Written evidence submitted by the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF)

Summary & Introduction
1. SCIAF is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland. We are proud members of Caritas Internationalis, the global family of Catholic development charities, dedicated to ending poverty and working alongside the world’s poorest people, whatever their faith. The main focus of our work in developing countries is helping people overcome hunger, conflict and disease; and we respond to humanitarian disasters. As well as providing practical support, we are passionate about challenging the underlying causes of poverty through education and campaigning.

2. SCIAF’s vision is of a just world, where everyone can “have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Our approach to development is inspired by the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church, promoting the good of the whole person. As Pope Paul VI taught, “Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man.” Economic growth alone is not sufficient to eradicate poverty.

3. SCIAF has welcomed the UK Government’s commitment to international development, including the maintenance of DFID as a stand-alone government department with a Cabinet minister, and achieving 0.7% of GNI in 2013. We would hope these commitments will continue in the future. SCIAF has had a long and constructive relationship with DfID and is currently in receipt of a grant from the Global Poverty Action Fund of £323,973 helping 3200 women affected by conflict and poverty to improve income assets and food security, running from January 2013 to December 2015. SCIAF has also been successful in its application to the DFID ‘UK Aid Match’ scheme for our 2015 ‘WEE BOX, Big Change’ Lent appeal.

4. SCIAF is part of the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS), which has called on the UK and Scottish Governments to adopt a ‘policy coherence’ approach to international development. Governments should consider the impact of all policy decisions on the poorest and most vulnerable in our global society, and act in the interests of building a more just and sustainable world.

5. SCIAF is also a member of Bond, and the CORE (Corporate Responsibility) Coalition, and would encourage the committee to give detailed consideration to the submissions from these networks, who represent a large number and broad spectrum of international development organisations.

The coherence of policies which affect development (including aid, security, prosperity, and climate)
The impact of the UK’s non-aid policies on developing countries

6. Aid works and has saved the lives of many millions of women, men and children. But aid alone is not a sustainable solution to the challenge of global poverty and inequality. We need to change the structures that create and sustain poverty, and this may also require a change in the mindset of decision makers and policy strategists.

7. In the modern world GDP growth is too often seen as a key policy objective in its own right. However it is clear that for too many people GDP growth has not automatically improved well-being. While economic growth in the global South is needed, we must acknowledge that growth alone is not sufficient to eradicate poverty. For people living in extreme poverty, the main question is how to ensure they can live in dignity. SCIAF believes that we must move towards a measure of development which replaces GDP with measures based on the well-being of individuals, communities and society as a whole.

1 Populorum Progressio, n14
8. As part of the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS), SCIAF has called on the UK and Scottish Governments to adopt a ‘policy coherence’ approach to international development. Governments should consider the impact of all policy decisions on the poorest and most vulnerable in our global society, and act in the interests of building a more just and sustainable world. In its report, Scotland’s Place in Building a Just World, NIDOS examines the example of Sweden, which in 2003 became the first country in the world to enact legislation to have an official coherence policy on international development. Through its Policy for Global Development (PGD), Sweden made a very strong, ambitious and quite unique commitment that all government policy areas should act coherently to comply with and contribute to the goal of an equitable and sustainable global development. The policy is characterised by two guiding perspectives: a rights perspective and a poor people’s perspective on development. Robust governmental and civil society reporting and accountability mechanisms exist to monitor the effectiveness of the policy approach.

9. SCIAF, as part of the NIDOS network, supports the introduction of a Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) model for government. Solidarity with the poor and equality should be at the heart of external relations. Mechanisms are needed for cross-government planning and policy review, with parliamentary and cross-party structures to scrutinise this to ensure a coherent approach that delivers a pro-development result. Accountability mechanisms should also include formal civil society engagement.

10. A ‘policy coherence’ approach to development, and the use of measures and indicators beyond GDP growth, will affect many areas of government policy. Trade and procurement policies should promote the highest ethical, social and environmental standards. Corporate tax systems must be reformed to ensure greater transparency and fairness. Steps to mitigate the impact of climate change through emission reduction, and support communities already affected to adapt are also needed. The UK Government should play a greater role in ensuring that all large companies implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

11. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) remains a vital component of global efforts to reduce poverty and inequality. SCIAF has welcomed the UK Government’s achievement of the 0.7% of GNI aid target in 2013, and would hope to see this commitment enshrined in legislation. Yet, even if current rates of commitment are met, ODA on its own will not be enough to eradicate poverty. New sources of revenue and finance will be needed. SCIAF has supported calls for the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), which if implemented globally could raise as much as £250 billion annually. The ‘Robin Hood Tax’ campaign for a FTT suggests that UK revenue could be split between financing international development, climate change, and domestic social policy. The campaign also argues that an FTT would reduce the amount of risky speculation undertaken by financial institutions, leading to greater overall stability in global markets. In this way, it could also act as an example of policy coherence in action.

The underlying government mechanisms needed to support any changes, including:

- The role of DFID in facilitating other UK Government departments and other UK organisations to assist developing countries;
- The role of DFID in influencing the policies of other Whitehall departments;
- Whether a stand-alone Department for International Development has a long-term future.

12. DFID is recognised around the world as a centre of excellence for the design and implementation of programmes aimed at reducing poverty and improving the lives and wellbeing of poor and vulnerable people. As well as this important technical expertise, DFID plays a crucial role within government and in its countries of operation in expressing the UK’s political will to prioritise the needs and rights of poor and vulnerable people.

13. There is a clear case for maintaining DFID as a stand-alone department, represented by a Secretary of State at Cabinet level. The post-2015/Sustainable Development Goals process deserves the highest
priority within Government. Implementation of a new SDG framework from the end of 2015 will require even greater levels of commitment and investment in order to ensure the goals are achieved. A stand-alone department will have greater capacity, and political capital, to make sure that the new SDGs and global efforts to end poverty and inequality are given the attention they deserve within government.

14. Since 2005, the Scottish Government has produced its own framework for international development and introduced an International Development Fund (IDF). SCIAF currently operates two programmes supported by the IDF and one supported by the Scottish Government’s Climate Justice Fund (CJF).

15. The co-operation between DFID and the Scottish Government to ensure complementarity between these schemes and to avoid duplication has been a positive example of a constructive relationship between departments of the two Governments. We would hope that DFID and the Scottish Government will continue to maintain a constructive relationship, based on clear communication, mutual respect and willingness to learn from each other’s best practice, irrespective of the outcome of the independence referendum on 18th September 2014.