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Environmental Audit
Committee

**Trade, Development
and Environment: The
Role of the FCO**

Fifth Report of Session 2006–07

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and
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The Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider to what extent the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development; to audit their performance against such targets as may be set for them by Her Majesty's Ministers; and to report thereon to the House.

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are: Mike Hennessy (Clerk); Sara Howe (Second Clerk); Richard Douglas (Committee Specialist); Oliver Bennett (Committee Specialist); Louise Smith (Committee Assistant); Caroline McElwee (Secretary); and Robert Long (Senior Office Clerk).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to The Clerk, Environmental Audit Committee, Committee Office, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general inquiries is: 020 7219 6150; the Committee's e-mail address is: eacom@parliament.uk

References

In the footnotes of this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by page number as in 'Ev12'. number HC *-II

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Conclusions and recommendations

1. The environment plays a complex and important role in conflict and its resolution. Sustainable development, climate change mitigation and environmental protection should therefore be considered security issues of critical importance to the UK Government and FCO. The UK must be a proponent of a strong, coordinated, multilateral environmental system able to avoid situations in which environmental degradation might lead to instability or conflict. International action on environmental challenges might also prove to be an important tool for fostering closer international relations. (Paragraph 14)
2. The Committee welcomes the Foreign Secretary's robust statement in the Sustainable Development Action Plan regarding the importance of sustainable development to international peace and prosperity. The significance the Foreign Secretary places on respecting environmental limits, on addressing climate change, and on the need to deal with the links between trade, poverty and the environment, satisfies the Committee that these issues are being taken seriously by the FCO. However, as the Foreign Secretary states, "the challenge we face is a big one". Words must therefore be backed up by an FCO institutionally equal to the challenge, in terms of skills and resources, to enable real progress to be made. (Paragraph 17)

FCO Policy

3. We agree with the Government that it is right for the FCO to have a focus on both climate change and environmental governance issues. The work that the FCO is conducting to ensure the better management of fisheries and forests is particularly important. Nevertheless, although this particular focus might enable the FCO to make efficiency savings, it risks the neglect of other, also critical, environmental issues. Given that the UK's ability to contribute successfully in meeting a number of international environmental challenges will largely be down to the skill and assiduousness of the FCO, the lack of a wider commitment to the environment risks the UK being ineffective in its response. It is essential that the FCO widen its focus to encompass those international environmental challenges where strong diplomacy will be part of the solution, such as biodiversity loss. (Paragraph 26)
4. Evidence from JNCC and IFAW suggests that the FCO has a declining role in international negotiations on biodiversity, which could have a damaging impact on our influence in such fora. We recommend that the FCO initiate an urgent review, with DEFRA and JNCC, to assess whether delegations are being provided with the level of diplomatic support that they require to achieve the UK's aims. (Paragraph 29)
5. Given the importance of improved staff knowledge of sustainable development in meeting sustainable development objectives, it is essential to ensure that training results in real knowledge improvements. If, as the Minister told the Sub-committee, the success of such training is now measured through a sophisticated internal assessment process, it is surprising that the FCO has not sought to trumpet this achievement though the Sustainable Development Action Plan. The next Action

Plan should explain fully this process as well as provide targets to enable progress in this area to be charted. (Paragraph 34)

6. The Sustainable Development Action Plan appears to have failed to address the SDC recommendation to “continue to explore the opportunities for joint working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to natural resource protection and conflict and reflect these in future [Action Plans]”. Opportunities for closer working between the two departments on the environment-conflict interface should include, jointly with DFID, an assessment of the role environmental protection and management, and sustainable development, can play in limiting the environmental conditions that can exacerbate conflict and how this could feed into Global Conflict Prevention Pool work. It should also consider the role that environmental protection and restoration can play in reconstruction efforts. The next Action Plan must detail how the FCO will take forward this work. (Paragraph 38)
7. The 2006 White Paper strategic priorities were identified by the Government, as a whole, as the most pressing international issues that it must address. We thus welcome greatly the Foreign Secretary’s inclusion of climate security as a new UK international priority, and the acknowledgement therefore of the critical importance of this issue. We commend also the Foreign Secretary for demonstrating the UK’s commitment to this issue through her robust argument for the consideration of climate change at the UN Security Council. Despite this we believe that wider environmental issues should be better reflected in the UK’s international priorities, particularly given the growing evidence of the threats associated with continued environmental degradation. A new international priority placing a greater emphasis on the need to ensure environmental protection must be added, to stress the key strategic importance of this issue for the whole of Government. This should complement a new international environmental strategy to focus Government-wide action. (Paragraph 42)

FCO capacity on the environment

8. We feel that the better integration in the FCO of sustainable development with business, and climate change with energy policy, is positive and could lead to the development of policies that better account for sustainable development issues. However, we are concerned that, as a result of restructuring, the FCO has lost its environmental nexus, and has decided to lower the resources given over to a number of international environmental issues. We recommend that an environmental policy group is re-established to drive forward an environmental agenda in the FCO, as well as to provide the central environmental expertise that existed prior to the restructuring. We are particularly concerned that failure to do this will impact on the UK’s ability to influence environmental negotiations in international fora. (Paragraph 46)
9. We welcome the FCO’s training programme to ensure better that all staff become conversant in sustainable development and environmental issues. Nevertheless, we have heard during the course of this inquiry that the specialist skills that the FCO requires in the field of environmental diplomacy are lacking. We are of the opinion that these skills can only in part be addressed by FCO staff and by other Government

departments through secondments. Given the complex and specialised nature of this work, and the FCO's own admission that its internal corps of civil servants working in this area are not able to develop their expertise quickly enough, we call for a large increase in the use of externally-appointed environmental specialists. In addition, to ensure that the unique abilities that FCO officials develop can be aligned with environmental expertise, it is essential that career diplomats with an environmental focus are developed; an environmental 'career anchor' must therefore be re-established. Our earlier recommendation that an environmental policy group be established could provide the location for this 'anchor'. The appointment of John Ashton as Special Representative on Climate Change, and the FCO's assertions as to the importance of this appointment for driving the climate change agenda forward, could be taken as an implicit recognition that the current structure is inadequate to the task of international diplomacy on environmental issues. (Paragraph 52)

A new international environmental strategy

10. Failures in the Government-wide Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, might explain the lack of consideration given to a number of international environmental issues in FCO sustainable development documents, which are based upon it. However, although it has its shortcomings, we were surprised to notice that the 2006 White Paper, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World*, also a Government-wide strategy, does not refer to or explain its links with *Securing the Future*. This is a considerable oversight, and demonstrates the continuing lack of coordination on sustainable development issues across Government. (Paragraph 58)
11. *Securing the Future* highlighted the fragmented state of natural resource protection policy, and the negative impact that this has on the UK's ability to meet environmental challenges. DEFRA has stated that it will seek to address this through the development of a coherent approach to the natural environment, which will also take into account the UK's international impact. However, we are concerned that the international dimension will not receive the focus it requires in this domestic strategy, and might fail to incorporate issues including security, foreign policy, trade and development. Therefore, a new international environmental strategy must be developed, owned and delivered by a number of departments, including FCO, DEFRA, DFID and DTI. (Paragraph 59)

Setting an example

12. We commend the support given by FCO staff to conservation and environmental projects and NGOs internationally, both financially and diplomatically, where such cooperation is in line with our international environmental objectives. Such support also sends a strong message to host countries that these issues are a priority for the UK Government. (Paragraph 60)
13. We welcome the Minister's strong statement on the need to work closely with NGOs in order better to make progress on mutual objectives, and to engage with NGOs at an earlier stage in the policy formation process. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence that we have received, a disconnect between the FCO and environmental NGOs still remains. We anticipate that the strategy for engagement with NGOs

currently being developed will go some way to address this, but we are not convinced that without a re-evaluation of overall FCO priorities to have a more explicit environmental focus the necessary changes will occur to ensure that this happens at all levels. Through such a re-evaluation, and the changes that we recommend in this report regarding, inter alia, the provision of specialist environmental expertise from outside the FCO and the development of FCO civil servants with a career focus on the environment, we believe that longer term, more beneficial, relationships will develop between the FCO and environmental NGOs. (Paragraph 65)

14. We applaud the FCO's demonstrated commitment to improving environmental management across its overseas estate. The promotion of sustainable practices through their application in the overseas estate is also essential in building support for, and exhibiting, the UK's commitment to best practice in sustainable development. (Paragraph 67)
15. The voluntary nature of carbon offsets from overseas posts' flights is an anomaly that needs removing. It runs contrary to domestic Government policy and leaves the UK Government open to criticism that it is failing to address the climate change impact of its own operations. The implications of this irregularity are particularly serious, and incongruous, given the FCO's diplomatic role in negotiating international agreements on climate change. (Paragraph 69)
16. The UK must succeed domestically on the same issues that we wish to succeed internationally, to provide the political leadership required to encourage more sustainable action by other countries. This includes meeting our international commitments in areas such as the prevention of biodiversity loss and domestic commitments on greenhouse gas emissions. Although the UK will meet its international commitments under Kyoto, we argue that this only represents a step in the right direction and does not necessarily reflect the scale of effort required to meet the challenge of climate change. We are therefore concerned that the UK might fail to reach its more demanding domestic target, and that this failure also will result in the loss of the political leadership demonstrated by the UK through the adoption of the target. (Paragraph 72)

UK Overseas Territories

17. We welcome the fact that FCO and DFID have, in the short term, increased their financial support for better environmental management in the UKOTs, but we are concerned that this has not been undertaken on the basis of an analysis of need. Research by the RSPB suggests that even with this funding increase a considerable funding shortfall will remain in the UKOTs for biodiversity protection. (Paragraph 78)
18. We are disturbed that witnesses have stressed to us that departments other than FCO and DFID do not provide the level of support to the UKOTs that is required. Although DEFRA does provide some direct and indirect support, the level of this does not fill the specialist environmental gaps that are apparent in the UKOTs. We recommend firstly that DEFRA be involved at the highest level in reviewing the Environment Charters. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Biodiversity should provide the focus for this review to ensure coordination between

departments. It is necessary for this review to assess whether both the Government, and the governments of the UKOTs, have met their respective obligations under the Environment Charters and Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Secondly, DEFRA should be given joint responsibility towards the UKOTs. This should be reflected in an updated UK International Priority, to include environmental protection alongside security and good governance in the UKOTs. This will also have to be reflected in DEFRA's Comprehensive Spending Review settlement. Finally, as part of the Environment Charter review, the case for larger and more routine funding must be explored. Given that the Treasury is currently conducting a spending review, it is imperative that this funding analysis feeds into, and influences, the Treasury's ultimate decision as to spending allocations for FCO, DFID and DEFRA. (Paragraph 83)

19. If the Government fails to address these issues it will run the risk of continued environmental decline and species extinctions in the UKOTs, ultimately causing the UK to fail in meeting its domestic and international environmental commitments. Failure to meet such commitments undermines the UK's ability to influence the international community to take the strong action required for reversing environmental degradation in their own countries, and globally. (Paragraph 84)

Introduction

The terms of this inquiry

1. The Environmental Audit Committee established a Sub-committee in February 2006 to explore concerns that Government policy on trade and development was failing to incorporate adequately the need for sustainable development and environmental protection. The Sub-committee has conducted a series of inquiries scrutinising the Department for International Development (DFID), the World Trade Organisation and UK trade policy, and the Government's response to the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

2. In general, these inquiries have highlighted the need for more coordinated action to identify and mitigate the negative impacts of trade and development policies. They have also highlighted the range of benefits that could be expected from a more sustainable approach, such as ensuring that development in developing countries will be long-term and not transitory, and ensuring that there is an increased trade in energy efficient technologies leading to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

3. This final short inquiry examined the role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in delivering the UK's international environmental objectives. Although the FCO is often not the lead department on sustainable development issues, it has a crucial role to play in building international support for UK policy objectives. FCO activities in this area include political dialogue and lobbying and direct funding of sustainable development projects in other countries. It also has a direct responsibility, jointly with DFID, towards the environment in UK Overseas Territories.

4. This inquiry, chaired by Colin Challen MP, received written memoranda from a range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the FCO. The Sub-committee also took oral evidence from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), BioDiplomacy and Ian McCartney MP, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for Trade and Industry. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the inquiry.

Why is the environment relevant to the work of the FCO?

5. The purpose of the FCO is "to work for the United Kingdom's interests in a safe, just and prosperous world".¹ The environment is relevant to the FCO for two main reasons. Firstly, as the UK's primary representative abroad, the FCO must have the appropriate knowledge and skills to be able to help deliver the Government's international environmental aspirations. This is particularly important due to the direct consequences for the UK of many international environmental degradation issues, such as climate change, and the UK's inability to deal with these unilaterally. Secondly, the environment

1 "About us", *FCO Website*, 8 March 2007, www.fco.gov.uk

and sustainable development are important components of any solution to the UK's other international priorities, including those to deliver poverty reduction, manage migration, limit terrorism, and prevent and resolve conflict.

6. The links between environmental degradation and poverty are explored extensively in our earlier reports including *Trade, Development and Environment: The Role of DFID*² and *Outflanked: The World Trade Organisation, International Trade and Sustainable Development*.³ The importance of addressing environmental issues in development policies can not be overstated. The United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Board found that development policies aimed at eliminating poverty may well be “doomed to failure” if the natural environment does not receive adequate protection.⁴ This view was also taken by the UN Millennium Project which found that long-term success in meeting Millennium Development Goals (to quantifiably reduce extreme poverty) will be “transitory and inequitable” without environmental sustainability. It went on that “[t]he paramount importance and clear urgency of environmental sustainability dictates immediate actions at all scales – and the political, social, and financial will be necessary to sustain those actions”.⁵ Therefore it is clear that the FCO must focus on the environment and sustainable development if it is to work towards eliminating poverty.

7. Environmental degradation and natural resource pressures may also link *via* poverty to increased social discontent, and might therefore create the conditions in which violent conflict can take hold:

Persistent levels of poverty, particularly when associated with profound deprivation, perceived injustices and forms of social exclusion, are likely to create the grounds for increased social discontent. This may create conditions for the onset of violent forms of conflict. However, materialisation requires some form of organised collective action. Although the chronically poor are not typically found to be involved in organised socio-political actions, chronic poverty may create triggers for mobilisation of masses as recruitment may be easier amongst those with lesser voices.

Chronic poverty may lead individuals to become soldiers/fighters as a form of coping with poverty itself (e.g. Humphreys and Weinstein, 2004), as well as gain access to economic and social advantages (e.g. Verwimp, 2005). However, different forms of conflict may be triggered by different circumstances and different actors. This hypothesis requires much more rigorous testing.⁶

2 Environmental Audit Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2005-2006, *Trade, Development and Environment: The Role of DFID*, HC 1014

3 Environmental Audit Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2005-2006, *Outflanked: The World Trade Organisation, International Trade and Sustainable Development*, HC 1455

4 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Board, *Living beyond our means; Natural Assets and Human Well-being; Statement from the Board* (Washington, 2005), p19

5 UN Millennium Project, *Environment and human well-being: a practical strategy* (2005), p27 www.unmillenniumproject.org

6 Patricia Justino, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper 61, *On the Links between Violent Conflict and Chronic Poverty: How Much Do We Really Know?* (2006), p13

8. A number of studies also draw a direct link between environmental degradation and an increasing likelihood of violent conflict. Richard Tarasofsky, Chatham House, told the Subcommittee that “the links between environment and international security policy have become increasingly discernable over time”.⁷ He pointed to literature describing the links between scarce natural resources, such as water, and increasing insecurity and instability.

9. These issues were expanded upon in an E3G working paper, *Sustainability and foreign policy*, by Nick Mabey, former Head of Sustainable Development in the FCO’s now closed Environmental Policy Department. This stated that international environmental problems might lead to a number of situations:

In an optimistic scenario, problems like climate change encourage global cooperation, innovation and creativity, and inspire governments to act wisely to minimise impacts on the poorest and weakest in society. However, it is also possible that resource scarcity and environmental stress will drive countries and societies into the politics of insecurity, exacerbating existing divides of ethnicity, community, caste, income and region as groups struggle to maintain their ability to use resources to the exclusion of others. The challenge for policy makers is to avoid the second scenario by building popular support for a serious and progressive agenda for managing the costs and consequences of our acute environmental interdependence.⁸

10. Nick Mabey’s paper also drew attention to the role of “politicised revenue allocation from natural resources based around ethnic, religious or regional lines” in driving major conflict. Shifts in such revenue allocations as a result of climate change might lead to destabilisation of regions as traditional resource sharing agreements become inadequate to different groups needs. For example, currently one third of the global population live in areas experiencing moderate to high water stress. Future population growth and a rising demand for water mean that millions more people are expected to be living in water stressed regions. However, alongside these demographic trends, climate models also indicate that the effects of rising global temperatures will greatly vary the distribution and characteristics of precipitation, leading to even greater numbers of people experiencing water shortages. A study quoted in the Stern Review indicated that a rise of 2 degrees Celsius will result in 1-4 billion people experiencing increased water stress by 2080, dependent upon how fast the population increases.⁹ The regions where such shortages are likely to occur are concentrated in areas that might be more prone to conflict due to existing tensions, including Africa and the Middle East.

