ANDREW MARR:  
As a proportion of national income, the UK is now one of the world’s most generous donors of international aid. The government wants to make British taxpayers more aware of how their money is spent. But at a time of austerity at home, can the protected budget for international development really be justified? Well I’m joined by the Secretary of State, Andrew Mitchell. Good morning.

ANDREW MITCHELL:  
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:  
Good morning. Now one of the things that you’re announcing this weekend is that you are going to stamp British aid in future with a mark showing where it comes from. I think we can see an example of that, I hope. And my question is really … So there you go, so a big Union Jack - UK aid from the British people. Now what’s the point of this? It could sound a little bit like swank or … Why are we doing it?

ANDREW MITCHELL:
Well I think it’s important that all around the world where British aid is saving lives, transforming lives, that the British public, the British taxpayer gets the credit for this. There was a previous logo which cost £100,000 to develop, which said aid from the Department for International Development. We’re replacing this at no cost with a flag that is identifiable all around the world to everybody and which says aid from the British people - which is what it is. And it’s going to enable us I think also to take the credit for these remarkable results which we are achieving around the world, matching one person in the poor world who doesn’t have access to clean water and sanitation with every single citizen of the United Kingdom, getting 11 million children into school at 2.5 per cent of the cost of educating a British child. So we’re really delivering value for money and clear results from this budget.

ANDREW MARR:  
So in a sense this logo is reassurance for people back home - some of whom, including in your own party, think that a difficult time, a time of austerity, it’s wrong that your budget should be the only one that is guaranteed to keep growing?

ANDREW MITCHELL:  
Well it’s making sure that people who are in the poorest parts of the world, whose lives are being changed and transformed know that this is Britain standing by its commitments and delivering. And you know for under one per cent of gross national income, this is a tremendous investment not only in the future stability and prosperity of some of the poorest and most dysfunctional parts of the world; it’s an investment for Britain in Britain’s future prosperity and stability and security. And you know a lot of people are worried that the next generation won’t be able to do as well and prosper in the way that our generation and previous generations have done, and the development budget is an investment in our children and our grandchildren’s future prosperity, stability and security too.

ANDREW MARR:  
Why was the commitment to get to 0.7 per cent of GDP, which is the international target, why was that not enshrined in law in the Queen’s Speech, or in a bill to be announced in the Queen’s Speech, because people expected that and it was an odd omission?
ANDREW MITCHELL:
Well the key thing is that we’re standing by our commitments and from 2013 we will reach the .7. That’s the absolute commitment.

ANDREW MARR:
So why wasn’t it put into the Queen’s Speech?

ANDREW MITCHELL:
Well it will be put into law. The Prime Minister and I have made it clear the bill is ready to proceed and it will proceed when the business managers say. But …

ANDREW MARR:
So is this because the Conservative Party is …

ANDREW MITCHELL:
No, the critical …

ANDREW MARR:
… neuralgic about this? No?

ANDREW MITCHELL:
No, the critical thing is that we stand by our commitments. The law will come, but in the end declaratory legislation should take second preference to the legislation which is being passed, which is vital for our future economic prosperity.

ANDREW MARR:
There will be a law? It will be enshrined in law?

ANDREW MITCHELL:
It will be enshrined in law, yes.

ANDREW MARR:
Right. Now you have sort of major conferences and so on every so often, giving you a sense of direction for aid in the coming year, and this week you’ve got one on fertility
issues and contraception.

**ANDREW MITCHELL:**

Yes, every year we try to do something which can both make a huge contribution to the lives of the poorest in the world and also demonstrate to British taxpayers why at a difficult time for our economy, we stand by these commitments. Last year it was the emphasis on vaccinating children, and as a result of the effort that Britain put together last year Britain will be vaccinating a child every two seconds in the poor world and saving the life of a child under five every two minutes from diseases which none of our children die from. These are not exotic tropical diseases; it’s diarrhoea, pneumonia, measles. And that was last year and it was a tremendous success. We have exceeded the target over the last year and the results we wanted to achieve in vaccinations. This year it will be …

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* So what’s the next one, yes?

**ANDREW MITCHELL:**

… this year it will be a family planning summit in London, which we are co-hosting with the Gates Foundation. We will be seeking to crowd in political and financial support to halve, reduce by 100 million the number of women in the poorest parts of the world who want access to contraception and don’t have it. So what we’re trying to do is ensure that women in the poorest parts of the world are able to make decisions for themselves over whether and when they have children and what the spacing of those children will be if we are successful, and it will completely transform the lives of more than 100 million of the poorest women in the world.

**ANDREW MARR:**

Of course this comes straight up against some pretty powerful cultural, religious and political barriers. Plenty of places in the world where this is thought to be offensive, foreign governments coming in and trying to control the reproductive abilities of women in Muslim and other traditional areas.

**ANDREW MITCHELL:**
But it absolutely is not that. And if you look, for example, at the Nairobi consensus among all faiths last year, there’s nothing in that consensus which cuts against what we’re doing. And what we’re doing is absolutely clear. It is to enable women who want access to contraception to exercise their own right of decision making in that, just as women in the rich world do, and it will save the lives of millions and millions of women and more than three million babies in their first year of life as a result.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And in contradistinction, what happens to Africa if the population carries on rising at this rate?

**ANDREW MITCHELL:**
Well that is another matter and it’s a relevant matter …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* It’s a relevant matter.

**ANDREW MITCHELL:**
… but what we are trying to do, what we are trying to do in London is absolutely fair square behind empowering women - allowing women in the poorest parts of the world to make their own decisions, decisions which women in the rich world make automatically every day.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Let’s turn briefly to a couple of domestic concerns. The Archbishop of Canterbury this morning is reported as deriding the Big Society as “waffle” and suggesting that actually it’s a cover for the withdrawal of the state under a Conservative led government.

**ANDREW MITCHELL:**
Well it is absolutely not that. It is the reverse of that. And we don’t always explain it perhaps as well as we should, but it’s about crowding in all parts of society - the government, local government, the voluntary sector, civil society - to tackle these big endemic problems which the Prime Minister and all of us have tried to articulate and
tackle. And you know the Archbishop and I will be announcing this week a joint effort between the government and all faiths on tackling poverty in the poorest parts of the world. We’ve been working on this for the last year. I think the …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Will you have a pop at him?

ANDREW MITCHELL:
… I think the headline belies the extraordinary amount of agreement on tackling poverty here and abroad, which exists between this coalition government and the Church of England.

ANDREW MARR:
Any thoughts on the whole Jimmy Carr and tax avoidance row? This is legal but aggressive ways of avoiding paying income tax. Should people like that be morally shunned?

ANDREW MITCHELL:
Well everybody should pay their tax. That is the key message that the government is making. And it’s extremely important - not least at a time like this when money is incredibly tight - that people pay their tax, and that’s the central message of the government.

ANDREW MARR:
Andrew Mitchell, thank you very much for joining us this morning.

INTERVIEW ENDS