Media Pack for Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (Ffd4) June 2025

Introduction

The **Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)** will take place in **Seville, Spain, from June 30–July 3, 2025**.

FfD4 is a rare opportunity to push for real, systemic, financial reforms on **debt justice, fairer tax rules, and climate finance**, so all countries have the resources and power to drive their own development. It is the only global platform where all nations negotiate economic governance on equal terms.

The UK's role

While the UK continues to enjoy disproportionate power over global economic decision-making, e.g. in the IMF, World Bank, and G20, it has so far acted as one of the largest blockers of the specific calls from global South governments for more inclusive, democratic processes to tackle debt, make global tax fair, or raise climate finance to be agreed upon at FFD4.

Global South governments and movements have called for a new system, overseen by the UN, to hold debt negotiations between governments and their lenders to help tackle debt crises that are driving poverty. This system would give more power to global South governments, and help finally break the chains of debt that are ultimately rooted in colonial history. Rich country governments, including the UK, should stop blocking these proposals, and support them.

The UK government came into power promising to reset relationships with the global South, building partnerships grounded in respect and listening. It has also sought to position itself as an international development and climate leader.

Despite this public support for development, it has actively tried to weaken or block reforms in the draft Outcome Document — the negotiated text that sets out the conference's agenda and commitments.

Against the backdrop of slashing its own aid budget and putting its contribution to climate finance in jeopardy, it is also blocking global south governments' specific proposals on tackling debt that would come at no cost to UK taxpayers, but would free up resources for addressing development and climate challenges.

This includes:
– Opposing calls for the creation of a UN sovereign debt workout mechanism (a fair and transparent process for countries to restructure unsustainable debt and restore economic stability with shared responsibility).
– Resisting proposals to reform the governance of the IMF and World Bank, which would give developing countries a fairer voice in decision-making.

At a time when countries in the Global South are facing historic levels of debt, aid cuts, climate stress, and inequality, the UK's blocking role sends a troubling signal: that the current system, designed to favour powerful nations, is more important than building a fairer, more stable global economy.

CENTER for ECONOMIC and SOCIAL RIGHTS christian aid bond

In this Jubilee year, 25 years since the UK helped lead global debt relief efforts, it's time for the UK to once again be on the right side of history. With the US and UK attempting to weaken or block key reforms, and Global South countries calling for systemic change, FfD4 is shaping up to be one of the most politically significant development negotiations of the decade.

Key issues and asks

Debt Justice

- Global South countries face the **worst debt crisis in history**: According to UNCTAD, 48 developing countries now spend more on interest payments than on either education or health, affecting approximately 3.3 billion people.
- **Global South** countries have **higher borrowing costs** than Global North countries (e.g. countries in Africa borrow at rates that are 2 to 4 times higher than those of the US and 6 to 12 times higher than those of Germany).
- **FfD4 must advance a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt** to create an independent, fair, and accountable debt restructuring and cancellation mechanism.
- **Unjust and illegitimate debt must be canceled immediately** to free up resources for sustainable development.

- **Private creditors must be compelled to participate in debt relief initiatives** because the largest share (39%) of lower-income countries' debt repayments are going to Western private lenders, not including Chinese lenders; 34% are to multilateral lenders; 13% are to Chinese public and private lenders. More than 43% of African external debt is owed to Western private creditors.

- These private creditors have been a blockage to progress in global debt relief negotiations (under the Common Framework). In Chad, Glencore delayed negotiations while being paid in full. Zambia and Ghana have agreed limited deals with bondholders, but are still waiting on deals with other Western private creditors long after government creditors have agreed. In Ethiopia, bondholders have rejected a deal and are reserving their rights to sue in the English courts. South Sudan has been sued by Afreximbank in the English courts for US$657 million.

- The majority of debts African and other low-income countries owe to private creditors are governed under English law. So Global South countries have rightly suggested that the UK and other jurisdictions that govern private creditors debt, use their powers to get private creditors to comply with more ambitious debt relief. This measure is essential to getting others in the G20, most notably China, to agree to more ambitious action. (Note that the only other major jurisdiction that is relevant is New York, where there is also a campaign for similar legislation to be brought in).

Tax Justice

- Countries **lose $492 billion annually** due to tax evasion and avoidance by multinational corporations and the wealthy, disproportionately impacting low- and middle-income nations.
- For decades, **global tax rules have been controlled by the OECD**, favoring its 38 rich member countries.
- Just the world's 10 richest individuals hold more than $1 trillion in combined wealth.