11. Conflict and environmental degradation or change are also likely to lead to increased human migration which can, in itself, lead to further conflict. Nick Mabey argued that migrations due to recent drought in South-West Asia have been linked to increased tensions in Kashmir and the recruitment of displaced people into terrorist organisations.¹⁰ In addition to shifts in regional climate, climate change might lead to the displacement and

7 Ev 68

8 Nick Mabey, E3G working paper, *Sustainability and foreign policy* (2007), p6, www.e3g.org

9 HM Treasury, *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, October 2006, p63

10 Nick Mabey, E3G working paper, *Sustainability and foreign policy* (2007), p15

migration of many millions of people as a result of sea-level rise. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2001 found that sea level could rise between 9 to 88 cm by 2100.¹¹ An increase of 100 cm would result in the loss of one fifth of Bangladesh's land area leading to the displacement of 15 million people. The movement of so many people might exacerbate existing tensions concerning migration in the area, which have already led India to construct a 2500 km fence along its entire border with Bangladesh.¹²

12. On a more positive note, the environment can also be used as a diplomatic tool to aid in conflict avoidance. The RSPB explained:

[W]e believe that biodiversity conservation can be a force for unity, promoting collaboration between otherwise hostile countries and offering a chance for the UK to promote a positive image in countries where overall our relations with governments are problematic. Environmental challenges ignore political boundaries, bridge religious and ideological divides, encourage local and non-governmental participation, and extend community building beyond polarising economic linkages. The RSPB is supporting successful conservation work by emerging NGOs in a number of countries where civil society has traditionally been discouraged or stifled.¹³

13. Chatham House agreed that the environment can form part of a solution to armed conflicts. It pointed to the creation of a "peace park" protected area between Ecuador and Peru, agreed as part of a package to end a border conflict, and secret negotiations between Syria and Israel about the possibility of a protected area in the disputed Golan Heights. Chatham House asserted that "environmental peacekeeping" is increasingly part of the toolkit in resolving insecurity".¹⁴

14. The environment plays a complex and important role in conflict and its resolution. Sustainable development, climate change mitigation and environmental protection should therefore be considered security issues of critical importance to the UK Government and FCO. The UK must be a proponent of a strong, coordinated, multilateral environmental system able to avoid situations in which environmental degradation might lead to instability or conflict. International action on environmental challenges might also prove to be an important tool for fostering closer international relations.

FCO Policy

15. There are three FCO policy documents of principal importance to this inquiry: the FCO *Sustainable Development Strategy* (SDS), published in March 2005; the White Paper

11 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers: A Report of Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (2001), p16

12 *The Times*, 28 December 2005

13 Ev 1

14 Ev 69

Active Diplomacy for a Changing World, published in March 2006; and the FCO Sustainable Development Action Plan, published in January 2007.

Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan

16. The SDS was published shortly after the Government's own overarching Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*. The SDS indicates how the FCO will work to achieve the UK's international sustainable development objectives, as outlined in *Securing the Future*.¹⁵ The general themes that the FCO sought to address in the document included the delivery of certain commitments made at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), such as promoting better environmental governance and the Partnership for Principle 10,¹⁶ and reducing poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The SDS focused on how these objectives could be achieved through a variety of avenues including our diplomatic posts overseas, with international organisations such as the UN and in partnership with NGOs.¹⁷

17. Witnesses to this inquiry were, in general, complimentary about the SDS and the Action Plan which implements it. Iain Orr, BioDiplomacy, argued that the forward to the Action Plan, written by the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, the Foreign Secretary, was "clear and forceful".¹⁸ We agree. **The Committee welcomes the Foreign Secretary's robust statement in the Sustainable Development Action Plan regarding the importance of sustainable development to international peace and prosperity. The significance the Foreign Secretary places on respecting environmental limits, on addressing climate change, and on the need to deal with the links between trade, poverty and the environment, satisfies the Committee that these issues are being taken seriously by the FCO. However, as the Foreign Secretary states, "the challenge we face is a big one". Words must therefore be backed up by an FCO institutionally equal to the challenge, in terms of skills and resources, to enable real progress to be made.**

Are environmental priorities too focused?

18. Although in general witnesses were impressed by the SDS and Action Plan, they had reservations that the documents fail to address all the international environmental issues that they ought to. RSPB stated that it found the SDS to be a "laudable document", commending the priority given to issues including climate change and illegal logging.¹⁹ However, it raised concerns to us about what it perceives to be a lack of profile given to biodiversity in the document. The RSPB elaborated on this in its written evidence:

15 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy*, March 2005, p3

16 Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration 1992 established that public access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice, are key principles of environmental governance. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development these principles were reaffirmed, with the Partnership for Principle 10 being established to better enable progress towards these goals. See: www.pp10.org

17 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy*, March 2005

18 Iain Orr (2007), www.bioDiplomacy.net

19 Qu 1 [Mr Buckley]

...the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy gives low priority to biodiversity conservation, even though this is acknowledged everywhere as one of the critical issues facing the Earth. Although specific aspects such as illegal logging are flagged up, there is no mention of the huge loss of species that is currently occurring, and there is an assumption perhaps that conservation work will be done by others.²⁰

19. The Minister in oral evidence to the Sub-committee said that the FCO is not “under any circumstances... underplaying or downplaying [biodiversity]... it is a critical part of the work we are doing”.²¹ He pointed out that the FCO is represented on the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Biodiversity, which coordinates action on biodiversity across government. Scott Wightman, Director of Global and Economic Issues at the FCO, told the Sub-Committee that his department is focusing on those issues where it feels it adds the “greatest value and achieve[s] the greatest degree of impact”.²² As a result, the FCO has decided to concentrate on climate change and environmental governance, which should, it is argued, have “a major impact on protecting biodiversity in the medium to long term”.²³ The FCO accepted that in the past it has supported a range of smaller biodiversity-related projects, but that it has now come to the conclusion on the basis “of expert advice on the effectiveness of our programmes from Stephen Bass, the former Chief Environmental Adviser at DFID, that the most effective way in which [it] can intervene is more at the policy, regulatory and legislative level”. It feels that “by focusing... efforts on enhancing the quality of environmental governance both at the international level and also at the national level, [it] can have a much broader impact on biodiversity across the board rather than on specific activities”.²⁴ The Minister stressed that this did not preclude specific work on biodiversity. He pointed to the use of FCO negotiating skills and contacts in ensuring the successful conclusion of the Heart of Borneo Initiative “to protect one of the rarest and largest ecosystems in the world”, and added “that is where our skill and knowledge is, that is where our capacity is”.²⁵

20. WWF told the Sub-committee that, the FCO had indeed provided valuable support in delivering the Heart of Borneo Initiative, although this appears to have been primarily due to the initiative of in-country staff rather than as a result of an overarching strategy:

The FCO recently gave WWF a £25,000 grant for the preparation of the Heart of Borneo Government plan. We believe that this grant was instigated by the UK ambassador to Brunei via the regional office in Jakarta.

In addition, the FCO in Jakarta and Brunei worked behind the scenes to secure the EU statement of support following the Declaration (earlier this year) on the Heart of Borneo.

20 Ev 2

21 Qu 72

22 Qu 73 [Mr Wightman]

23 Qu 73 [Mr Wightman]

24 *ibid*

25 Qu 73 [Mr McCartney]

The UK Embassy in Brunei has been the prime source of support from the FCO, and the ambassador has had frequent communication with the Brunei Government and hosted dinners on behalf of the Heart of Borneo. He has also co-ordinated with his counterparts in Malaysia and Indonesia.²⁶

21. We asked the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the Government's statutory advisor on UK and international nature conservation, whether it accepted that the FCO had placed the correct emphasis on the need to address biodiversity decline, and related issues. Marcus Yeo, Director of Resources and External Affairs JNCC, told us that his impression is that, in reading FCO documents, "global environment issues could have a rather higher profile within the FCO. For example, only two of the ten international priorities contained in the White Paper explicitly mention the environment. Those are the priorities to do with sustainable development and climate change". He pointed out that "despite the global importance of the Overseas Territories for biodiversity for example, the priority associated with the territories only refers to ensuring security and good governance; it does not mention the environment at all". JNCC told us that most of the international priorities are "solely concerned with social or economic issues", and that the environment does indeed "need to have a higher profile within the FCO and that environmental issues need to be better integrated with other concerns".²⁷

22. RSPB claimed that it is inappropriate for the FCO to neglect biodiversity on the basis that it is working on other issues that should protect biodiversity in the long run. It stressed that biodiversity protection has a critical role to play in itself. Sarah Sanders, RSPB, cited the situation of the Overseas Territories as an example of this:

Looking at it from the perspective of the Overseas Territories, most of which are small islands so they are considerably threatened by climate change, you cannot address climate change issues and you cannot adapt to climate change without looking at conservation and biodiversity and natural resources. If you are looking to reduce vulnerability and there are huge areas of mangrove and coral reefs, they all need to be protected and you cannot separate the two.²⁸

23. The need to deal with other environmental issues, including biodiversity, alongside climate change was highlighted in a recent article by Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. He stated that "unless biodiversity loss and climate change are tackled together and with equal priority, the impact of both on the lives of future generations could be very much worse".²⁹ He argued that the protection of ecosystems from threats other than climate change, such as pollution, raises their likely resilience to any climate change that might occur thereby lowering the impact of climate change on those people who might rely on that ecosystem. He highlighted coral reefs as an example:

26 Ev 76

27 Qu 39 [Mr Yeo]

28 Qu 9 [Ms Sanders]

29 "It's not just about climate", *BBC News Online*, 2 March 2007, news.bbc.co.uk

Increased sea temperatures [as a result of climate change] have been linked to episodes of "bleaching", in which the delicate balance between coral organisms and the algae on which they depend is upset, and the vibrant underwater communities turn quickly into virtual deserts. The degradation of tropical reefs, however, has been the result of a combination of human pressures acting together: coastal pollution has raised nutrient levels and promoted over-growth of algae, deforestation has dumped eroded sediments onto reefs and smothered them, and overfishing has removed algae-grazing species from the food chain and left the reefs vulnerable to change. Reducing these other sources of stress to the reefs may well make them less likely to succumb to the added pressure of climate change, and so protect human communities dependent on coral ecosystems for tourism income, seafood and protection of coastlines.³⁰

24. In addition to helping lessen the impact of climate change, the preservation of natural ecosystems and biodiversity can also act to prevent the further release of greenhouse gases. The Stern Review pointed in particular to the importance of preserving forests due to some estimates that suggest deforestation causes more than 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than the whole of the global transport network.³¹ Other natural ecosystems are also significant carbon stores. For example, although they cover only 3% of the Earth's surface, peat bogs hold twice as much carbon dioxide as all forests (which cover ~30%).^{32, 33} The conservation of larger numbers of species might also help us to adapt better to the negative impacts of climate change: for example, drought resistant crops could reduce the impact of changes in rainfall.³⁴

25. Chatham House told us in written evidence that the FCO should engage in certain international environmental issues where more diplomatic effort is required to ensure progress:

There would be little benefit in assigning the FCO with overall responsibility for engaging in all environmental issues. But ones where there is a need for a sophisticated diplomatic strategy to leverage innovative bargains among a wide set of actors, combined with a higher-than-usual political weight, could merit greater attention by the FCO. These could be some of the environment and security problems alluded to above or even more global environmental challenges that current approaches are failing to effectively confront, such as biodiversity loss.³⁵

26. We agree with the Government that it is right for the FCO to have a focus on both climate change and environmental governance issues. The work that the FCO is

30 "It's not just about climate", *BBC News Online*, 2 March 2007, news.bbc.co.uk

31 HM Treasury, *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, October 2006, p536

32 "Address by Dr Ahmed Djoghlaif", *Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity*, 19 March 2007, www.biodiv.org

33 "Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005", *Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations*, 2006, www.fao.org

34 "Biodiversity and climate change", *Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity*, 20 March 2007, www.biodiv.org

35 Ev 69 & 70

conducting to ensure the better management of fisheries and forests is particularly important. Nevertheless, although this particular focus might enable the FCO to make efficiency savings, it risks the neglect of other, also critical, environmental issues. Given that the UK's ability to contribute successfully in meeting a number of international environmental challenges will largely be down to the skill and assiduousness of the FCO, the lack of a wider commitment to the environment risks the UK being ineffective in its response. It is essential that the FCO widen its focus to encompass those international environmental challenges where strong diplomacy will be part of the solution, such as biodiversity loss.

International environmental negotiations

27. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) told the Sub-committee that the FCO has lowered the amount of resources that it now puts into biodiversity-related work. Vassili Papastavrou, of IFAW, explained that this might have a negative impact on international biodiversity conservation. He pointed to the pivotal role that the FCO has played in the past in negotiations on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).³⁶ He claimed that as a result of this shift in resources it is now “questionable whether the FCO would have the capacity or expertise to play a similar role today”.³⁷

28. The JNCC was also concerned that FCO involvement in international environmental negotiations had declined. It stated that “FCO staff now less frequently form part of UK delegations to multilateral environmental agreements and the number of contacts within the FCO with whom we deal on environmental issues is reduced”.³⁸ The JNCC stressed the important role that the FCO plays, not only in lobbying to create support for UK positions during international negotiations, but also in lobbying through its overseas posts prior to negotiations. It also drew the Sub-committee's attention to the FCO's role in gathering intelligence on the views of other countries, so that when JNCC attends negotiations it is “able to know which countries [it] may wish to target, to persuade, or where other countries would be more difficult to persuade”.³⁹ The Sub-committee asked the JNCC why, given the important nature of this involvement, the FCO had decided to play a smaller role in international environmental negotiations. It simply responded that the FCO was aligning its structures and priorities “with the 2006 White Paper and [its] Sustainable Development Strategy”.⁴⁰

29. Evidence from JNCC and IFAW suggests that the FCO has a declining role in international negotiations on biodiversity, which could have a damaging impact on our influence in such fora. We recommend that the FCO initiate an urgent review, with

36 Qu 1 [Mr Papastavrou]

37 Ev 4

38 Ev 25

39 Qu 45

40 Qu 68

DEFRA and JNCC, to assess whether delegations are being provided with the level of diplomatic support that they require to achieve the UK's aims.

Sustainable Development Commission review

30. In October 2006, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) undertook a review of the FCO SDS. This found that the FCO had “set a good standard” with its first SDS and that it had demonstrated a:

...good understanding of the impact of a sustainable development approach on foreign policy whether in terms of the potential for resource management to lead to conflict or as a key tool of public diplomacy. The department also acknowledges the need to lead by example in its own operation around the world.⁴¹

31. In particular the SDC supported the SDS' focus on climate security. Nevertheless, the SDC recommended that for the FCO to maintain and build on the strategy, further work was required. This included: stronger targets with specified outcomes; further information on how the FCO will assess progress on mainstreaming sustainable development into policy making; work to ensure that the SDS is owned by staff; demonstration of top-level commitment to sustainable development; and an indication of how the FCO is “going about sustainable development ‘proofing’ of its work”.⁴² The FCO stated that it responded to these recommendations in the latest Action Plan, published in January 2007, by “focusing on where we can add most value. The Plan includes activities to raise awareness of sustainable development across the FCO, to ensure that it is embedded in all our work”.⁴³ We have not attempted to assess fully whether the Action Plan has incorporated in full the SDC's recommendations. However, we have identified two areas in which we feel that it has not fully addressed the SDC's recommendations.

