



Rt Hon Stephen Timms, MP
Financial Secretary to the Treasury
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24th October 2008

Dear Treasury Secretary

Re. Britain obstructing the upgrade of the UN Tax Committee

Tax Justice Network (TJN) is greatly concerned that this week a British government official has sought to actively block international attempts to upgrade the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (the UN Tax Committee) from its current expert status to inter-governmental status. We consider this position to be wholly at odds with the Prime Minister's recent comments to the UN General Assembly when he is quoted as saying: << *We must now build a new global financial order founded on transparency not opacity, rewarding success not excess, responsibility not impunity and which is global not national.*>>

The proposal to upgrade this Committee is a significant element in the current draft of the Doha Outcome Report currently under negotiation in the run-up to the Doha review of the Monterrey Consensus (as outlined in paragraph 10 the draft Doha Outcome Report). The proposal is supported by developing countries and many European Union countries.

The upgrade of the UN Tax Committee to inter-governmental status would inject an important political element into the work of the Committee, which is charged with responsibility for strengthening international cooperation in tax matters, for example through development of international norms for tackling tax evasion and trade mispricing.

reply to:

John Christensen, director, Tax Justice Network International Secretariat
London, United Kingdom
tel +44 (0) 7979 868 302
email john@taxjustice.net



TJN has discussed this issue with the British official and we are dissatisfied with the explanations offered for blocking this upgrade proposal.

On behalf of TJN I am seeking an urgent meeting with you to clarify whether the position articulated by the British official attending the fourth session of the UN Tax Committee in Geneva this week represents the position of HM Government or was the personal position of the official acting in his personal capacity. We consider the upgrade of this Committee to be an essential part of the Financing for Development process and we urge the UK government to support the proposal.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John Christensen'.

John Christensen
Director

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