kenya and trade between the two countries is worth over £1 billion annually.

Innovative technology, supported by DFID, is helping Kenya build resilience to climate challenges, including drought, and to build a modern economy for the future.

Mordaunt's visit to Kenya comes ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, taking place in London in

April this year. The summit will bring together heads of government to discuss reforming and revitalising the Commonwealth, and establishing it as a modern organisation that is responsive to the global challenges faced today and in the future.

During her visit the International Development Secretary:

- Launched the second phase of Trade Mark East Africa. The landmark UK aid programme helps enterprise and creates jobs by breaking down barriers to trade. In Nairobi Mordaunt saw how the first phase of the programme has cut customs clearance times – from an average of nine to two days – and reduced the cost of trading across the region with new cargo-tracking technologies and improved infrastructure. Mordaunt heard from British business about how this technology has helped them enter the Kenyan market. She also announced the launch of a partnership programme, to support the Government of Kenya on urban economic planning and investment.
- Set out further UK aid support to the Hunger Safety Net Programme – an innovative cash-transfer scheme bringing together biometric technology and mobile money. This is helping more vulnerable households and supporting the Government of Kenya to own, manage and ultimately fund the programme. Mordaunt also met some of the 100,000 households benefiting from the programme, and saw how cash transfers get aid to those who need it when they need it, achieving value for money by cutting excessive bureaucracy, avoiding duplication by aid agencies and reducing waste.
- Saw how UK aid-supported research is helping to power low-cost insurance for livestock herders in drought-prone parts of Kenya. The research makes use of already existing satellite technology by NASA to provide images of vegetation cover. This ensures timely insurance pay-outs are made correctly and quickly if cover levels drop. DFID both backs the research and supports private sector insurers to provide it to local herders.

Mordaunt commented: “I have seen how, in the face of East Africa’s devastating drought, UK aid works and is saving lives. But 2018 will bring more desperate weather conditions to the region. This is a stark reminder that we need to back new ideas to future-proof against the biggest challenges in Africa.

“Here in Kenya, technology is delivering UK aid in new ways, from innovative cash transfers using biometrics, through to trade technologies that support economic growth, jobs and investment. It is in all our interests that we harness the best of British innovation with African entrepreneurialism – to create jobs, defeat poverty, and support our future trading partners, as we work towards a shared prosperous future.”

Further investment in resources

The UK is significantly scaling up its support to trade and regional integration across East Africa, now providing a total of £211 million to the second phase of TMEA. This will increase sustainable and shared prosperity in East Africa.

The £60 million Sustainable Urban Economic Development partnership programme will run until 2022, supporting up to 10 rapidly urbanising towns in Kenya with urban economic planning, investment climate reforms and attracting private sector investment.

The UK has also invested £8 million through the World Bank to assist the Government of Kenya in the development of more Special Economic Zones, private-public partnerships and select counties on doing business reforms.

This programme will also support urban planning in response to the new Government of Kenya’s focus on improving access to affordable housing.