Raising staff capacity

32. The SDC criticised the FCO SDS for targets that “rarely indicate the required outcome”, with most referring to “‘supporting’, ‘encouraging’ and ‘engaging’”.⁴⁴ The SDC argued that this lack of clarity “limits the ability of both the FCO and its external stakeholders to track or assess progress effectively”.⁴⁵ The SDC described how the UK SDS commits the Government to “ensuring that staff have an understanding of how to apply sustainable development principles as a key part of policy skills for the future and that all policies are properly appraised against the new principles of sustainable development”. The SDC found that the FCO SDS acknowledges that all FCO staff need to understand the importance of sustainable development and how it links to their wider work. Nevertheless,

41 Sustainable Development Commission, *Strategic Assessment: Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*, October 2006, p5

42 Sustainable Development Commission, *Strategic Assessment: Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*, October 2006, p5

43 Ev 36

44 Sustainable Development Commission, *Strategic Assessment: Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*, October 2006, p18

45 *ibid*

the SDC said that “it is not clear how far current training addresses its use and application in terms of adapting approaches to policy making”. It therefore called for future sustainable development action plans to include targets relating to “policy making skills and sustainable development and some measure of the FCO’s ‘mainstreaming’ success”.⁴⁶

33. It can be argued that the FCO has failed to address this issue. For example, although there is a welcome action to run three one-day training modules for staff on sustainable development, energy and climate security, no accompanying targets have been set, such as the number of staff who might be expected to attend.⁴⁷ There is also no indication given of how the success of this programme will be assessed. In addition to this, the action to redevelop the FCO’s intranet site on sustainable development “so that it becomes the definitive one-stop shop for our network of SD attachés in posts overseas for news, policy briefings, resource information and contacts on SD”, is not accompanied by a specified time scale over which this should be expected to happen.⁴⁸

34. The Minister was asked how his department measures progress in raising staff capacity. He responded that they have a staff assessment process whereby “everybody gets an individual assessment of their role and their work”. He argued that this assessment process is a “sophisticated approach where we can tell how our investment is working”.⁴⁹ **Given the importance of improved staff knowledge of sustainable development in meeting sustainable development objectives, it is essential to ensure that training results in real knowledge improvements. If, as the Minister told the Sub-committee, the success of such training is now measured through a sophisticated internal assessment process, it is surprising that the FCO has not sought to trumpet this achievement though the Sustainable Development Action Plan. The next Action Plan should explain fully this process as well as provide targets to enable progress in this area to be charted.** We return to the issue of staff capacity in sustainable development-related issues later in this report.

Environment – conflict issues

35. As outlined in earlier chapters, the environment can play a critical role in creating the conditions in which conflict can flourish. It is therefore likely that efforts to bring stability to a region will also have to tackle the environmental drivers of conflict. A UNEP report considered the links between environmental degradation and conflict in Afghanistan:

...the long-term consequences of nearly 25 years of war and overexploitation of Afghanistan’s once rich natural resources created grave environmental threats. These included surface and groundwater scarcity and contamination, massive and ongoing deforestation, desertification of important wetlands, soil erosion, air pollution, and

46 Sustainable Development Commission, *Strategic Assessment: Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*, October 2006, p39

47 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Action Plan*, January 2007, p35

48 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Action Plan*, January 2007, p36

49 Qu 84

depleted wildlife populations. In addition, the prolonged lack of water and the rapid disappearance of half of the country's forest and woodland cover turned thousands of people into environmental refugees. This has led to increased population pressure on over-burdened urban areas and could generate new small-scale conflicts over access to scarce resources. National capacity to address these problems is severely limited as a result of the collapse of local and national forms of governance and resource management.⁵⁰

36. Although UNEP has been working to improve environmental capacity in Afghanistan, and the UK is a major funder of UNEP, specific development work undertaken by the UK appears to have neglected the need to address these environmental issues. For example, DFID's efforts on environmental sustainability in Afghanistan have focused on the development of agriculture, and in particular, "irrigation rehabilitation, farm and non-farm training, agriculture inputs, illiteracy, roads and access to markets".⁵¹ Although important, these programmes by themselves might not necessarily lead to more sustainable agricultural practices or prevent further environmental degradation.

37. Although the foreword to the Sustainable Development Action Plan makes it clear that the environment plays an important role in the FCO's objective of helping to prevent and resolve conflict, it provides little in the way of direct explanation of how the FCO will use environmental management to do this. Of course, other actions in the plan might be expected to address indirectly the links between the environment and conflict including action on international corruption, bribery and illegal logging. Nevertheless, given the explicit acknowledgement that the environment can play a pivotal role, we believe that the Action Plan should seek to address this issue more unequivocally, especially as the SDC review highlighted this as an issue.⁵² Failure to deal adequately with environmental issues in conflict is also apparent in other government documents. For example, the Government established Global Conflict Prevention Pools (GCPP) in 2001 to enable a coordinated approach to conflict prevention and management by the FCO, DFID and MoD. They seek to bring UK diplomacy, defence and development together into a common strategy.⁵³ Although the need for sustainable development and natural resource protection is touched upon in documents relating to the GCPPs, the lack of prominence given to them implies that these issues are not being seen as an integral part of conflict prevention and resolution.

38. The Sustainable Development Action Plan appears to have failed to address the SDC recommendation to "continue to explore the opportunities for joint working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to natural resource protection and conflict and reflect these in future [Action Plans]".⁵⁴ Opportunities for closer working between the two departments on the environment-conflict interface should include, jointly with

50 United Nations Environment Programme, *Afghanistan's Environmental Recovery: A post-conflict plan for people and their natural resources* (Kenya, 2006), p2

51 "Country profiles: Afghanistan", *DFID website*, May 2007, www.dfid.gov.uk

52 Sustainable Development Commission, *Strategic Assessment: Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*, October 2006, p8

53 Conflict Prevention Pools, *Foreign Office website*, 14 March 2007, www.fco.gov.uk

54 Sustainable Development Commission, *Strategic Assessment: Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*, October 2006, p8

DFID, an assessment of the role environmental protection and management, and sustainable development, can play in limiting the environmental conditions that can exacerbate conflict and how this could feed into Global Conflict Prevention Pool work. It should also consider the role that environmental protection and restoration can play in reconstruction efforts. The next Action Plan must detail how the FCO will take forward this work.

Active Diplomacy for a Changing World

39. The 2006 White Paper *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World* established a new set of international strategic priorities for the UK Government. This represented an update on earlier priorities outlined in a 2003 White Paper, with more of an overt focus on environmental protection through the inclusion of a priority of “promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment”.⁵⁵ Further to this the Foreign Secretary in June 2006 added an additional priority of “achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy” in order to strengthen its “commitment to promoting sustainable development and tackling climate change”.⁵⁶ The FCO told us that this “highlighted the importance of the environment and natural resources for development and recognised environmental degradation and an unstable climate as major threats to the UK’s ability to secure its political, security and economic objectives”.⁵⁷

40. Nevertheless, the JNCC argued to us that global environmental issues could have a higher profile in the White Paper:

...only two of the ten international priorities contained in the White Paper explicitly mention the environment. Those are the priorities to do with sustainable development and climate change. So, despite the global importance of the Overseas Territories for biodiversity for example, the priority associated with the territories only refers to ensuring security and good governance; it does not mention the environment at all...

It is certainly true that most of those international priorities are solely concerned with social or economic issues. We believe that it is really important that government and FCO do not treat environmental issues in isolation; they are intimately entwined with social and economic issues. That, after all, is at the heart of the concept of sustainable development. We would therefore recommend that the environment does need to have a higher profile within the FCO and that environmental issues need to be better integrated with other concerns.⁵⁸

55 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World; The UK’s International Priorities*, CM 6762, March 2006

56 Ev 35

57 ibid

58 Ev 28

41. We are concerned that there is some justice in the JNCC view that international environmental issues were not adequately considered—the 2006 White Paper analysis of trends failed adequately to describe the likely importance of natural resource degradation and pressures. This is despite the Paper being published in March 2006, a full year after the publication of the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment which found that environmental degradation is leading to, *inter alia*:

- rapidly increasing costs
- an increase in the likelihood of dramatic and abrupt ecosystem changes with devastating and permanent impacts
- the likely failure of achieving Millennium Development Goals to eradicate poverty, and might even undermine the progress that has already been made.⁵⁹

42. The 2006 White Paper acknowledged that “we need to tackle shared global challenges, in particular... the loss of natural resources and biodiversity”,⁶⁰ although it did not elaborate on how action will be taken forward directly on this front, focusing instead on climate change and good governance. Biodiversity only receives one other mention in the document—in relation to the Overseas Territories. It should be stressed that these **strategic priorities were identified by the Government, as a whole, as the most pressing international issues that it must address. We thus welcome greatly the Foreign Secretary’s inclusion of climate security as a new UK international priority, and the acknowledgement therefore of the critical importance of this issue. We commend also the Foreign Secretary for demonstrating the UK’s commitment to this issue through her robust argument for the consideration of climate change at the UN Security Council. Despite this we believe that wider environmental issues should be better reflected in the UK’s international priorities, particularly given the growing evidence of the threats associated with continued environmental degradation. A new international priority placing a greater emphasis on the need to ensure environmental protection must be added, to stress the key strategic importance of this issue for the whole of Government. This should complement a new international environmental strategy to focus Government-wide action.**

FCO capacity on the environment

Restructuring

43. Witnesses to this inquiry felt that restructuring to align the FCO with its 2006 White Paper and SDS, had resulted in a reduction in the department’s capacity to deal with environmental issues. The RSPB told us that the restructuring entailed the merger of the Environmental Policy Department into what is now the Sustainable Development and Business Group. The RSPB argued that this “gives the environment in general and

59 Environmental Audit Committee, First Report of Session 2006-07, *The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, HC 77

60 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World; The UK’s International Priorities*, CM 6762, March 2006, p35

biodiversity in particular a much lower profile in the FCO's work".⁶¹ The JNCC agreed that "there is currently less focus on environmental issues in the FCO than there has been previously, especially prior to the White Paper and the internal re-structuring that accompanied this".⁶² As a result of this the JNCC argued that the number of FCO contacts that it deals with has "dropped off considerably".⁶³

44. Nick Mabey, former Head of Sustainable Development in the FCO's Environment Policy department and now Chief Executive of E3G, told the Sub-committee that the restructuring had indeed had a mixed impact on the FCO's ability to address international environmental objectives:

The restructuring strengthened the FCO's role on climate change to an extent, though the hoped for synthesis of climate and energy security has yet to really emerge in the group. The focus on other environmental issues has been severely damaged by the restructuring.⁶⁴

45. An FCO official rejected these claims in part. Mr Wightman argued to us that the initial restructuring had led to an increase in the resources given over to climate change and other environmental issues. However, he acknowledged that a subsequent restructuring had reduced the amount of work dedicated to the environmental strand of sustainable development, although it also increased the resources available for climate change and energy work by over 25 per cent.⁶⁵

46. We feel that the better integration in the FCO of sustainable development with business, and climate change with energy policy, is positive and could lead to the development of policies that better account for sustainable development issues. However, we are concerned that, as a result of restructuring, the FCO has lost its environmental nexus, and has decided to lower the resources given over to a number of international environmental issues. We recommend that an environmental policy group is re-established to drive forward an environmental agenda in the FCO, as well as to provide the central environmental expertise that existed prior to the restructuring. We are particularly concerned that failure to do this will impact on the UK's ability to influence environmental negotiations in international fora.

Expertise

47. Witnesses to this inquiry told us that the restructuring exercise had resulted not only in a shift away from many global environmental issues, but also had caused a decline in the FCO's environmental expertise. Nick Mabey argued that the restructuring and concurrent loss of expertise will have a negative impact on the ability of the FCO to deal with these issues as they "require significant literacy and longevity of expertise to have an effective

61 Ev 2

62 Ev 24

63 Qu 40

64 Ev 76

65 Qu 81

diplomatic impact”.⁶⁶ He also argued that the loss of a section with responsibility for the environment has meant that there is now “the lack of a clear focal point or career anchor in the FCO”, diminishing “its ability to integrate environmental issues successfully into its mainstream work (e.g. on environmental factors and conflict, corruption and governance/democracy), or provide an adequate diplomatic support function for DEFRA”.⁶⁷ IFAW also questioned whether the structure of the FCO is “adequate to respond to the needs of international environmental diplomacy”.⁶⁸ Iain Orr, of BioDiplomacy, highlighted the importance of cross-government working, and called for a “good deal more in the way of both inward and outward secondments in the Foreign Office”.⁶⁹ JNCC agreed in part, saying that:

...to some extent the lack of expertise within FCO can be offset by having expertise, for example, within Defra or within JNCC. We can offer that specialist advice. I also believe that there are considerable advantages in mainstreaming the environment within other policy areas. However, I have to say that, at the end of all that, I still believe that you need some central core within FCO that has responsibility for overseeing that integration and mainstreaming, and making sure it is effective.⁷⁰

48. These criticisms are similar to those that have been levelled at the civil service generally. For example, a paper published by Demos pointed out that the civil service currently functions through the appointment of gifted generalists:

Organisational life in the public and private sectors has been characterised for much of its modern existence by the increasing professionalisation of functions. There was a time when, for example, human resources, finance and marketing were ‘picked up’ by generalist managers and their staffs. No longer. These and others have become professionalised with institutes, qualification and accreditation. Just as importantly, some organisations and industries have become ‘schools’ for functions vital to their businesses; for example, the most expert marketing people come out of retail and consumer goods companies. Specialisation also occurs within professions—forensic accountants, hip operation surgeons and media lawyers—as the know-how of, and demands on, the speciality increase. In the public services, specialists abound—in housing, adoption, primary teaching, integration of services, and so on.

By contrast, the UK civil service has stuck with its ‘gifted generalist’ approach, relying on process to make specialist functions amenable to generalist operation. While some qualified professionals have been admitted, for example, in accounting, the functions as a whole would not be classed as professionalised. This generalist approach goes beyond the so-called ‘back office’ functions and is institutionalised through the career development practice of changing job responsibilities about every three years. These moves may be seen as small steps by civil servants but they are

66 Ev 76

67 Ev 77

68 Ev 5

69 Qu 34

70 Ev 29

giant steps for society: education to housing; domestic violence to primary teaching; industry productivity to police budgets.⁷¹

49. The paper went on to argue that this structure leads to “knowledge shedding” and a limited institutional memory. In order to ensure the required level of specialist expertise in the civil service it recommended that the current structure should be changed so that far more civil servants are recruited from outside the organisation, a ratio of 70:30 of “freshers” to “lifers” was suggested.⁷² An argument was also given that rejected the existing response to the need for more specialist expertise by the creation of “career anchors” within the home-grown lifer model rather than sourcing specialists today from proven producers. It would be ten years before the civil service produced specialists of the depth available today from outside”.⁷³

50. The Sub-committee asked the Minister and officials how they were addressing the need for specialist environmental expertise. It was told that this was being deal with by a “regular flow of secondees from Defra into both the climate change side and the sustainable development side both to ensure that [... the FCO has] excellent working relationships with Defra, ... but also [has] a corps of technical expertise which, with the best will in the world, [the FCO is] not always capable of developing quickly [itself]”.⁷⁴ The Minister added that the FCO is increasing the sustainable development skills of its complete workforce, so that sustainable development can be embedded across the whole of the FCO’s work.⁷⁵

51. We asked Nick Mabey, whether addressing the issue of specialist expertise in this way was adequate to the task:

No. The issues the FCO deals with are different to those in DEFRA and changing rapidly. Many of the areas where FCO could add most value are still developing and are intellectually and institutionally immature, for example: Climate change diplomacy and the links to energy security; environmental technology cooperation; climate security and environmental stress; resource management, conflict and corporate behaviour; international environmental governance; environmental democracy and rights. There is no off the shelf training available to teach generalists how to approach these issues. DEFRA does not effectively cover these areas either.

Effective diplomacy requires people to have cutting edge skills and be in touch with networks of key thinkers and actors. This requires both serious in-depth training and a career path where experience and networks can be built. This is the approach taken for FCO staff on major countries and institutions—China, India, EU—where on top of 6-12 months of dedicated language training staff can expect several tours of duty on a related region/country/institution—thus giving them incentives to maintain and build their knowledge and understanding over time. It is strange that a

71 Ed Straw, *The Dead Generalist; Reforming the civil service and public services*, Demos, 13 September 2004

72 *ibid*, p49

73 *ibid*, p34

74 Qu 81 [Mr Wightman]

75 Qu 82 [Mr McCartney]

similar investment is not made on environmental issues, which by their very nature are international and require successful diplomacy to deliver UK interests. This type of internal capacity should be supplemented by external secondees from academia, NGOs and business—as has been successfully pioneered in the human rights and science and technology areas in FCO, and was a key part of [the Environmental Policy Department] from 1999-2003.⁷⁶

52. We welcome the FCO’s training programme to ensure better that all staff become conversant in sustainable development and environmental issues. Nevertheless, we have heard during the course of this inquiry that the specialist skills that the FCO requires in the field of environmental diplomacy are lacking. We are of the opinion that these skills can only in part be addressed by FCO staff and by other Government departments through secondments. Given the complex and specialised nature of this work, and the FCO’s own admission that its internal corps of civil servants working in this area are not able to develop their expertise quickly enough, we call for a large increase in the use of externally-appointed environmental specialists. In addition, to ensure that the unique abilities that FCO officials develop can be aligned with environmental expertise, it is essential that career diplomats with an environmental focus are developed; an environmental ‘career anchor’ must therefore be re-established. Our earlier recommendation that an environmental policy group be established could provide the location for this ‘anchor’. The appointment of John Ashton as Special Representative on Climate Change, and the FCO’s assertions as to the importance of this appointment for driving the climate change agenda forward, could be taken as an implicit recognition that the current structure is inadequate to the task of international diplomacy on environmental issues.