- In **August 2024, the UN adopted a landmark agreement to negotiate a UN Tax Convention**, shifting global tax rule-making to a more inclusive platform.
- **FfD4 is a crucial moment to provide impetus to the negotiation of this convention**, ensuring fairer global tax rules that curb corporate tax abuse and empower the Global South.

Climate Justice

- **Climate-related disasters** have **increased by 83%** in two decades, displacing 22 million people annually since 2008.
- Many **Global South** countries now spend **five times more on debt repayments** than on climate action. According to Recourse, the IMF endorses continued fossil fuel extraction in 11 out of 21 fossil fuel producer countries, often driven by their need to repay debt with foreign exchange made from commodity exports.
- It is estimated that **trillions of dollars of funding is needed every year** to fund loss and damage, adaptation and mitigation, critical green infrastructure and just transition policies in the Global South.
- The figure of $300 billion annually and the investment target of $1.3 trillion by 2035 agreed in Baku were inadequate, diluted the obligations of developed countries, thereby placing an undue financial burden on nations that have contributed least to the climate crisis and relied too much on private finance, rather than substantial public grants.
- Fossil fuel companies made $1 trillion in profits last year and investments in fossil fuel industries from the world's 60 biggest banks for instance totaled US$705.8 billion in 2023.
- We are calling for reaffirmation of a commitment to Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (**CBDR**) and climate finance being new, additional, and primarily grant-based.

What is the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development?

The **Financing for Development (FfD) Conferences** are the only global forum where **all** governments, the UN, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society come together to reach agreements on development finance and global economic governance. Unlike other major international economic decision-making spaces such as G20 or G7, the FfD process ensures that each country has an equal say with decisions made by all governments involved in the conference.

The first International Conference on Financing for Development took place in Monterrey, Mexico, where the Monterrey Consensus (2002) was agreed, followed by the Doha Declaration (2008), and Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015).

Current context of the negotiations

Formal preparation negotiations took place between the Global North and the Global South throughout the last year and most recently in New York at the end of April revealing diverging responses to financing for international development.

Countries in the Global North are generally advocating for maintaining the status quo, with a focus on mobilising private finance for development, whereas countries in the Global South are generally calling for more structural reforms, in tax and debt in particular, which they argue are driving significant financial outflows from the South to the North.

In particular, we are advocating for the paragraph on establishing an intergovernmental process to agree a UN Convention on Sovereign Debt to be retained.

Facilitating governments have produced the final draft of the Outcome Document, which will be debated in public on 17 June in New York (This debate will be live webcast). Given how far apart governments are in their negotiations, it is possible they will need to vote on whether to take the draft document to Seville for adoption to reach agreement, rather than through consensus, which would be unprecedented in the history of Financing for Development Conferences.

The US may pull out of FfD4, having already denounced the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and consistently opposing international agreements on climate action and gender equality.

It recently pulled out of the UN negotiations for an international convention on tax cooperation, further signaling its retreat from multilateral processes. If the US pulls out of the FfD4 process, this would be the first time in history that an FfD outcome document does not have universal support - but could still be adopted and implemented by the UN's remaining 192 member states. The US is currently still in the negotiations, but has been placing reservations on every paragraph of the Outcome Document, signalling its potential withdrawal from the process.

Why FfD4 Matters

The global financial system is failing the countries that need it most. Rising inequality, unsustainable debt, climate disasters, and aid cuts have deepened economic injustices, while multilateralism is under threat as some governments prioritise short-term national interests over global cooperation. Only 17% of the SDGs are on track, with only 5 years left to go until 2030. According to the World Bank, **external public debt** mostly in the Global South has surged to **over $9 trillion**, a more than **double increase since 2010**.

Too many powerful global institutions (e.g. the World Bank and IMF) are dominated by rich, powerful countries perpetuating extractive colonial models; these institutions need fairer governance rules.

10 years after the FFD3 in Addis, the FfD4 is a rare opportunity to push for real, systemic, financial reforms—**debt justice, fairer tax rules, and climate finance**—so all countries have the resources and power to drive their own development. It is the only global platform where all nations negotiate economic governance on equal terms.

Recent **UN-led progress on global tax negotiations** proves that reform is possible. FfD4 must build on this momentum to create a financial system that works for everyone—not just those who designed it.

