



Christians Together in Jersey

16th January 2007

St Thomas' Presbytery
17 Le Val Plaisant
St Helier
JE2 4TA

Dear Sir

I am writing to you on behalf of Christians Together in Jersey ("CTJ") in connection with Senator James Perchard's recent call for a review of Jersey's overseas aid policy.

CTJ is the umbrella representative body for nearly 50 mainstream church congregations in Jersey. Many of our members are actively involved in overseas aid, either indirectly through charitable giving, or through direct participation.

I understand that the Corporate Services Scrutiny Sub-Panel is considering in particular:

- (a) the States' policy for upgrading the Island's Overseas Aid budget in line with GNI
- (b) the JOAC's policies and procedures for the distribution of its grant aid budget
- (c) the methods for measuring the effective utilisation of the JOAC's aid budget by recipients
- (d) the Island's Overseas Aid contributions in comparison with other jurisdictions

We believe that Jersey should follow the lead set by other key European countries by making a commitment to meet the UN target of a minimum of 0.7% of Gross National Income ("GNI") by 2015. We support this goal for a number of reasons:

- (a) Jersey depends largely on free trade with the rest of the world for its prosperity. This, in turn, relies on the Island maintaining good international relations. One important way we can do this is to be, and be seen to be, a responsible international player. The recent adoption of the EU Savings Directive by Jersey is a case in point. As far as Official Development Assistance ("ODA") is concerned, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have already reached or exceeded the ODA target. Ireland has made a commitment to fulfil the target by 2007, Belgium by 2010, France and Spain by 2012, the UK by 2013, and Germany by 2015.

We are very pleased to note that Jersey's ODA budget has increased by around 29% between 1996 and 2006. It had risen to 0.17% of GNI in 2004 and we understand that it will be further increased to an estimated 0.2% of GNI in 2008. However, Luxembourg's ODA budget (Luxembourg being not only a 'small nation' but also one of Jersey's main international competitors) was 0.83% of its GNI in 2004 - almost five times the Jersey level.

- (b) We think that arguments about 'per capita' comparisons miss the point: the international standard, the one by which we will be measured, relates to a percentage of GNI, and to nothing else.
- (c) We are proud of the quality of Jersey's aid when compared with other countries but we do not believe that this should be used as a reason to reduce the 0.7% GNI target. Even after adjusting for this factor using the stringent ActionAid criteria for aid quality it appears that the Island's level of aid is still less than one quarter of the Luxembourg equivalent.

- (d) We do not support the view expressed by some that, because Jersey is not a nation, the 0.7% target is therefore irrelevant. Jersey has many of the characteristics of a small nation. It has a distinct cultural identity and history, legal system and parliamentary democracy and enjoys a significant degree of autonomy in its relationship with the UK. In particular, Jersey's domestic fiscal autonomy (together with other factors including political stability, respected legal system, financial expertise and infrastructure) has been key to the island's relative prosperity. Furthermore, we understand that the development of Jersey's international personality is a strategic priority. Section 5.2 of the States' Strategic Plan 2006-11 explicitly identifies Jersey's Overseas Aid programme as an indicator relevant to this objective.

We would also like to point out in this connection that Jersey is not burdened with some of the costs borne by sovereign states against which we are being compared. The fact that we are a 'small nation' and do not bear such costs could in fact support the view that we should be better able to afford the 0.7% ODA target.

- (e) We do not believe that the private generosity of Jersey residents should be used as a reason to soften the UN target for ODA. While Jersey people have a reputation for being very generous, we are uncertain whether they are in fact any more generous than anyone else. In the UK, for example, 57.2% of the population donate to charity and the total amount donated equates to 0.9% of GDP (source: Charities Aid Foundation). People in Jersey would need to donate around £25 million to charitable causes (0.9% of £2,760 million GDP in 2005) in order to match the generosity of UK residents.

Being good neighbours has a particular resonance for Christian people, and is the reason why so many of our members give both financially and of their time and talents in order to help the less well-off in our world.

We are called to deal justly with our neighbours, whoever and wherever they may be, and we believe that there are consequences for not doing so. We also believe that many situations, whether domestic, local, national or geo-political, are the consequence of a lack of justice. We are convinced that a society such as Jersey that benefits so much through international trade but does not also play a proportionate role in international efforts to reduce global poverty is ultimately unsustainable.

Yours faithfully

**FOR AND ON BEHALF OF
CHRISTIANS TOGETHER IN JERSEY**

**REV CANON NICHOLAS J FRANCE
PRESIDENT**