International environmental strategy

53. As the Government’s overarching Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, identified, there is the need to develop a “clear vision and coherent approach for the UK to the protection and enhancement of natural resources”. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has identified that the existing framework for environmental protection is overly complex and fragmented, and was “developed through individual policies rather than by taking a strategic overview of the whole of the natural environment”. DEFRA recognised that as a result of this policy situation:

We are unable to deal effectively with cross-cutting issues such as environmental limits, the effects of cumulative pressures, and how to value ecosystem services and environmental assets.

We do not have a strategic vision for the natural environment, which makes it difficult for us to communicate our policy agenda, to prioritise effectively and to influence other Government Departments.⁷⁷

54. A review commissioned by DEFRA concluded that “it is clear that a paradigm shift is required to put ecosystem services at the centre of development management. The current incremental approach provides a second best approach”.⁷⁸ DEFRA has since been working to develop a new strategy for publication by the end of 2007. It published a draft vision for the new policy framework in December 2006, drawing heavily on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment concept of ecosystem services and conceptual frameworks, which we welcome greatly. The vision has a primary focus on the domestic terrestrial environment, although it also seeks to set a strategic direction to “provide a stronger basis for the UK’s engagement in the European Union and in other international fora, ensuring that we have a clear and consistent voice in negotiations”.⁷⁹ The need for a more holistic approach to international environmental issues is apparent even in the draft vision document itself. For example, the document fails to discuss the World Trade Organisation’s Committee on Trade and Environment, the importance of which was highlighted in an earlier report by this Committee.⁸⁰

55. The need for a new international strategic vision for the natural environment is discussed in a report by Nick Mabey of E3G. This states that the Government has “improved its coordination and effectiveness on the environment” and that it has “positioned itself as a leader on the environment and innovative forms of foreign policy” since 1997, but that this had not been backed up by sufficient financing or appropriate environmental mainstreaming by DFID. He argued for the UK to adopt an international strategy that includes the need to press the EU into becoming “the environmental leader within the international community”, to focus much more on the need to tackle the “environmental roots of poverty and conflict”, and for it to press for more effective international environmental governance.⁸¹ He called for the Government to become:

... better at making the case for preventive investment of political, financial and organisational capital to reduce the risk of irreversible and catastrophic environmental losses. The UK has led the world on building the moral and economic case for poverty reduction. The Stern Review has provided part of the case on climate change, but similar rigour needs to be applied to a range of environmental problems.⁸²

56. The development of an international environmental strategy would provide “greater democratic accountability and oversight over the UK’s international policy on

77 “Natural environment policy; Rationale and vision”, *DEFRA website*, 21 March 2006, www.defra.gov.uk

78 ADAS UK Ltd, *NR0105 – Natural Resource Policy Framework Analysis*, April 2006, p51, www.defra.gov.uk

79 “Natural environment policy; Rationale and vision”, *DEFRA website*, 21 March 2006, www.defra.gov.uk

80 Environmental Audit Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2005-2006, *Outflanked: The World Trade Organisation, International Trade and Sustainable Development*, HC 1455

81 Nick Mabey, E3G working paper, *Sustainability and foreign policy* (2007), p6, www.e3g.org

82 *ibid*

environmental issues”. Reforms, he argued, “must encompass... foreign policy, development, trade and defence and integrate elements of environment, energy, industry and law enforcement”.⁸³ He felt that the absence of such a strategy is “skewing the UK towards a focus on climate change mitigation policy, while ignoring that successful and peaceful adaptation to the inevitable changes in the climate will require far more effective and resilient governance of natural resources and ecosystems in the short to medium term – especially given the proximate stresses of population growth and economic development”.⁸⁴ A new international strategy must improve coordination between departments. Witnesses stressed to the Sub-committee that currently departments are failing to work together on these issues. IFAW gave whaling as an example of this:

...DEFRA do a good job when they [attend] meetings of the International Whaling Commission. They have appropriate expertise, they prepare for the meeting and they achieve what can be achieved at the meeting. Where the disconnect lies is... outside the meeting[.] [There does] not appear to be very much in the way of lobbying efforts beforehand and information-gathering and all the work that you would expect FCO to do... [T]here is not... joined-up thinking between the FCO and DEFRA.⁸⁵

57. We are concerned to see that this alleged disconnect between the FCO and DEFRA on biodiversity issues is reflected in the FCO’s Action Plan. In the section of the plan that describes how the FCO will work with other government departments through cross-government structures, it makes no mention of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Biodiversity.⁸⁶ The benefits of better coordination between departments was highlighted by the FCO itself. It told us that there was “considerable evidence” that the development of the International Energy Strategy, which was the first Whitehall document to bring together the Government’s international objectives on energy security and climate change in an integrated fashion, signed by FCO, DTI and DEFRA, had led to more integrated policy making.⁸⁷ The JNCC asserted that the FCO will be essential in developing such a strategy due to its unique talents and knowledge. It argued that “it can act, for example, as the face of the UK Government abroad; it can help to provide an understanding of the social, political and cultural context of environmental policies in other countries; and it can also—and I think that this is particularly important—provide leadership across government for international issues.”⁸⁸

58. Failures in the Government-wide Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, might explain the lack of consideration given to a number of international environmental issues in FCO sustainable development documents, which are based upon it. However, although it has its shortcomings, we were surprised to notice that the

83 *ibid*

84 Ev 77

85 Qu 12 [Mr Papastavrou]

86 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Action Plan*, January 2007, p19

87 Ev 46

88 Ev 28

2006 White Paper, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World*, also a Government-wide strategy, does not refer to or explain its links with *Securing the Future*. This is a considerable oversight, and demonstrates the continuing lack of coordination on sustainable development issues across Government.

59. *Securing the Future* highlighted the fragmented state of natural resource protection policy, and the negative impact that this has on the UK's ability to meet environmental challenges. DEFRA has stated that it will seek to address this through the development of a coherent approach to the natural environment, which will also take into account the UK's international impact. However, we are concerned that the international dimension will not receive the focus it requires in this domestic strategy, and might fail to incorporate issues including security, foreign policy, trade and development. Therefore, a new international environmental strategy must be developed, owned and delivered by a number of departments, including FCO, DEFRA, DFID and DTI.

Setting an example

Working with NGOs

60. Witnesses to this inquiry highlighted the importance of international collaboration on environmental projects, and the FCO's role in facilitating this. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) told us that in many of the countries in which it works around the world, FCO representatives have "played a hugely important role" in helping to establish important relationships with in-country institutions.⁸⁹ RBGE gave the example of China, where successive UK Ambassadors have taken an active interest in a partnership between RBGE and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which has led to the establishment of projects connected to plant conservation in line with the Chinese national biodiversity strategy. RBGE told us that "such campaigns serve as an excellent way of promoting scientific collaboration and public engagement with scientific issues".⁹⁰ IFAW also pointed to FCO in-country staff being "instrumental" in obtaining research permits for their international whale research vessel, "sometimes in difficult countries, and providing excellent support for the boat through its embassies".⁹¹ This vessel is mainly engaged in using non-lethal techniques to study whales as part of the NGO's global campaign to resist attempts to resume commercial whaling, which is also an aim of the Government. **We commend the support given by FCO staff to conservation and environmental projects and NGOs internationally, both financially and diplomatically, where such cooperation is in line with our international environmental objectives. Such support also sends a strong message to host countries that these issues are a priority for the UK Government.**

61. The 2006 White Paper recognised the need for the FCO to deepen its working relationships with NGOs to "build a future based on shared values and interests".⁹² The

89 Ev 71

90 *ibid*

91 Ev 5

92 Ev 50

White Paper said that “as the links between domestic and international issues grow, co-operation between Departments of Government and with the private sector, NGOs and the public must deepen”.⁹³ In written evidence to the Sub-committee, the FCO described how it is seeking to establish strategic partnerships and networks with NGOs in the UK and overseas in order to strengthen relationships, and to work towards common goals.⁹⁴ This will be facilitated through the development of “strategies for engagement with businesses, trade unions, NGOs, and faith groups, which recognise the achievement they can make to help achieve the Government’s international environmental objectives”.⁹⁵

62. The Sub-committee asked the NGO witnesses what they would wish to see from such a strategy. IFAW stated that without the environment being an explicit foreign policy objective the development of a strategy would not necessarily improve links between them. It argued that where a common objective exists, “interactions form naturally”.⁹⁶ The RSPB agreed but also argued that any strategy developed should emphasise the need to maintain long-term relationships with NGOs. Mr Buckley from RSPB told us that the RSPB feels very strongly about this due to the value that they have seen from themselves supporting NGOs for long periods of time, which can lead to such organisations becoming “very effective and relatively sustainable”. Failure to maintain relationships with NGOs, in terms of funding or partnership, often leads to “boom and bust affairs where something happens for two or three years and then vanishes”. Mr Buckley clearly thought that this was not the best use of resources.⁹⁷

63. Iain Orr, from BioDiplomacy, told us that the FCO had worked quite well with NGOs on various occasions, although it could do “considerably more” to work with non-state actors.⁹⁸ He thought that the FCO often works successfully with NGOs at large international meetings, but that these relationships were not maintained on a day-to-day basis.⁹⁹ In addition he told us that, from his own experience within the FCO, NGOs and other stakeholders were not consulted early enough in the policy formation process.¹⁰⁰ IFAW agreed that the current relationship that it has with the FCO is unsatisfactory. Mr Papastavrou of IFAW described the relationship as “very haphazard and variable”.¹⁰¹ He thought that this variability was largely due to the development of personal relationships with individuals in the FCO, which enabled the NGO to benefit from the FCO and *vice versa*, but that the development of these contacts was not being led by any overall policy.¹⁰²

93 *ibid*

94 *ibid*

95 Ev 50

96 Qu 17 [Mr Papastavrou]

97 Qu 17 [Mr Buckley]

98 Ev 15

99 Qu 29

100 *ibid*

101 Qu 16

102 *ibid*

64. The Sub-committee put these criticisms to the Minister, who said that he was not aware of a lack of interaction with NGOs. He argued that he spends “a great proportion” of his time engaging with NGOs, and said “[I could not] ... achieve what I need to achieve... unless I have a proactive working relationship” with them.¹⁰³ He said that before visiting a country:

I sit down with the NGOs and talk through what the priorities of the visit should be across all of the issues that the NGOs might have and we then agree priorities for that visit. Then, when I come back, I set out what we have achieved and what we have not achieved, and the next thing I would do is set a work programme out for future visits or contacts, so I am very keen to work with NGOs and I am sorry if people feel that they have not received that kind of contact. I will take it in the way it should be taken and we will go back and look at it and see what more we can do.¹⁰⁴

The Minister was asked what issues will be addressed by the NGO engagement strategy that is currently being developed, and he responded by saying:

For example, we will be engaging with them in terms of any new action plans [...]. I think that the NGOs, the business representatives, the trade unions, all the alliances that need to be there are going to be included, so it is not just consulting them about what we want to do, but we want to consult them about what they think we should be doing. We want to fit them with the hat of actually developing the policy itself so that it is more than just a consultation, I would say it is a consultation plus where they have the capacity actually to influence at the start of the policy development the actual outcome of what that policy should look like, and I am keen for that to happen. There is a lot of skill, knowledge and commitment out there and it would be folly not to utilise it. That does not mean we will be able to agree everything, that will never happen, the NGOs always have their case to put and they put it vociferously and that is to be welcomed, it helps people like me to focus, but I give you an absolute assurance that, on all of the work we are doing now and in future work, they will be involved and invited to the table.¹⁰⁵

65. We welcome the Minister’s strong statement on the need to work closely with NGOs in order better to make progress on mutual objectives, and to engage with NGOs at an earlier stage in the policy formation process. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence that we have received, a disconnect between the FCO and environmental NGOs still remains. We anticipate that the strategy for engagement with NGOs currently being developed will go some way to address this, but we are not convinced that without a re-evaluation of overall FCO priorities to have a more explicit environmental focus the necessary changes will occur to ensure that this happens at all levels. Through such a re-evaluation, and the changes that we recommend in this report regarding, *inter alia*, the provision of specialist environmental expertise from outside the FCO and the development of FCO civil servants with a career focus on the environment, we believe

103 Qu 75

104 Qu 74

105 Qu 75

that longer term, more beneficial, relationships will develop between the FCO and environmental NGOs.

Promoting sustainable development through FCO corporate activities

66. Iain Orr of BioDiplomacy argued to us that strong sustainable development messages can also be sent through the adoption of robust environmental estate and transport policies overseas, especially those that use the “best UK and local standards of energy and resource efficiency, recycling and design”.¹⁰⁶ He went on:

This is particularly important for new buildings and renovations; and is not just a task for estate and transport budget managers. Whatever technologies are used (local will sometimes be best), commercial and public diplomacy sections should use this in their work, reporting back to UK industry and investors on innovations abroad from which we can learn and perhaps develop for wider use. Travel should be carbon balanced, with input on the value of different offset schemes being provided by the FCO climate change team (in consultation with Defra). Posts should be given flexibility in choosing schemes that suit local circumstances.¹⁰⁷

67. The Sustainable Development Commission’s review of the FCO SDS found that overall it was “impressed with the initiatives that the FCO is undertaking in relation to developing a more systematic approach to environmental management across the FCO estate, as well as incentives, support and encouragement towards more sustainable practices”. The Action Plan expanded on the action that the FCO is taking to improve the environmental operation of its overseas estate. This included using feedback from an environmental management pilot project to model a system for the wider network, initially for 20 posts, and that major refurbishments and new builds on the overseas estate would be undertaken to a bespoke environmental assessment method developed by the Building Research Establishment from April 2007. In written evidence to us the FCO also said that it was “currently extending the coverage of [its] property management database to all [its] properties overseas, owned and rented alike. When complete the system will give [it] the information [it needs] to measure the full environmental impact of the overseas estate, and hence, the tools to mitigate this”.¹⁰⁸ **We applaud the FCO’s demonstrated commitment to improving environmental management across its overseas estate. The promotion of sustainable practices through their application in the overseas estate is also essential in building support for, and exhibiting, the UK’s commitment to best practice in sustainable development.**

68. The FCO, in written evidence, told the Sub-committee that it was “working with REEEP (the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership) to offset the emissions generated by the air travel of UK based staff and Ministers”. It also encouraged staff in Posts “to make a voluntary contribution from their travel budgets to an airline or other

106 Ev 15

107 ibid

108 Ev 51

organisation to offset the carbon emissions from their air travel.”¹⁰⁹ The FCO offsetting scheme was set up before the creation of the Government’s Carbon Offset Fund (GCOF), which offsets the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the majority of central government official and ministerial flights. The FCO chose to continue its offsetting arrangements with REEEP, rather than transferring to GCOF.¹¹⁰

69. The voluntary nature of carbon offsets from overseas posts’ flights is an anomaly that needs removing. It runs contrary to domestic Government policy and leaves the UK Government open to criticism that it is failing to address the climate change impact of its own operations. The implications of this irregularity are particularly serious, and incongruous, given the FCO’s diplomatic role in negotiating international agreements on climate change.

70. Although it is important that the UK set a good example through overseas posts, Iain Orr, of BioDiplomacy, told the Sub-committee that “above all the UK’s national housekeeping will determine posts’ influence on environmental issues”. He went on:

Embassies will be listened to with more interest and respect overseas when the UK has domestic success stories on recycling, good design, energy efficiency, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, access to environmental information, management of environmental risks and mitigation measures to tackle the unavoidable effects of climate change that are already in the pipeline.¹¹¹

71. The Sub-committee asked an FCO official whether it was important to succeed domestically on environmental issues to provide the required diplomatic leadership to encourage international movement, specifically in relation to our domestic target for greenhouse gas emission reduction. He agreed that it was:

... the ability for the UK to sustain the leadership that it has shown internationally and given internationally, I think, is dependent on how people perceive actions which have been taken by the Government domestically to pursue its own domestic targets and to pursue the general policies in relation to emissions and reductions, so I think, as a general principle, you are right...¹¹²

72. The UK must succeed domestically on the same issues that we wish to succeed internationally, to provide the political leadership required to encourage more sustainable action by other countries. This includes meeting our international commitments in areas such as the prevention of biodiversity loss and domestic commitments on greenhouse gas emissions. Although the UK will meet its international commitments under Kyoto, we argue that this only represents a step in the right direction and does not necessarily reflect the scale of effort required to meet the challenge of climate change. We are therefore concerned that the UK might fail to

109 Ev 51

110 National Audit Office, *Government Carbon Offset Fund*, Note shortly to be published with the Environmental Audit Committee report on carbon offsetting.