Other Key Issues & Asks

Global economic governance

- Multilateral economic decision-making remains dominated by a small handful of countries in the Global North through international institutions and forums in which the Global South is structurally marginalised or wholly excluded.
- Despite their 80 years of existence the most powerful economic institutions - the IMF and the World Bank - their governance structures, internal incentives and drivers, and the power dynamics between them, have remained largely unchanged.
- The message from Global South countries for FfD4 is very clear. Enough is enough. Governance of the global economic architecture is archaic, unfit for purpose and fundamentally unfair.
- In the FfD4 negotiations, the Global South is demanding a seat at the table or a bigger voice in international decision-making on everything from international tax cooperation, aid discussions and the rules that govern international sovereign debt issues, to trade rules, development finance and financial regulation.
- The Global South is united in demanding meaningful governance reforms at the IMF and World Bank, where the UK still holds a bigger vote share (4.03%) than 15 of its former

sub-Saharan African colonies combined. The US holds 16.5% of the vote share while the whole of Africa has only 4.7%.

Gender Inequality

- **Women in the Global South spend three times more time on unpaid care work than men**, limiting their economic opportunities.
- **Only 24% of women in low-income countries are in formal employment**, compared to 38% of men.
- **One in three women globally faces gender-based violence**, with limited legal protections and support in many Global South countries.
- The Outcome Document includes commendable language on investing in care economies, supporting women's economic empowerment, and committing to gender-balanced governance. But it must address the **exploitation of care workers** and the **structural inequalities** that shape women's access to economic opportunity.

Human Rights

Human rights provide a powerful framework for rethinking global finance—linking tax justice, debt, and climate action to the realisation of economic and social rights. FfD4 has a unique opportunity to centre human rights—unlike forums such as the OECD or Bretton Woods institutions—by advancing transparent, inclusive, and accountable financial systems that tackle inequality and uphold states' legal obligations to cooperate internationally and mobilise resources fairly.

Language on human rights has been diluted since the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) document produced following the last FfD conference in Ethiopia. For example, this provided detailed commitments to labour rights, gender equality and migrant rights and explicitly references international human rights standards and agreements. However, the FfD4 Outcome Document adopts more generalised language, potentially reducing the clarity and enforceability of these commitments, and places greater emphasis on aligning with national laws and policies, which may vary in their human rights protections.

This is largely as a result of compromises to accommodate diverse national perspectives, especially that of the US and various European countries. The UK government's (stated) commitment to international law means that the UK should be a strong champion of strengthening human rights throughout the FfD negotiations.

Areas of contention between the Global North and the Global South

Key areas of contention between the Global North and Global South positions include the following:

UN debt mechanism

Proposals for a UN debt mechanism that would comprehensively address unsustainable and illegitimate debt, including through extensive debt cancellation, have been gaining steam in the lead up to the Fourth Financing for Development Conference. These proposals are supported by the Africa Group, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group and other countries in the Global South, as well as over 800+ civil Society organisations. However, proposals on this have long been blocked by the UK, US and the EU.

Role of IFIs vs UN/battle for decision-making power

Throughout the FfD outcome document, battles are being fought about the location of decision-making, particularly between international finance institutions (IFIs) where the Global North still dominates decision-making, and UN bodies and fora, where all countries would have an equal vote and the Global South is in the majority.

The EU, UK and US in particular are arguing that many of the decisions that could be taken at FfD should be taken by the boards of IFIs instead, leaning on arguments of the independence of these institutions and duplication of the international architecture.

Global South countries have been pointing out that FfD4 is an international conference at the heads of state level, which means they have the power to make decisions that would also bind finance ministers, central bank directors and development ministers, who tend to make up the highest decision-making bodies of IFIs.

UN tax convention

For decades, tax policies have been set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the group of 38 rich nations, which are often accused of shaping tax rules to their own advantage — particularly of the corporate lobbies within the OECD's richest countries. As a counter to this exclusionary process, governments are currently advancing efforts to establish a **Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation through the UN**, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable global tax system.

A TOR was approved for the Convention on November 27 last year. Only 9 countries opposed: the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Argentina, and New Zealand, while 46 including the EU abstained and an overwhelming majority of 125 nations voted in favour.

Climate financing

The first draft of the Outcome Document reaffirms commitments to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. It emphasises the urgency of accelerating climate action based on equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. However, G77 countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and the African Group, have emphasised the need for climate finance to be new and additional to existing Overseas Development Aid commitments. Notably, the draft proposes establishing a UN General Assembly working group to enhance consistency and transparency in climate finance reporting, addressing concerns about the double counting of climate finance and ODA.

An internal UN document indicates that the US aims to remove references to climate change, gender equality, and sustainability. Additionally, the US opposes proposals such as global solidarity levies, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, and reforms to enhance tax transparency and credit rating systems for developing countries.

Country case studies

This section will be updated in the coming weeks, so watch this space!

Below are summaries of country case studies. More detailed versions are available on request.

