

Unite the union submission to Britain in the World consultation – July 2022

This submission is made by Unite, the major UK trade union with over 1 million members across all sectors of the economy including, manufacturing, financial services, transport, food and agriculture, construction, energy and utilities, information technology, service industries, health, local government and the not for profit sector. Unite also organises in the community, enabling those who are not in employment to be part of our union.

General comments:

- The document as presented is severely limited and lacking in any real detail, it is hoped that future re-drafts are significantly more detailed in relation to what the programme of an incoming Labour government would be.
- There are many, many issues and details that could be raised in this response, such as the Labour Party position on better regulation of international trade, workers' rights in multinational companies and international supply chains, the relationship of the UK with the BRICS countries, the international dimension of tackling climate change, etc., but this document does not address any of the issues or offer anything to respond to.
- Clearly the UK under a Labour government should be internationalist and multilateralist, and foreign policy should be directed towards maintaining peace, dealing with climate change, protecting workers rights internationally, and tackling the massive global poverty and inequality that exists. But we are concerned to stress that beginning a consultation process from such a limited basis does not enable the opportunity to contribute to the detail and direction needed to achieve this
- Unite wishes to engage in developing coherent and thought out policies building on existing Labour Party commitments

Europe:

- Most glaring is the total absence of anything at all in relation to the future relationship with the European Union, all that the document contains are general references to having a better relationship with the EU and aiming to make the most of opportunities that Brexit presents – we are very concerned that without further clarity, the party's position on Europe is not shown as distinct from the current government's approach
- Unite members face huge problems due to Brexit that urgently need addressing – waiting times and facilities for HGV drivers at docks and ports, collapsing investment in the auto sector and other parts of manufacturing, problems with tariffs and market access in the steel sector, numerous problems in the food and drink sector – such as the impact of proposed gene editing legislation, and of course the watering down of workers' rights. The Labour

Party needs to demonstrate understanding and acknowledge these problems exist and what proposals Labour has to deal with them

- Since the document was issued, Keir Starmer, has made it clear in a speech that the party would not seek to re-join the European Union, the Single Market or the Customs Union, making the above point more pressing

Ukraine and international security:

- While it is clearly right to highlight the dramatic impact of the war in Ukraine and its wider impact on global food supplies, as well as the appalling situation in Afghanistan following the US withdrawal, there is again no detail at all on how any of these issues would be dealt with differently by a Labour government.
- Labour will also need to confirm clear policies in terms of its role in NATO and the part it is playing in achieving peace and internationalism. This does require debate
- Although there is a mention of some other existing conflicts, such as Yemen and Israel-Palestine, there is nothing at all about the party's position on these or the intended policy going forward. Solidarity with the Palestinian people is extremely important for many Unite members and activists
- Similarly there is not even a mention of the fact that the UK is currently deeply engaged with an authoritarian government in NATO member Turkey, a government that has jailed tens of thousands, engaged in ethnic cleansing of Kurds in Syria, militarily attacked its own population and supported ISIS, and which may well outlaw its main opposition party the HDP— sister party of the Labour Party.

International Development:

- The document rightly draws attention to the abolition of the Department for International Development and the appalling decision of the current government to drop the 0.7% of GDP commitment to international aid, however there appears to be nothing at all concerning the proposals of the Labour Party in relation to this – it was Labour that introduced this commitment, and a clear commitment the party commit to re-establishing the 0.7% commitment is needed
- **ILO Core Labour Standards are basic minimum standards across the world.** They include no child labour, no forced labour, no discrimination, right to join and collectively bargain through a trade union. Unions are campaigning globally for health and safety and the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the world of work to become a core labour standard, something Unite strongly supports. Labour commitment to support this is needed.