111 Ev 15

112 Qu 78 [Mr Wightman]

reach its more demanding domestic target, and that this failure also will result in the loss of the political leadership demonstrated by the UK through the adoption of the target.

UK Overseas Territories

73. In our last report on the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, we discussed the importance of the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). These 14 territories, which include the Falkland Islands, are globally significant in terms of their biodiversity resources. We found during the course of the inquiry that many environments in the UKOTs are under threat, and that the current level of support being provided to the UKOTs for the protection of these resources are not adequate. We concluded that the “Government must act decisively to prevent further loss of biodiversity in the UKOTs”, and that this would involve a move “towards increased and more appropriate funding for conservation and ecosystem management there”.¹¹³

74. DFID and FCO responded that they agree that “a longer-term funding commitment would enable a more strategic approach to be taken, but [that they] are currently providing resources to the Overseas Territories for environmental management to the fullest extent [they are] able”.¹¹⁴ The Government pointed out to us that FCO funding for the UKOTs via the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) had been increased by £94,000 for the financial year 2007/08, to £469,000, although it stated that future allocations would depend on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. DFID has also increased its allocation, to £1.5 million for the period 2007/08-2009/10, an increase of £125,000 annually. OTEP will therefore receive just under £1 million in 2007/08. It also highlighted the fact that the JNCC was enhancing its support for biodiversity in the UKOTs, “in part due to increased resources from DEFRA through its financial settlement”.¹¹⁵

75. The RSPB recently published a report that attempts to provide an outline estimate of the cost in meeting biodiversity priorities in the UKOTs, “to facilitate a comparison of current expenditures with identified needs”. The analysis estimated that total costs amount to some £16.1 million per year between 2007 and 2011, in addition to existing local expenditure on biodiversity conservation. The report’s authors concede that the estimates are only intended to be indicative, and are also incomplete, but they stress that the figures suggest that current funding is “insufficient to meet biodiversity conservation priorities”.¹¹⁶

76. During the Sub-committee inquiry into the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the DEFRA Minister, Barry Gardiner MP, acknowledged the problems that the UKOTs

¹¹³ Environmental Audit Committee, First Report of Session 2006-07, *The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, HC 77, paragraphs 133 & 140

¹¹⁴ Government response to the Committee’s First Report of Session 2006-07: *The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, May 2007, www.parliament.uk

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ RSPB, *Costing Biodiversity Priorities in the UK Overseas Territories*, 2 April 2007, www.rspb.org.uk

face in meeting environmental degradation challenges.¹¹⁷ The Sub-committee asked the FCO Minister about these concerns and he said that:

We take very seriously our activities in the Overseas Territories. Many of those territories have limited capacity and so it is important that we help build capacity, build resources and we utilise across government our resources, whether it is Defra resources or DIFD resources or our own resources, and to do it in a practical way, not just getting them to sign up to activities but to actually help them in a practical way forward.

...

So we have to make sure that we are very proactive in ensuring that our Overseas Territories are covered in an effective, practical way in international agreements or in any programme work that we are doing, whether it is in biodiversity or other programmes on sustainable development and that means in most instances putting practical programmes in place.¹¹⁸

77. This strong acceptance by the Minister of the need to support the UKOTs, seems at odds with the current funding situation, which appears based on what the FCO and DFID can ‘spare’, rather than on a strategic assessment of need. The UKOT Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) stressed that they were grateful to the FCO, “not simply for contributing to their funding but also for their support in promoting improved environmental policies in the UKOTs”.¹¹⁹ The NGO provided a number of examples of the environmental projects that the FCO has contributed to, one in particular demonstrating the apparent current strategic disarray of environmental funding, as well as the benefits of increased environmental funding:

[The]Ascension Seabird Restoration Project. This 2001-2003 project tackled another invasive problem—the feral cats on Ascension. It was technically challenging for the RSPB and the Ascension Administrator to manage because of the terrain and because the cooperation of every island resident and visitor was essential. However, because of its scale the project has already produced benefits far beyond the complete elimination of feral cats (the largest island anywhere on which this has been achieved) and the growth of new seabird colonies. The budget allowed for the first year’s salary for a full-time conservation officer in the Ascension Island Government (Tara Pelembe, a Saint [Ascension islander] with a degree in geography). The project became the subject of her M.Sc and her full-time position—now wholly funded by the elected Ascension Island Council out of local taxes—has enabled her to work with local volunteers to establish (with funding from OTEP) Ascension’s First National Park on Green Mountain. She has also supported work on Green Turtle conservation, attracting several graduate students from the UK.

117 Environmental Audit Committee, First Report of Session 2006-07, *The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, HC 77, Ev 44

118 Ev 62

119 Ev 73

This textbook example of capacity building has, however, a catch. The seabird project was not a typical small project: it cost £0.5 million, the same as the FCO's current annual contribution to OTEP for ALL the UKOTs. While the RSPB and other Forum members had developed the environmental and business case for this project over many years, this had been repeatedly rejected by HMG on budgetary grounds. Ironically, the money was found from the FCO's programme budget, when a non-environmental large UN-related project fell through and there was a risk of an embarrassing underspend, which would have been clawed back by the Treasury. The fortuitous implementation of this strategic large project has a kick in the tail. The Ascension Conservation Officer has just been recruited to a new post in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee—to work on UKOTs issues. The Forum greatly welcomes this further demonstration of the JNCC's commitment to the territories: and we are delighted to see this example of Ascension helping with capacity building in the UK!¹²⁰

78. We welcome the fact that FCO and DFID have, in the short term, increased their financial support for better environmental management in the UKOTs, but we are concerned that this has not been undertaken on the basis of an analysis of need. Research by the RSPB suggests that even with this funding increase a considerable funding shortfall will remain in the UKOTs for biodiversity protection.

79. Iain Orr of BioDiplomacy told the Sub-committee that part of the reason why the UKOTs have been neglected by the Government is that they are often seen “by many officials and ministers as problems rather than as overseas relations sharing a common British heritage”, and that the rest of Whitehall “often treats issues involving the UKOTs as for them or the FCO to ‘sort out’”.¹²¹ He argued that “one of the FCO's prime undischarged responsibilities is to convince every part of [the Government] (especially the Treasury and DEFRA) that only by a sea-change in attitudes to the UKOTs will the UK be able to meet its commitments” towards them, both international and domestic.¹²² The UKOTCF told us that the Government's domestic commitments to the UKOTs were established in a series of Environment Charters agreed in 2001. The Charters “have shared principles, followed by separate commitments made by each territory and by the UK”.¹²³ The UK government's commitments follow a common pattern:

Help build capacity to support and implement integrated environmental management which is consistent with [the territory's] own plans for sustainable development.

Assist [the territory] in reviewing and updating environmental legislation.

120 Ev 73 & 74

121 Ev 17

122 *ibid* para 29

123 Ev 72

Facilitate the extension of the UK's ratification of Multilateral Environmental Agreements of benefit to [the territory] and which [the territory] has the capacity to implement.

Keep [the territory] informed regarding new developments in relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements and invite [the territory] to participate where appropriate in the UK's delegation to international environmental negotiations and conferences.

Help [the territory] to ensure it has the legislation, institutional capacity and mechanisms it needs to meet international obligations.

Promote better cooperation and the sharing of experience and expertise between [the territory], other Overseas Territories and small island states and communities which face similar environmental problems.

Use UK, regional and local expertise to give advice and improve knowledge of technical and scientific issues. This includes regular consultation with interested non-governmental organisations and networks.

Use the existing Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories, and promote access to other sources of public funding, for projects of lasting benefit to [the territory's] environment.

Help [the territory] identify further funding partners for environmental projects, such as donors, the private sector or non-governmental organisations.

Recognise the diversity of the challenges facing Overseas Territories in very different socio-economic and geographical situations.

Abide by the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment.¹²⁴

80. The Sub-committee asked the Minister whether his department had assessed the success of the Environment Charters, and was told that the "UKOTCF is currently gathering information on the progress in implementing the Environment Charter Commitments for each Territory". This is due to be published as a report towards the middle of this year, to feed into a wider review of the Charters with other departments and UKOT governments.¹²⁵

81. International commitments for which the Government also has a joint responsibility in the UKOTs include those under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ramsar, The Convention on Migratory Species and CITES.¹²⁶ UKOTCF argued that the FCO does not have the expertise to address most of these domestic and international commitments, on

124 Ev 72

125 Ev 64

126 Ev 73

which DEFRA leads in most cases.¹²⁷ It stressed that “the UK government and civil society will never achieve policy coherence on the UKOTs concerning trade, development and environment if this is treated as primarily a matter for the FCO”.¹²⁸ The NGO argued to us that the “core problem” concerning environmental and governance issues in the UKOTs is that:

... the UK exercises sovereignty over the territories primarily through the FCO (which appoints Governors and Administrators to work with the locally-elected governments), but in many specific areas that matter to the UK as a whole—and to the UK’s international reputation - the FCO lacks essential skills or resources. This would not matter much as far as trade, development and the environment are concerned, if—as should be the case—other parts of HMG accepted their responsibilities and made staffing and budgetary provision for work relating to the UKOTs. A key FCO responsibility should, therefore, be acting as a champion for the UKOTs throughout Whitehall and in the FCO’s network of relations with companies, NGOs and institutions whose expertise can benefit the UKOTs.¹²⁹

82. The RSPB provided us with an example of the failure of Departments to work together in providing adequate support for the UKOTs. It told us that when a UKOT has a query on an environmental issue for which the FCO is not responsible, it is not clear who should provide the support. It argued that the “roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and it is almost as if they are trying to pass the responsibility between two government departments so it just slips between the cracks”.¹³⁰ The RSPB also alleged that the UKOTs are not a high priority for DEFRA, and also that “although they have perhaps the expertise they do not have the connections on the ground like the Foreign Office does”.¹³¹ Sarah Sanders from RSPB did accept that “there has been a move to try and improve working relationships between [FCO, DEFRA and DFID] for the UK Overseas Territories but... there is still room for a lot of improvement”.¹³²

83. We are disturbed that witnesses have stressed to us that departments other than FCO and DFID do not provide the level of support to the UKOTs that is required. Although DEFRA does provide some direct and indirect support, the level of this does not fill the specialist environmental gaps that are apparent in the UKOTs. We recommend firstly that DEFRA be involved at the highest level in reviewing the Environment Charters. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Biodiversity should provide the focus for this review to ensure coordination between departments. It is necessary for this review to assess whether both the Government, and the governments of the UKOTs, have met their respective obligations under the Environment Charters and Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Secondly, DEFRA should be given joint

127 *ibid*

128 Ev 75

129 Ev 74

130 Qu 8 [Ms Sanders]

131 Qu 10

132 Qu 11 [Ms Sanders]

responsibility towards the UKOTs. This should be reflected in an updated UK International Priority, to include environmental protection alongside security and good governance in the UKOTs. This will also have to be reflected in DEFRA's Comprehensive Spending Review settlement. Finally, as part of the Environment Charter review, the case for larger and more routine funding must be explored. Given that the Treasury is currently conducting a spending review, it is imperative that this funding analysis feeds into, and influences, the Treasury's ultimate decision as to spending allocations for FCO, DFID and DEFRA.

84. If the Government fails to address these issues it will run the risk of continued environmental decline and species extinctions in the UKOTs, ultimately causing the UK to fail in meeting its domestic and international environmental commitments. Failure to meet such commitments undermines the UK's ability to influence the international community to take the strong action required for reversing environmental degradation in their own countries, and globally.

Formal minutes

Tuesday 15 May 2007

Members present:

Mr Tim Yeo, in the Chair

Mr Martin Caton
Mr David Chaytor

Mr David Howarth
Joan Walley

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (Trade, Development and Environment: The Role of the FCO), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 84 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Memoranda received by the Committee be reported to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That provision be made for embargoed copies of the Report to be made available, in accordance with Standing Order No.134.

The Committee deliberated.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 22 May 2007 at 10am]

Witnesses

Tuesday 30 January 2007

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Mr Paul Buckley, Head of Global Country Programme Unit, and **Ms Sarah Sanders**, UK and Overseas Territories Programme Manager, RSPB. Ev1, 5

Mr Vassilli Papastavrou, Whale Team leader and biologist, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) Ev3

Mr Iain Orr, Director, BioDiplomacy Ev12

Wednesday 7 February 2007

Mr Marcus Yeo, Director of Resources and External Affairs, and **Mr Vin Fleming**, Head of Global and Overseas Territories Advice Programmes, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Ev24

Wednesday 21 February 2007

Rt Hon Ian McCartney MP, Minister of State for Trade, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, **Mr Scott Wightman**, Director Global and Economic Issues and **Mr Fergus Auld**, Team Leader for Climate Change and Cleaner Energy, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ev35

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Second	Pre-Budget Report 2001: <i>A New Agenda?</i> , HC 363 (<i>HC 1000</i>)
Third	UK Preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, HC 616 (<i>Reply, Cm 5558</i>)
Fourth	Measuring the Quality of Life: The Sustainable Development Headline Indicators, HC 824 (<i>Reply, Cm 5650</i>)
Fifth	A Sustainable Energy Strategy? Renewables and the PIU Review, HC 582 (<i>Reply, HC 471</i>)
Sixth	Buying Time for Forests: <i>Timber Trade and Public Procurement</i> , HC 792-I , (<i>Reply, HC 909, Session 2002-03</i>)

2000-01 Session

First	Environmental Audit: <i>the first Parliament</i> , HC 67 (<i>Reply, Cm 5098</i>)
Second	The Pre-Budget Report 2000: <i>fuelling the debate</i> , HC 71 (<i>Reply HC 216, Session 2001-02</i>)

1999-2000 Session

First	EU Policy and the Environment: An Agenda for the Helsinki Summit, HC 44 (<i>Reply, HC 68</i>)
Second	World Trade and Sustainable Development: An Agenda for the Seattle Summit, HC 45 (Including the Government response to the First Report 1998-99: Multilateral Agreement on Investment, HC 58) (<i>Reply, HC 69</i>)
Third	Comprehensive Spending Review: Government response and follow-up,

	HC 233 (<i>Reply, HC 70, Session 2000-01</i>)
Fourth	The Pre-Budget Report 1999: pesticides, aggregates and the Climate Change Levy, HC 76
Fifth	The Greening Government Initiative: first annual report from the Green Ministers Committee 1998/99, HC 341
Sixth	Budget 2000 and the Environment etc., HC 404
Seventh	Water Prices and the Environment, HC 597 (<i>Reply, HC 290, Session 2000-01</i>)

1998-99 Session

First	The Multilateral Agreement on Investment, HC 58 (<i>Reply, HC 45, Session 1999-2000</i>)
Second	Climate Change: Government response and follow-up, HC 88
Third	The Comprehensive Spending Review and Public Service Agreements, HC 92 (<i>Reply, HC 233, Session 1999-2000</i>)
Fourth	The Pre-Budget Report 1998, HC 93
Fifth	GMOs and the Environment: Coordination of Government Policy, HC 384 (<i>Reply Cm 4528</i>)
Sixth	The Greening Government Initiative 1999, HC 426
Seventh	Energy Efficiency, HC 159 (<i>Reply, HC 571, Session 2000-01</i>)
Eighth	The Budget 1999: Environmental Implications, HC 326

1997-98 Session

First	The Pre-Budget Report, HC 547 (<i>Reply, HC 985</i>)
Second	The Greening Government Initiative, HC 517 (<i>Reply, HC 426, Session 1998-99</i>)
Third	The Pre-Budget Report: Government response and follow-up, HC 985
Fourth	Climate Change: UK Emission Reduction Targets and Audit Arrangements, HC 899 (<i>Reply, HC 88, Session 1998-99</i>)

Oral evidence

Taken before the Environmental Audit Committee, (Trade, Development and Environment Sub-Committee)

on Tuesday 30 January 2007

Members present:

Colin Challen, in the Chair

Mr Martin Caton

David Howarth

Memorandum submitted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

INTRODUCTION

The RSPB is the UK partner of BirdLife International, a network of over 100 grass-roots conservation organisations around the world. As part of our commitment to the conservation of biodiversity worldwide, we provide financial, technical and advisory support to emerging NGO partners in more than 20 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. In addition, we are committed to increasing our already substantial programme of biodiversity conservation work in the UK Overseas Territories. Much of the RSPB's work in the UK Overseas Territories contributes to the priorities identified in the White Paper, *Partnerships for Progress and Prosperity* (March 1999), and assists the territories in meeting their commitments under the Environment Charter and international conventions including the Convention on Biological Diversity.