Argentina - fossil fuels for debt — how the IMF is driving climate breakdown

Argentina's $64 billion debt to the IMF is driving fossil fuel expansion. To repay its loans, the country is ramping up fracked gas exports from the Vaca Muerta field—an approach explicitly endorsed in IMF technical reviews. The IMF's plans link debt repayment to fossil infrastructure, while austerity conditions have slashed funding for climate programmes and renewables. This debt-driven model is worsening Argentina's climate vulnerability, diverting resources away from sustainable development

and toward methane-intensive extraction. Argentina's case shows how IMF bailouts risk becoming drivers of global climate breakdown—underscoring the urgent need for debt relief, climate-aligned recovery plans, and financing that supports a just transition, not extraction.

DRC, illegitimate debt and the UN tax convention

Despite its vast mineral wealth, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with 95% of its population living on less than $2 a day. Prolonged conflict, including recent M23 rebel violence, and the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. aid in 2024 have deepened humanitarian crises, disrupting access to clean water, healthcare, and food for millions. Much of the DRC's current debt is illegitimate, incurred under the corrupt Mobutu regime with full knowledge of international lenders, yet the country still spent billions repaying it before qualifying for partial cancellation. A UN debt mechanism would help prevent such exploitation by assessing the legitimacy of past loans and stopping unjust debts from burdening future generations. At the same time, the DRC loses billions annually through unfair tax arrangements with multinational mining companies. A UN tax convention could enforce fairer taxation of extractive industries, ensuring that a greater share of the country's natural wealth is invested back into public services and infrastructure, rather than flowing offshore.

Ecuador's Galápagos Debt-for-Nature Swap: A Controversial Model Under Scrutiny

Ecuador's widely publicised debt-for-nature swap in the Galápagos Islands is under fire for failing to deliver promised conservation outcomes, offering only marginal debt relief, and excluding local communities from decision-making. Over a year since its launch, no funds have been disbursed, prompting a formal investigation by the Inter-American Development Bank following a complaint from Ecuadorian civil society groups. Critics argue the deal prioritises private interests and lacks transparency, with the Galápagos Life Fund—tasked with managing the money—operating with limited oversight.

Civil society networks like Latindadd warn that this case reflects deeper structural flaws in the debt-for-nature model, which often reinforces inequality, imposes harmful conditions, and provides inadequate financial reprieve. With the U.S. now reconsidering support for such mechanisms, future swaps face uncertainty. Campaigners are calling instead for unconditional climate finance and debt cancellation, arguing that true environmental justice must center local communities and address the root causes of unsustainable debt.

Malawi in Crisis: Climate Extremes and Crushing Debt Collide

Malawi is grappling with a deepening debt crisis, compounded by the escalating impacts of climate change. As of September 2024, public debt had reached K16.19 trillion—86.4% of GDP—with external loans, many at high interest rates, consuming 43% of domestic revenue and crowding out essential public spending. Health and education systems are critically underfunded, with classrooms severely overcrowded and hospitals lacking basic supplies.

Climate disasters, such as Cyclone Freddy and recurring droughts, are causing significant economic damage and displacement, costing the country at least 1% of GDP annually. Despite urgent needs, Malawi's ability to invest in climate resilience is stifled by unsustainable debt levels, opaque commercial loans, poor governance, and a shrinking aid base. Protests in early 2025 reflected mounting public frustration over inflation, austerity, and deteriorating living conditions, highlighting the urgent need for integrated debt relief and climate adaptation strategies.

Hospitals Starve While Bondholders Feast: Nigeria’s Debt Dilemma

Nigeria is facing a deepening fiscal crisis, spending billions to repay private creditors — particularly Eurobond holders — while its hospitals, schools, and essential services remain critically underfunded. In 2025 alone, the country will spend $5.2 billion on external debt servicing, including a $1.1 billion Eurobond repayment. Interest payments are consuming a significant portion of government revenue, leaving little room for investment in health or education. Meanwhile, generous tax incentives and opaque borrowing — including oil-backed loans like Project Eagle — continue to erode domestic accountability and long-term sustainability.

This debt strategy, heavily reliant on private lending and mortgaging future oil revenues, is exacerbating Nigeria’s economic vulnerabilities and undermining its development and climate goals. The health sector, especially family planning services, is bearing the brunt of the fiscal squeeze, with drastic budget cuts and withdrawal of donor support threatening to reverse progress. As Nigeria becomes increasingly dependent on fossil fuel extraction to repay debt, civil society is urging a shift toward fairer, transparent, and development-focused financing that prioritizes people and the planet over creditors’ profits.