This submission is in two parts, firstly observations on general areas of the FCO's interaction with environmental issues, specifically biodiversity conservation (particularly related to inquiry questions, 1, 3, 5 and 7). Secondly we make more detailed comments on the UK Overseas Territories (question 13). We strongly support the conclusions on Overseas Territories of the Committee's recent report on The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

THE ROLE, STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMES OF FCO IN RELATION TO BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Biodiversity conservation led by the UK and the role of the FCO

1. We believe that the many good examples of biodiversity conservation in the UK by both government and non-government agencies, the strength and capacity of the UK conservation sector and the long history of UK citizens in contributing to global conservation should be a huge source of pride to the UK. The potential contribution of British institutions and individuals to the cause of global biodiversity conservation across the world is enormous. The success of projects funded by the Darwin Initiative (managed by DEFRA) is clear evidence of this, as are the many initiatives funded and undertaken by voluntary organisations such as the RSPB, Kew Gardens, WWF and Fauna and Flora International. Where initiatives have been supported by the FCO, for example seabird restoration in Ascension, they have been equally successful.

2. Furthermore, the RSPB believes that such programmes can have benefits beyond biodiversity conservation itself. Environmental sustainability is a key component of good governance and a prerequisite for sustainable development, peace and security.

3. Environmental problems are rated alongside the threats of terrorism and insecurity as major global challenges. Environmental factors are also increasingly implicated in analyses of development, peace and conflict situations. There is mounting concern over the extent to which environmental stress is threatening livelihoods, health and the fulfilment of basic needs, and harming the sustainability and resilience of fragile ecosystems. Environmental degradation intensifies conflict and competition over natural resources, aggravating social tensions, and in certain volatile situations can provoke or escalate violence and conflict.

4. Conversely, we believe that biodiversity conservation can be a force for unity, promoting collaboration between otherwise hostile countries and offering a chance for the UK to promote a positive image in countries where overall our relations with governments are problematic. Environmental challenges ignore political boundaries, bridge religious and ideological divides, encourage local and non-governmental participation, and extend community building beyond polarising economic linkages. The RSPB is supporting successful conservation work by emerging NGOs in a number of countries where civil society has traditionally been discouraged or stifled.

FCO responsibilities

5. In this context we are sorry that the FCO seems generally to place a low priority on biodiversity conservation. While there are some positive initiatives, there are also many causes for concern.

- (i) Generally, the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy gives low priority to biodiversity conservation, even though this is acknowledged everywhere as one of the critical issues facing the Earth. Although specific aspects such as illegal logging are flagged up, there is no mention of the huge loss of species that is currently occurring, and there is an assumption perhaps that conservation work will be done by others.
- (ii) Perhaps in consequence the Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) makes very limited provision for funding biodiversity conservation projects, certainly compared with the now abolished Environmental Projects Fund (EPF), which was a modest but enormously useful programme which benefited biodiversity and other conservation projects in many countries around the world. It is profoundly worrying that, although “biodiversity” was one of nine priorities under the old Human rights, democracy and good governance programme within the GOF, it is not a priority under the current Sustainable development programme.
- (iii) The merging of the former Environmental Policy Department into what is now the Sustainable Development and Business Group gives the environment in general and biodiversity in particular a much lower profile in the FCO’s work.
- (iv) The very welcome development of the network of environmental attachés in embassies around the world was somewhat negated by the apparently low priority afforded to what was often one of their many tasks and the abolition rapidly thereafter of the EPF which removed one of the key tools for their work. We are unclear whether the environmental attaché network is still in operation.

6. We consider that this represents a missed opportunity to showcase a major contribution that the UK can make to one of the most important international issues facing the world—the widespread loss of biodiversity. The decision to close the British Embassy in Madagascar—one of the most important countries in the world for biodiversity and at a time when the government there is extremely receptive to assistance from UK agencies—symbolises the perception that biodiversity does not feature highly in the FCO’s strategic concerns.

Recommendation

7. Environmental degradation, alongside poverty and disease, needs to be recognised as a significant underlying threat to international peace and security. National and international efforts need to explicitly recognise this and urgently put it at the heart of UK government policy.

8. We propose that the FCO should consider urgently:

- (i) the introduction of biodiversity conservation, focusing on the safeguarding of threatened species and habitats, as an explicit theme within the Global Opportunities Fund;
- (ii) the recognition of the potential role of biodiversity conservation in promoting other themes of importance to the UK (for example under the Engaging with the Islamic world GOF programme, where there are many opportunities for conservation initiatives to involve diverse sections of society);
- (iii) an enhanced role for attachés in overseas missions to promote UK conservation expertise overseas and to engage with both UK and in-country stakeholders;
- (iv) better provision of information to FCO staff on the importance of the environment for development and security objectives, and *vice versa*;
- (v) providing support to assist capacity-building in civil society within the environment sector;
- (vi) encouraging all governments to ratify and strengthen existing multilateral environmental agreements by helping developing countries to implement them through the provision of financial and technical support; and
- (vii) a continued commitment by the UK Government to ensure that all development programmes funded by the Government or subject to export credit guarantees undergo appropriate environmental assessment before they are considered for approval.

HAS THE FCO MET ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT IN UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES?

9. The UK Overseas Territories are rich in biodiversity. For example, they are home to at least 47 bird species of global conservation concern (more than the whole of Europe) and play host to more than a third of the world’s breeding albatrosses. Based on the numbers of globally threatened and near-threatened bird species, the UK mainland ranks 192nd in importance out of 234 countries. When the Overseas Territories are included, however, the UK rises into the top 20.

10. The conservation of biodiversity is a priority for many of the Territories' inhabitants, as they are dependent on it for their livelihoods. For example, revenue raised from fisheries and tourism is vital to many communities, and mangroves and coral reefs provide protection from severe weather events. As on all small islands around the world, however, these fragile ecosystems are increasingly under threat. The impact of introduced invasive species has been devastating, causing extinctions and significant population reductions in every territory. Habitat destruction is increasing vulnerability to hurricanes. Long-line fishing is having a catastrophic effect on seabirds while they feed out at sea.

11. The UK Overseas Territories have minimal capacity to manage their biodiversity effectively, because they are small, remote islands with small populations and little income. It is not possible for the UK Overseas Territories to access international sources of funding such as the Global Environment Facility because they are considered to be the responsibility of the UK Government.

FCO's responsibilities

12. Although the UK Overseas Territories are locally self-governed, the UK Government, through FCO and other government departments, retains responsibility for external affairs, including the implementation of international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, the Cartagena Convention, the World Heritage Convention, CITES and the Convention on Migratory Species. The UK Government has signed up to the 2010 target to halt the loss of biodiversity, which makes the territories a high priority for conservation action.

13. Although the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy has targets for the Overseas Territories, it is difficult to see how the FCO can meet its environmental responsibilities within this plan as it has insufficient internal environmental expertise or resources. Currently the FCO contributes only approximately £0.5 million per year to the Overseas Territories Environment Programme, a fund run jointly with the Department for International Development to support biodiversity conservation in the UK Overseas Territories. This is paltry when compared to the £460 million spent on biodiversity conservation in the UK, and is not commensurate with the numbers of globally threatened species found on the territories. It means that the areas of UK territory that are most important in global biodiversity terms are also most poorly resourced.

14. Given the Government's responsibility for the UK Overseas Territories and the contribution that biodiversity makes to livelihoods there, it is shameful that the territories are not given more support. Additional sums are urgently needed to build basic biodiversity conservation capacity in each territory, to develop measures to meet international obligations and to undertake priority restoration works. The RSPB hopes to embark on work in 2007 to cost more exactly the priority conservation programmes in the UK Overseas Territories. Meanwhile, we estimate that a minimum of £10 million per year for the territories would begin to meet the priority conservation needs.

15. If increased funding is not identified, endemic species will become extinct in these territories and the UK Government will fail to meet the 2010 target to address biodiversity loss. Opportunities to make positive gains for biodiversity and make amends for historical losses, such as through island restoration through control of invasive species will never be realised. It is increasingly at risk of being seen as hypocritical in urging others to take conservation action while not taking it within its own jurisdiction.

Recommendation

16. We believe that the FCO should demonstrate that it takes its international obligations seriously, first by guaranteeing the long-term continuation of a strengthened Overseas Territories Environment Programme, and secondly by ensuring that adequate resources are available through this programme. This must be achieved either by obtaining increased funding or (if this is not possible) by focusing some of the existing Global Opportunity Fund resources on the territories, for which the UK Government has undisputed responsibility.

January 2006

Memorandum from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

SUMMARY

- IFAW welcomes this inquiry by the sub-committee as we believe the FCO has a vital role to play in environment, conservation and animal welfare issues at an international level. Furthermore IFAW is in a good position to comment on the role of the FCO as we have had the chance to work with the FCO on a number of issues at international level in the past.

- IFAW strongly believes that many of the most serious environment issues require international co-operation and negotiation often through multilateral environmental agreements. This is true of the two particular examples given in our evidence: the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
- There are examples of successful environmental diplomacy in the past, including the FCO's role in helping achieve better protection from commercial trade for basking sharks at the 2002 CITES meeting. It is questionable whether the structure and capacity of the FCO today could play a similarly successful role.
- The issue of whaling is an area in desperate need of diplomatic support from the FCO. It is questionable whether Defra receives the support it needs in this area to achieve the Government's stated objective; to maintain the current global moratorium on whaling and to stop all but indigenous subsistence whaling.
- IFAW would like to see the sub-committee recommend that the FCO review its structure and capacity to support environmental international diplomacy, and the level of priority these issues are given; and that high level diplomatic action is needed ahead of this year's IWC meeting.
- Specifically regarding the work of IFAW's scientific whale research vessel in foreign waters, IFAW would like to place on record our gratitude to the FCO Maritime team and embassy staff abroad, who have been exceptionally helpful and instrumental in getting research permits for boat.

1. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) works to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals throughout the world by reducing commercial exploitation of animals, protecting wildlife habitats, and assisting animals in distress. We seek to motivate the public to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote animal welfare and conservation policies that advance the well-being of both animals and people.

2. As one of the largest international animal welfare organisations in the world, IFAW has offices in 15 countries and a staff of more than 200 experienced campaigners, legal and political experts, and internationally acclaimed scientists.

3. IFAW welcomes this inquiry by the sub-committee as we believe the FCO has a vital role to play in environment, conservation and animal welfare issues at an international level. Furthermore IFAW is in a good position to comment on the role of the FCO as we have had the chance to work with the FCO on a number of issues at international level in the past.

4. IFAW's comments below apply generally to our experience of the work of the FCO. We do not feel able to fully comment on all the 14 questions outlined in the inquiry press notice, so our comments are simply given in the most coherent way possible. Where points match specific questions these have been highlighted to assist the sub-committee.

5. Two specific areas where IFAW's work has brought us into contact with the FCO include the issue of whaling and the International Whaling Commission (IWC); and the protection of endangered species from wildlife trade through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).

6. IFAW strongly believes that many of the most serious environment issues require international co-operation and negotiation often through multilateral environmental agreements. This is true of the two particular examples mentioned above; the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

7. Regarding international environmental diplomacy [Question 2], one example of a successful role played by the FCO in the past relates to the critical importance of the FCO in securing protection from commercial trade of the basking shark by having it listed on Appendix II of CITES (therefore regulating trade and introducing protection measures for basking sharks). It can take considerable effort to get species listed on CITES Appendices, and the listing of the basking shark was achieved through involvement of British embassies in a number of countries and an FCO team who participated at the 2002 CITES meeting where the decision was taken. At that time, there existed the Environment Policy Department within the FCO, which had experts familiar with the biological and conservation issues and who worked to provide good technical detail to embassies and ensure that it was clear that the issue was a key policy objective for the UK. Since then, the role, structure, and size of what was the Environment Policy Department has changed significantly. It is questionable whether the FCO would have the capacity or expertise to play a similar role today as was the case outlined in the example above.

8. IFAW campaigns against commercial whaling and so-called "scientific" whaling by the nations of Japan, Norway and Iceland. IFAW welcomes the strong anti-whaling stance of successive UK governments, which has been demonstrated by consistent Ministerial representation at the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the international body which exists to regulate whaling and to protect whales from over-exploitation and other threats.

9. However, regarding whaling, the only country that maintains a diplomatic engagement in the issue year-round is Japan. Over the past 20 years, this high-level diplomatic action by the Government of Japan has led to a steady recruitment of nations to the IWC (mostly poor, developing nations from West Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands, none with any history of commercial whaling) who vote alongside

Japan in its bid to overturn the current moratorium on commercial whaling. This resulted in the pro-whaling nations achieving a simple majority at the IWC for the first time in decades at last year's meeting in St Kitts and Nevis.

10. The Government's stated policy is to maintain the moratorium on whaling and for all forms of whaling to be stopped, except subsistence whaling by indigenous peoples. The UK has also done a lot to strengthen the role of the IWC in protecting whales and other cetaceans. However, in the face of consistent high level diplomatic efforts by Japan, the Government's objective requires the help of the FCO if it is to be successful.

11. For the FCO to become active again on the issue of whaling expertise is required within FCO and it needs to be clear that stopping commercial and scientific whaling is indeed a priority policy objective for the UK. Increased involvement of FCO, especially through embassies in countries supportive of pro-whaling but not actually whaling nations, would help promote Government objectives at IWC and ensure that negotiations lead to more effective global protection for whales and their environment. [Q.2]

12. With respect to both CITES and the IWC, Defra is rightly the lead department on these issues but it is questionable whether Defra receives the level of diplomatic support required in these areas to achieve the outcomes it is looking for (especially regarding the IWC).

13. Furthermore, IFAW questions whether the structure of the FCO is adequate to respond to the needs of international environmental diplomacy. Clearly, it is imperative that the FCO is able to support the work of Government as a whole as it pursue international agreement on environmental issues. Climate change is a prime example of where such international environmental diplomacy is required but other international areas and conventions as mentioned in this submission are also worthy of consideration in the way the FCO works.

14. IFAW suggests that the sub-committee recommends that the FCO review its structure and capacity to support environmental international diplomacy, and the level of priority these issues are given. [Q.8 and Q.3] Specifically with regard to the IWC, IFAW would like to see the sub-committee recommend that the FCO undertake high-level diplomatic action, involving all pro-whaling nations not just Japan, Norway and Iceland, ahead of this year's IWC in May to prevent further increases in whaling, and to combat Japan's efforts to overturn the moratorium and undermine the conservation mandate of the IWC.

15. IFAW also feels it appropriate to mention that we operate a 72ft sailing research vessel (*RV Song of the Whale*), registered in London, which is mainly engaged in using benign techniques to study whales, as part of IFAW's global campaign to protect marine mammals and their habitats. Since its launch in 2004, *Song of the Whale* has travelled over 30,000 miles, and the team has conducted projects in North Africa, the Mediterranean, North America, the Caribbean and Iceland. The *Song of the Whale* team has recently returned from Iceland, a country which resumed scientific whaling in 2003 and commercial whaling in 2006. The IFAW team was carrying out research on rare blue whales using non-invasive research methods. In the face of the continuing expansion of so called "scientific" whaling by Japan and Iceland, the work of IFAW is vitally important in demonstrating and promoting the fact that we do not need to kill whales to study them.

16. We would like to record our gratitude for the assistance and support of the FCO's Maritime Team in London and the FCO staff in various countries in obtaining research permits for the vessel. We feel that the FCO has been instrumental in obtaining these permits, sometimes in difficult countries, and providing excellent support for the boat through its embassies.

17. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. As stated in the covering letter IFAW would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence to the sub-committee. If you require any further information, please contact:

January 2007

Witnesses: **Mr Paul Buckley**, Head of Global Country Programme Unit, and **Ms Sarah Sanders**, UK Overseas Territories Programme Manager, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB); and **Mr Vassili Papastavrou**, Whale Team Leader and Biologist, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), gave evidence.

Q1 Chairman: Good morning to you and it is nice to see you here for this first session of our inquiry into the role of the FCO in sustainable development, et cetera. I apologise for the delay in seeing you but we were unfortunately not able to establish a quorum last week. We are only three members serving on the Sub-Committee at the moment so we do need all three on each occasion. It is very good of you to come back. Could you briefly introduce yourselves and perhaps give us a perspective on where you stand in relation to the Government's performance, particularly the FCO's performance on these issues?

Mr Buckley: Good morning. I am Paul Buckley from the International Division of the RSPB and my colleague Sarah Sanders is working in the same team. Sarah is particularly involved in the Overseas Territories and has just come back last week from Montserrat and Anguilla to look at a couple of our projects there. The RSPB take our primary experience with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office from first of all our advocacy work on a whole range of international issues and multilateral agreements and secondly from our work around the world building capacity with Birdlife International

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partners and NGOs and small government departments on the Overseas Territories. Through that work we have interacted with the FCO both here and in the posts overseas for a number of years. We very much try to work on the ground with those organisations and as well as partner development work we have a number of big projects, including a couple of big avoided deforestation projects in Sierra Leone and Sumatra which together cover about 170,000 hectares of tropical forest. The core of our links with the FCO over the last few years has been with the Overseas Territories and that is certainly our current priority and it is certainly an area where we are already actively in dialogue with the FCO. I know you have heard a lot in your discussions on the MEA about the biodiversity crisis and we do consider with the 16,000 species known to be threatened with global extinction, that this is something that is a major challenge and something that the UK is incredibly well-placed to lead on and be very proud of its work on. We do feel at the moment that a lack of a clear biodiversity focus and environmental focus as far as the Overseas Territories are concerned within the FCO really means we are lagging behind on these responsibilities. We think that the Sustainable Development Strategy is a laudable document and obviously with priorities like climate change, sustainable logging, and so on, we cannot argue with anything in there, but we feel that biodiversity has a rather low profile, and even within the strategy it talks about funding programmes for biodiversity and in fact those have now been abandoned in the last couple of years, and it is very difficult for us to envisage getting funding today for some of the very successful programmes we have had in collaboration with the FCO in past years. You have seen our key points in the submission. I think the two things we seek most immediately are really an explicit recognition within the FCO and within the posts globally that biodiversity is a strategic priority. Secondly, I mentioned that we seek adequate resources for the very important work of conserving biodiversity in the Overseas Territories. We know of 47 birds in the Overseas Territories which are considered to be globally threatened so there is an immense biodiversity resource there which the UK has direct responsibility for. As a final point, there has been a lot of discussion about who should have responsibility for that, whether it should be Defra, whether it should be FCO, or whether it should be somebody else, and I suppose from our point of view, to be honest, we do not really care, we just want somebody to take that responsibility and make sure those resources are available. At the end of the day it does fall to the FCO to be the ambassadors for the Overseas Territories; maybe it is Defra, maybe it is somebody else, but it is the FCO's responsibility to make sure that happens, whoever then provides the resources and the expertise.

Mr Papastavrou: My name is Vassili Papastavrou and I am a whale biologist with the International Fund for Animal Welfare which was set up in 1969 and works to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals, but mainly wild animals,

throughout the world. I think we are unusual for having that focus on wild animals, specifically on whales and seals and animals that are both rare and abundant, so on the one hand we have looked at the exploitation of Canadian harp seals which are still abundant and we have also tried to maintain protection for Mediterranean monk seals which are extremely endangered. The same is true for our work on whales. We have worked to try and address the problem of commercial whaling. At the same time we are also working on some extremely endangered populations of whales such as the grey whales in the Western Pacific which now number only 100 and are threatened by oil exploration. Our focus on commercial whaling has obviously centred around two Conventions; the International Whaling Commission, and when I started working for IFAW in 1992 there were round about 30 active members, there are now 72 active members; and the much larger Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which now has round about 170 members. Our work as an NGO has had quite a strong scientific component and we have found science a useful tool in trying to get our message across, so for example we have funded DNA analyses of whale meat on sale in Japan and Korea for about ten years, and for 20 years we have been engaged in benign research on whales using our research vessel *Song of the Whale* which most recently was in Iceland. When I started personally studying live whales in 1984 it was seen as a bit of a joke and at that stage the only real way to do it was to study dead animals, but now there has been a transformation in the way that we study whales and most of the really interesting things that have been learnt and most of the conservation problems that we are trying to address are through studies on live animals. I mention our research vessel *Song of the Whale* because it is registered in London and we have had some extremely good support from the FCO when we have come to work in a variety of countries and we have found that the embassies have actually helped us a great deal. As an NGO we have offices in 15 countries and reasonably good contacts in perhaps another 12, and if you consider the disparity between that and 170 members of CITES, it is clear that we need to work with governments who have a much wider representation. I suppose we have seen the real strengths that the FCO can bring perhaps most specifically when the UK decided to push the listing of the basking shark in Appendix 2 of CITES. It took two CITES conferences of the parties for this proposal to be successful, and for both of them we saw an extremely strong team go to CITES with a clear foreign policy objective and not only work during the meeting to achieve the objective but actually work before the meeting through the British embassies and contacts abroad and also even during the meeting phoning those embassies, so we can see that when the UK has an environment foreign policy objective that it wants to pursue it can really apply a huge amount of force. It should be remembered that it was not an easy listing of this particular species because many countries took the view that as a fish it was not really the responsibility of the Convention on International

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Trade in Endangered Species to give it protection. However, what we are seeing now is a downplay in the interest of the Foreign Office in the issues that we are most directly involved with and we are not seeing the same kind of regular contact and interest that we have seen in previous years, particularly I would say on the whaling issue. Thank you.

Q2 Chairman: What would you ascribe that to?

Mr Papastavrou: When things were going well we had a team within the Foreign Office who were not only experts on the issue itself so they knew and understood the complexities (of in this case the whaling issue but the same was also true of other environment issues) but they also knew how to use the Foreign Office network in order not only to influence other countries but to find out what was going on, so we often received information coming back from those posts and we were then able to interact and provide the more technical knowledge that we had ourselves.

Q3 Chairman: Has that dried up? What has happened to that?

Mr Papastavrou: I think it is fair to say that there are no longer any real experts on the whaling issue within the FCO and the lead in theory is taken by Defra but we are finding that in some cases FCO officials do not even attend the meetings of Wildlife Link, which is the whole NGO community, and if they do they are fairly passive, they are not contributing actively to our discussion of the issues.

Q4 Chairman: But they used to do?

Mr Papastavrou: They certainly used to, yes. Maybe we are going to come on to this later but we did a quick analysis of the UK missions which have closed down in recent years and there is a remarkable similarity between the countries where missions have closed down and the countries where Japan is either recruiting votes for the IWC or has already bought votes, so we are losing influence in albeit small countries but they are countries that still have a vote in the big conventions which we are dealing with.

Q5 Chairman: It sounds like we are in retreat but is it coincidence that the list you have shows that pattern or have you picked up anything to suggest that this is a deliberate policy?

Mr Papastavrou: I could not really argue as to whether it is coincidence or not; it just happens to be the case. We have lost embassies in Mali, Nicaragua, Kiribati, Côte d'Ivoire, Tonga, and in fact recently Anne Main MP wrote to the consulate of the Republic of Kiribati and the reply indicated that although the consul was sympathetic to our position he concluded the letter by saying: "Unfortunately following the cessation of UK aid over the past few years, especially the much valued VSO programme, and then the closure of the British High Commission in Tarawa last year, the UK has lost much of the influence over public opinion in Kiribati that it used to have", so here is a very clear example from a tiny country, that is also seriously threatened by climate

change so you could argue that our interest in the whaling issue is fairly small, of where the UK has lost some influence in a particular country.

Q6 Chairman: My question to all three of you following on from that is whether or not you would say that the environment and sustainable development has sufficiently high priority for the FCO?

Mr Buckley: We feel that there are perhaps some distinctions. There is no question when you look at certain key environment issues that the UK Government has taken a strong lead internationally, and I think we would acknowledge on climate change issues and to some extent on issues like sustainable logging and bush meat and so on they have done a lot on the international scene and also on things like illegal fishing and so on. Specifically on biodiversity there is really very little evidence of the UK really seeing this as a strategic issue. As I said earlier, that is reflected in the Sustainable Development Strategy. Although we get enormous support from individual embassies and individual ambassadors and their staff overseas and so on, obviously there is nothing being driven from the centre that is saying this is something they should be spending their time on. I think it is something that the UK could be making much, much more of, particularly in these really key countries like Madagascar, Brazil, China, India and so on where they are incredibly important countries for biodiversity, and I do not think we are really reflecting that. There does not seem to be acknowledgement in the Foreign Office of the links between environmental issues, development, security and stability and on which we believe there are very clear links. I do not want to suggest it is just about money, yes, of course we would like money for conservation but we also want that role as ambassadors for the issue.

Ms Sanders: Just thinking about the Overseas Territories in particular, I do not think the UK Government is meeting its environment responsibilities, particularly as it signed up to the International Convention on Biological Biodiversity for most of the territories. At the moment there are over 240 species which are threatened with extinction but at the same time livelihoods on the territories are almost utterly dependent on their biodiversity and natural resources. You only have to look at the fisheries in the Falklands and in Tristan da Cunha, you only have to look at tourism in the Caribbean; biodiversity underpins the economies of those territories and it is very difficult to see how the Foreign Office can ensure security and stability unless it assists territories in conserving natural resources and biodiversity.

Q7 Chairman: You have made an argument that particularly in our relationships with problematic countries that this force for unity focusing on biodiversity can be very important. Do you want to expand a little bit more on that theme?

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Mr Buckley: As with anything like this, you can find good examples and bad examples and I am sure somebody else could produce bad examples of where it has not, but I think what environmental and conservation issues very often do is that they are a way of bringing together groups of people who otherwise would not perhaps talk to each other. I think we can cite a number of our projects where we have got everybody involved from local communities up to in some cases presidents of countries. I am thinking particularly of our project in Sierra Leone at the moment where we are attempting to conserve the last big area of rainforest, and for a country just coming out of civil war and I believe recognised as the poorest country in the world, the project has included all of those groups and we have regular meetings with the President and at the same time we are talking to people in the villages around the forest and that really has brought people together in some of the divided communities in a very impressive way. We hope in the longer term we will extend that programme perhaps to the Liberian side of the forest and of course that brings in the whole concept of peace parks and things which have been very effectively implemented in Southern Africa and Central America, big areas of border zones which can promote stability between countries that have at times been at loggerheads. Just one other example, I think, which is quite a good one from Birdlife's work which is this is an area where we have found in some cases that we have been able to work in countries which I think the UK finds quite difficult to work with but at the same time courts a very high priority. I am thinking here of some work I have been involved in over the last couple of years in Syria. For one thing, it is a good news story from Syria in a sense, which is not always the case, and it is also something where we have worked very closely with the embassy and we have been able to build quite a good rapport between the two Governments and ourselves. There is a final example from the Birdlife International partnership, and sadly I cannot say this is still the case because over the last three or four years it has been more difficult, but certainly for a good ten or 15 years we had partners in both Israel and Palestine and those two organisations were working extremely closely together, sharing training and collaborating on projects. That is perhaps the ultimate example in the world of where two very difficult countries can collaborate on issues such as this.

Mr Papastavrou: Just maybe to follow on from Paul's point, I think we all have some good examples where we have worked very closely with particular ambassadors in particular countries and there does seem to be some really serious interest in some of the work that both RSPB and IFAW are doing in some countries. For us the best recent example is Iceland where both the British ambassador and his predecessor have maintained a really close relationship with us. The present ambassador is very well-connected in Iceland and has given us a huge amount of help in first of all obtaining a research permit for our vessel and then in a whole variety of

other ways, but we do not see the whole thing being driven centrally. I think it is fair to say that the whaling issue does not seem to be a foreign policy objective for the UK in the way that it is for Japan, so we see Japan working year round in all the countries where it has representation to secure the objective it wants and we do not see the same coming from the UK at all.

Q8 David Howarth: The one thing we need to do is ask you to respond to what we expect the Government's responses to be to your criticisms. One of those is that if, for example, you take one of the apparent causes of the downgrading of the importance of biodiversity and other environmental issues is that inside the FCO the Environmental Policy Department appears to have disappeared and appears to have merged with something called the Sustainable Development and Business Group, and that does not look too great, but their response would possibly be that this is a good thing because we have got a mainstream sustainable development and it is good to bring it together with business and to make sure the economic policy and environmental policy are done at the same time. How do you respond to that sort of response that I think we will probably get from them?

Ms Sanders: In principle, it sounds good but in terms of the Overseas Territories there is no-one within that team who has any responsibility for biodiversity so when they are looking for advice from the UK Government they do not know where to go. I suppose the response from the Foreign Office will be, "Contact Defra." I had someone on the phone from Ascension last week with a question about CITES, "Who do I get in touch with?" I have one or two contacts in Defra but I have never been told by Defra who is the person responsible for CITES for the UK Overseas Territories. The roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and it is almost as if they are trying to pass the responsibility between two government departments so it just slips between the cracks.

Mr Buckley: It is entirely up to the Foreign Office how they structure themselves, and I do not think we want to comment on the whys and wherefores in one sense. As with everywhere in the world, restructurings can either work or fail and it is not necessarily to do with the principle of the restructuring, it is more to do with how it works in practice. I think in a way the mere existence of something called the Environmental Policy Department suggested that this is a strategic priority and it is something which the Foreign Office takes seriously. Yes, with it being mainstreamed that might be good but you have to burrow quite hard down into that structure to find people who do have responsibilities for particular issues, and I think potentially the issues we are interested in of sustainable tourism, logging and marine biodiversity are all in different groups and there are no obvious, as people have said, experts within that

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and many people have responsibilities, so I think yes mainstreaming is great but where are the champions for the subject in that sense within that.

Mr Papastavrou: I think from our point of view what we are missing more than anything is experts on environment issues within FCO, people who know and understand the environment issues, they just do not seem to be there any more. One could argue that not all environment issues are sustainable development issues and in some cases if you are trying to protect the environment you have to actually protect it. The UK in certain areas has a policy of for example not using certain species such as whales, so I think sustainable development might send slightly the wrong message and I think the additional problem of not having environment and biodiversity experts within the FCO means that there is no central way for the embassies to be briefed and to work together to secure a good result.

Q9 David Howarth: What about their other argument which I am sure they are going to make which is that climate change is the big issue and although there is an interaction between climate change and biodiversity nevertheless they have got limited resources and they should put those resources towards the biggest possible issue; climate change. How do you respond to that point?

Ms Sanders: Looking at it from the perspective of the Overseas Territories, most of which are small islands so they are considerably threatened by climate change, you cannot address climate change issues and you cannot adapt to climate change without looking at conservation of biodiversity and natural resources. If you are looking to reduce vulnerability, there are huge areas of mangrove and coral reefs, which can reduce the vulnerability of territories, but they all need to be protected. You cannot separate the two.

Q10 David Howarth: You mentioned Defra and the response seems to be to ring up Defra. If you ring up Defra are they doing any more or are they just trying to cope with what they had previously?

Ms Sanders: It is not a high priority for Defra. The other issue with Defra is that although they have perhaps expertise they do not have the connections on the ground like the Foreign Office does.

Q11 David Howarth: DFID has connections on the ground so that raises the question of how well do these three ministries work together—Defra, DFID and the FCO—when it comes to biodiversity issues?

Mr Buckley: I am not sure that we have very extensive knowledge of the sort of interconnections between them but I think that the general pattern is probably patchy. We are aware of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Biodiversity which potentially is a very powerful meeting point for those three and perhaps potentially for other ministries and that would seem to be the obvious way at the higher level, but you also need the close working relationships at the day-to-day level as well.

Ms Sanders: I think there has been a move to try and improve working relationships between the three government departments for the UK Overseas Territories but I think there is still room for a lot of improvement.

Mr Buckley: IDFID clearly does have a biodiversity remit in the OTs. They do not elsewhere and I suspect elsewhere the interactions between the three certainly on environmental issues are probably fairly sparse simply because it is not DFID's primary remit, although clearly they would acknowledge there are links. Of course we would like to see the links more explicitly recognised.

Q12 David Howarth: But they do not do any better on other environmental issues than biodiversity?

Mr Buckley: I am not sure.

Mr Papastavrou: Just to give a specific example about the inter-relation between Defra and FCO with respect to the whaling issue, I think it is fair to say that Defra do a good job when they actually turn up to the meetings of the International Whaling Commission. They have appropriate expertise, they prepare for the meeting and they achieve what can be achieved at the meeting. Where the disconnect lies is the work outside the meeting is not being done so there do not appear to be very much in the way of lobbying efforts beforehand and information-gathering and all the work that you would expect FCO to do, so I think from the point of view of the issue that I most closely work on, which is apparently a foreign policy objective for the UK, in theory at least, there is not that kind of joined-up thinking between the FCO and Defra.

Q13 David Howarth: Can we just come back finally to the embassies issue which you raised. I think the RSPB particularly raised the symbolic consequences of the closure of the Madagascar embassy, and that is a particularly striking case. I suppose the FCO response might be first of all they are saving resources and that would free up resources for other projects—environmental projects or biodiversity projects—and that would be good and, secondly, they can handle this on a regional or multi country basis so you do not need to have one ambassador per country. How do you respond to those points?