Sierra Leone – IMF policies severely impact on women

IMF-backed economic policies in Sierra Leone have had a severe impact on women, worsening poverty and limiting access to essential services. With a debt servicing rate of 169% of government revenue, far more is spent on repaying debt than on critical sectors like health and education.

As a result, healthcare facilities are under-resourced and lack basic equipment and staff, disproportionately affecting women, especially mothers. Rising costs of essentials such as rice and fuel—due in part to IMF-recommended tax hikes and the removal of subsidies—have further strained household budgets. Women, many of whom work in the informal sector, face heightened economic insecurity. Privatisation, another IMF-supported policy, has led to soaring utility and telecom costs, while key infrastructure projects benefit foreign companies over local communities. Joanna Favour Tom-Kargbo, Economic Justice Manager-for Christian Aid highlights the lack of transparency in these deals and calls for greater accountability and policies that prioritise the well-being and development of Sierra Leone's people, especially women, who continue to bear the brunt of austerity measures.

Zimbabwe's Debt Crisis: A Call for Global Financial Justice and Climate Justice

Zimbabwe faces a dire financial crisis, burdened by an external debt of US$18 billion and annual losses of US$1.8 billion through illicit financial flows — exceeding its entire health budget. Despite its wealth in minerals like lithium, gold, and platinum, the country is locked out of global finance due to arrears, denied climate funding, and trapped in a system that favors creditors and multinationals over people and development. Over 70% of the population lives in poverty, and climate adaptation needs estimated at US$10 billion remain largely unmet.

At the heart of the issue is a global financial system designed to extract and exclude. Zimbabwe's case highlights the urgent need for structural reform, as advocated at the upcoming FFD4 summit. This includes cancelling illegitimate debt, ending illicit financial flows, delivering climate finance as reparations, and restoring national sovereignty. Zimbabwe's plight is a warning — and a call — for a just, inclusive financial order that prioritizes people, planet, and genuine development over profit and power.

Key spokespeople

The following people will be attending FfD4:

For Christian Aid

Emma Burgisser is the **economic justice lead** at Christian Aid with a particular focus on IMF quota reform. She has over 10 years of experience in global policy advocacy, with expertise in international finance institutions, fiscal justice, gender equality, and human rights. She holds a masters in International and European Law from the University of Groningen with a focus on International Human Rights Law.

Mariana Paoli, **global advocacy lead** at Christian Aid from Brazil, specialising in **climate finance** and energy. She has over 20 years of experience on global advocacy and policy, leading on global processes such as COPs and engaging with international finance institutions. She holds a masters in International Political Economy from the London School of Economics with a focus on International Political Economy of the Environment.

Bios of the following to follow:

Sophie Powell, chief of UK Policy and Advocacy

Africa Kiiza, Economic Justice Advisor (based in Kenya)
Prior to joining Christian Aid, Africa was a Policy Advisor and Research Fellow on Trade and Labor Rights at Solidarity Centre, Research Fellow on Trade, Investment and Industrial Policy at Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment and a Senior Trade and Investment Policy Analyst and Advocacy Officer at Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI)-Uganda. Africa has a master's degree in social science (Governance and Regional Integration) from Pan African University and a bachelor's degree in development studies from Makerere University.

Aulline Chapisa, Country Director, Zimbabwe

Omney Nahida, Senior Policy Specialist Economic Justice (based in Bangladesh)

Christian Aid partners

Kenya

- Tom Ogada, Okoa Uchumi/Tisa
- Evelyne Mathai, Okoa Uchumi/Tisa

Nigeria

- Ibrahim Musa Auwal, Civil Society Advocacy Legislative Centre

Sierra Leone

- Bintu Kamara, 50-50

Zimbabwe

- Admire Mutizwa, CEO, Zimbabwe Council of Churches
- Wilfred Dimingu, Zimbabwe Council of Churches

For CESR

Maria Ron Balsera is the executive director of the Center for Economic and Social Rights. She is a feminist leader with over 15 years of experience in research and advocacy in economic justice, human rights, education, privatisation, and intersectionality. She holds a Ph.D. in Education and Human Development from Bielefeld University.

For Bond

- **Romilly Greenhill CEO of Bond.** Romilly was previously UK Director at the ONE Campaign for six years, leading successful campaigns on global health, education, and development finance, and working actively with bond and other NGO networks. She was one of the lead policy experts for the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign, helping to secure historic agreements on aid and debt cancellation and was present at the previous Financing for Development Conference in 2015.

- **Alex Farley, Policy and Advocacy Manager** for Development Finance at Bond. Alex leads Bond's work on FfD4.