Mr Buckley: I am sure we all appreciate that the Foreign Office like everyone else has limited resources and it has to do what it sees fit to do. My colleague will talk more about this, I am sure, in terms of how this leaves to some extent vacuums for other people. I think we have found generally that we have very good relationships with embassies, they are very helpful. We recently had fantastic assistance from the ambassador in Indonesia again in respect of the other big rainforest project we are involved in, who hosted a reception for us and so on, and that was a very powerful vehicle to push the case for the protection of the forest, so again when they do things they do them very well and we have great assistance from them. I guess we quoted the Madagascar example and Vassili mentioned a number of other examples where closures have occurred in high biodiversity countries, particularly

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places like Central America, and I think it just reflects perhaps that if biodiversity was a strategic priority you would take a different view about somewhere like Madagascar, particularly at a time when the new government there has just opened an embassy in Britain, funnily enough, but also it is very open and really wants to right the deforestation wrongs of the last few decades and actually work with countries like Britain to help them to do so. It seems a particularly regrettable example but I guess it is just one symptom of that. We do work very well with embassies where we have particular projects. We should acknowledge from Defra the Darwin Initiative which albeit a rather small amount of money is a fantastic fund for our work and we have very good links. Where we have projects we have had very good collaboration from the embassies as well. Generally if it is not something that is given to them as a strategic priority and if they do not really have any funds to play with in terms of doing anything, then it inevitably becomes a lesser priority compared with other things in their countries.

Mr Papastavrou: Maybe just to underscore the comment that I have already made in reading out the letter from Kiribati, on the issue that I am working on we are actually reaching a critical moment where Japan is about to take over the International Whaling Commission. It has nearly got—it maybe has—a majority of countries, so you are looking in the case of Japan after a 15 or 20-year effort to take over the Convention and we think it is the only time that one country has virtually succeeded in taking over an entire Convention. Then at the same time from non-whaling countries, and remember the UK is just one of these, there is not even an effort to keep a really small post going in one of these countries which would take a very small amount of investment and the vote of a country like Kiribati could be the vote that would tip the Whaling Commission one way or the other. So although obviously this is only one of many issues that the UK is concerned about, Kiribati has a vote in other Conventions as well, as does Madagascar. The embassy in Madagascar used to deal with The Comoros which are about to join the Whaling Commission to vote with Japan, so again if you do not have your representation on the ground in the country you do not have the same level of influence if you just fly people in for meetings and they then leave.

Q14 David Howarth: You mentioned other conventions so the CITES Convention might have implications for the enforcement of CITES and I think you mentioned the expansion of it as well.

Mr Papastavrou: I just mentioned the two Conventions that I am particularly familiar with. Yes, I think you could probably generalise to all multilateral environment agreements basically.

Q15 Chairman: We always refer to the Foreign Office as the Foreign Office but of course it is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Does the Commonwealth play any role at all in these issues?

Mr Papastavrou: I would say it should but it does not at the moment and a lot of those Commonwealth countries are leaning further towards Japan than perhaps they might on the whaling issue. I have not done the analysis to give to you but maybe I should after I go home.

Q16 Chairman: I think it would be very interesting to see that since you would have hoped that it would really be the other way round, but there we are. Martin?

Mr Caton: Mr Papastavrou, you mentioned ways in which the FCO has helped in your work with other countries and you particularly mentioned the basking shark protection matter. You have indicated that there is some reduction in interest in the FCO but do you believe that it takes full advantage of the potential for working with charities in delivering its international objectives?

Mr Papastavrou: I would say that it is very haphazard and variable and there are instances where largely due to personal relationships with individuals we do fully benefit from the FCO and I think they make full use of our expertise, and I think this is essentially the same point that RSPB have made, but there seems to be no overall policy to do that. From our particular perspective there is one bit of the FCO that works incredibly well and it is called the Maritime Team and they are the people to whom we speak if we want help with obtaining research permits for our vessel, and the relationship there is faultless. I think it is a bit like being out there on a cloudy day and occasionally there is a bright ray of sunshine and you see what could be happening if there really was a clear objective to do it. That is what is lacking at the moment.

Q17 Mr Caton: A possible new dawn is perhaps the strategy that the FCO is developing at the moment, potentially to deepen its involvement with NGOs and other groups. You could all answer this. What would you hope to see come out of that strategy?

Ms Sanders: In terms of the Overseas Territories, what I would really like to see is the UK Government taking its responsibilities seriously because these are part of the UK; these are territories that want to remain part of the UK. I would like to see the UK Government making sure that there are adequate resources available for biodiversity on these territories. I also think the UK Government has a role to play in strengthening environmental legislation in the territories, particularly looking at things like environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments. You will notice that I am talking about the UK Government. We are not concerned whether this drive comes from Defra, the Foreign Office or DFID. From whichever UK Government department, whatever their role and responsibility, it should be clearly defined and the territories made aware of what the various responsibilities and roles are.

Mr Papastavrou: Your question is a rather difficult one to answer. It may be difficult to answer because, in my opinion, unless the environment is a clear foreign policy objective, then just talking more to

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NGOs or having more meetings with them will not necessarily help. In the past, when we have seen that particular environmental issues have been a clear foreign policy objective, we have seen a huge amount of progress. Those interactions with the NGOs will form naturally from that. I am speaking here on environmental issues with the exception of climate change where that decision has already been taken. It does not seem to have been taken yet on biodiversity issues. I am not sure if I have made myself clear.

Mr Buckley: There is one other matter that I could mention. Obviously we do welcome that dialogue. We have recently had visits from our stakeholder manager. I would agree with the last point. We would also like them to recognise, in whatever partnerships they do form or whatever funding programmes they might develop in the future, which we and others are able to access, perhaps the importance of long-term partnerships. We feel this point very strongly because we have been working with some NGOs in developing countries for ten or 15 years. We have provided them with support through that time and because of that they have become very effective and relatively sustainable NGOs considering the environment in countries in Africa. If it is long-term funding, and projects and partnerships often tend to be boom and bust affairs where something happens for two or three years and then vanishes, I do not think that is the best use of resources. Whatever they do, we would like them to do it for the long term so that they recognise that people in a poor country or in the Overseas Territories, if they are going to do effective projects, will need salaries and people on the ground to do the work. It is crazy to expect the Tristan Government with 280 people to have the resources to employ staff to do all these things. It is very important that people have resources to do the work and they need to be supported in the longer term perspective as well.

Q18 Mr Caton: Keeping the focus on the Overseas Territories and the point that you and Ms Sanders have made about improving resources, it is argued that the UK Overseas Territories do not have the capacity to deal effectively with their environmental challenges. Financial capacity aside, how might institutional and knowledge capacity be improved in the territories to help address this?

Ms Sanders: There is a range of ways. It has been very encouraging in the last couple of months to see Lord Triesman's decision on the UK Overseas Territories. Students now only have to pay UK fees to go to university in the UK. That is a huge step forward but, at the same time, I think we still need to remember here in the UK the salaries of people in the territories. For example, a conservation officer on Tristan earns £200 a month. Although he may want to come over and study in the UK, he is going to need support to come over here and do that. There are people out in the territories who would like to be trained and to have access to university education. Those opportunities need to be made available to them by the UK Government. A lot of support could be put in there, for example, by access to training, as

I said before, and providing assistance and support when you are looking at uninhabited territories. For example, the UK has two World Heritage sites, Henderson Island which is part of the Pitcairn Group, and Gough Island. These are not inhabited territories but there is a lot of expertise both in the UK and, if we are thinking about Gough Island in South Africa, there is a lot of interest in supporting monitoring and surveys and other work on those islands. It is just a question of resources. One of the comments that came back from the Foreign Office about the OTEP Fund was that the Overseas Territories do not have the capacity to take on more projects. I do not think that is quite correct. The capacity is there but more funds need to go in to paying for salaried posts. At the moment, although territories can access OTEP funds to support biodiversity conservation projects, they are not actually allowed to use that money to support salaries. Often the reason there are fewer projects submitted is because territories cannot employ people to take those projects forward on the ground.

Q19 Mr Caton: One clear improvement would be if DFID or FCO directly funded environmental positions in these places.

Ms Sanders: Yes.

Q20 Mr Caton: You mentioned those territories where nobody lives. I guess again the Government's argument against this is that these are very remote places and you have to put in a lot of resources that might show a better return elsewhere. What do you say to that argument?

Ms Sanders: If you look at the level of resources required on the territories and what we spend on biodiversity conservation in the UK, I do not think we are looking at huge amounts of resources. The UK has a responsibility here. When we talk about Henderson and Gough Islands, these are World Heritage sites. At the moment on Gough Island the Tristan albatross is threatened with extinction because it is predated by mice. At present we are funded by the UK Government to do a feasibility study to look at the potential for perhaps eradicating mice from the island but to take forward a project like that we are looking at least £2 million. Resources like that need to be available for the UK Overseas Territories if they are going to meet their biodiversity conservation responsibilities.

Q21 Mr Caton: We have already discussed the structural reorganisation in the FOC. Has that had a direct impact on the Overseas Territories in terms of environmental protection?

Ms Sanders: I think it has. Who do they go to in the Foreign Office for some biodiversity advice? I am thinking particularly of the recent oil rig stranding off Tristan Island. This had the potential basically to destroy the whole economy of Tristan because Tristan is dependent on its cray fishery. The arrival of this oil rig and the potential introduction of invasive marine species—I think there have been at least 30 potential marine invasives—could destroy the fishery, but who were the Tristan Island Council

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meant to turn to? Who in the Foreign Office could provide the environmental advice and expertise that they needed? It is just not very clear.

Q22 Mr Caton: You have said that you are agnostic on whether environmental responsibility should lie with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or Defra, but I detect in some of the evidence you have given that you have looked back to a time when FCO was functioning very well and, if you could return to that, that might be the best way forward.

Ms Sanders: The advantage that the Foreign Office has over Defra is that it has the contacts on the ground. Defra does not necessarily have those same sorts of relationships. Perhaps the way forward is to increase the internal expertise within the Foreign Office.

Mr Buckley: If one moves to a scenario where it is seen slightly more as a focal part of the UK environment policy, there is potentially a role for lots of people. The Foreign Office are clearly the right people to make the links between the territories and people within the UK, rooted in the UK, but obviously Defra, through the organisation, does have a range of expertise which could be usefully employed. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee would be an obvious agency to implement some of this work. We also think about

people like DCMS, who have responsibility for the World Heritage sites but also run the National Lottery. One of the issues we are trying to seek clarification on is whether the territories actually could access the National Lottery but they never have been able to do that. One can imagine a network building up of various people being able to help. I go back to the point that the previous life of the Foreign Office was better but there were still very few resources around to do this work. It might have been better but it was not quite there.

Ms Sanders: It has been encouraging recently to see JNCC appoint an officer specifically responsible for the UK Overseas Territories that comes from the Overseas Territories. It is a step forward in the right direction. JNCC would also say that they need more resources if they are going to provide the sort of advice that the Overseas Territories require.

Mr Papastavrou: I have a comment on your earlier question. In a lot of ways the FCO is better placed to deal with multilateral environment agreements than Defra. FCO people will know what is achievable in China or Vietnam in a way that Defra will not. If people within FCO have a handle on the overall network of countries that they deal with, they will know which are the best ones to approach in a way that Defra simply will not be able to do.

Chairman: Thank you all very much for that very useful evidence.

Memorandum Submitted by BioDiplomacy

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BioDiplomacy is a diplomatic/environmental consultancy established by Iain Orr in 2002, after retiring from the UK Diplomatic Service. His career had a strong China focus (Consul-General, Shanghai 1987–1990); and many of his jobs involved political networks in Whitehall and overseas concerning trade, development and environment. He set up the FCO's Biodiversity Team, managed FCO environmental funding for overseas posts and negotiated (within Whitehall as much as with UK Overseas Territories' governments) the detailed texts of joint Environment Charters. This memorandum also draws on BioDiplomacy's work with the World Land Trust, the Global Islands Network, Integrated Water Resources International, and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.

SUMMARY

The FCO has distinctive roles in trade, development and environment work in the UK and overseas. However, it does not always deploy or use its resources well. One reason is failing to understand and protect its own assets. The FCO's funding of overseas projects needs to be managed more flexibly, giving greater attention to the input from its posts and with less limited criteria on environmental issues in order to strengthen its engagement with biodiversity and food and water security. The recent closure of the Embassy in Madagascar should be reversed. A sea change is needed throughout Whitehall in respect of the UK's Overseas Territories. The UK should lead an international commitment to protect the biodiversity of oceanic islands.

PS The FCO will find it easy to ignore whatever recommendations the EAC makes: to understand why this is so needs a social anthropologist to analyse the FCO's working culture in the UK and overseas.

Why should the FCO be involved in these issues?

1. The FCO's involvement in trade seems to need no explanation, but is often misunderstood. Diplomats are not traders (and the FCO's culture is increasingly risk averse). The trade services the FCO provides, largely through its overseas posts, should be regarded as part of its wider consular responsibility to promote and protect, when appropriate, the interests overseas and internationally of British citizens and organizations, including those in its overseas territories and the Crown Dependencies.

2. What are the FCO's main assets? Knowing the politics and culture of other countries; and skilled political negotiating, bilaterally and internationally. These assets depend on good and constantly updated contacts overseas with political and commercial decision makers, the media and civil society. The FCO needs to monitor changing currents that may benefit or threaten UK interests. It should promote civilized values (freedom under just laws, democracy, open-mindedness, individual responsibility and creativity). In the UK, the FCO also needs to listen to people and organizations that can give it different perspectives and keep it aware of the variety of overseas and international interests that should influence UK foreign policy.

3. British interests, global changes and civilized values (not exclusive to Britain—one is readiness to learn from and help others) are why the FCO engages in overseas development. Funding for poverty reduction, disaster relief and the development needs of the overseas territories are related but different matters, where statutory responsibilities and budgets lie with DFID. From 2010, DFID will no longer be providing China with development aid, but the UK will have a continuing interest in China's economic and social development (and similarly with other rapidly developing countries).

4. The FCO's reasons for involvement in environmental issues are largely because of newer developments. During the 19th and 20th centuries, building on the industrial revolution that Britain pioneered, there were increasingly global strains on earth, water and air (Note 1). But until the mid-20th century these strains were largely felt and tackled within national boundaries (Note 2). Only recently have we understood that these issues cannot be solved without a new conception of sovereignty. (Note 3) The first to understand this were local communities, then scientists and environmental campaigners. Politicians and diplomats have come to it late and have much catching up to do. Their instinct is often still to rely on traditional muscle-power (the UK trying to "punch above its weight"—deluded cliché) of diplomatic carrots and military sticks; and to do so within traditional power structures—nation state alliances and trade-offs within the UN and the Security Council.

5. Largely outside that framework lies the power of global communities: investment managers, bond-dealers, multinationals, NGOs, peer-reviewed scientists; global media, sport and music; and educational, health and other service industries looking for the best people and products wherever they can be found (at the right price). These have their own frameworks and operate with or without visas, trading through markets and on the web. Those with no framework are the poor, marginalized and outcasts, mostly in poor countries but also in rich ones (including servants and seasonal migrants, sending remittances to children and relatives overseas).

6. What this account omits is the extent to which environmental factors have influenced much traditional diplomacy. The metaphor behind diplomatic rivalries:

“Rivals = people who share the same river bank (from the Latin *rivalis-rivus* a brook)”

reflects how often historic conflicts over territory have been motivated by competition for the ecoservices which a rival's territory could provide and their own could not—food security, water (an issue in Palestine from biblical times), the strategic value of safe harbours for navies, fishermen and whalers. Now, the whole planet deserves listing under the World Heritage Convention because of the global ecoservices provided to all people by the atmosphere, the oceans and global biodiversity (a foundation for food security and human health). It would be an international outrage if the local guardians in this generation were to trash Stonehenge, the Great Wall or the Galapagos Islands. All that prevents global biodiversity and atmospheric, freshwater and oceanic systems from being listed is that they are everywhere. (Note 3)

PROTECTING THE FCO'S DISTINCTIVE ASSETS

7. There are two clichés that nevertheless cover vital truths. First, that a diplomat is “an honest man who lies abroad for his country”. The honesty is what matters. Second, that the FCO “looks after the interests of foreigners”. The truth is that in looking after British interests and civilized values, diplomats need to understand what other countries and their people see as their interests; and make sure that UK political leaders and officials in other government departments are aware of these when developing policies with bilateral, regional or international dimensions. That means British Ambassadors and the FCO are often blamed for bringing bad news: sometimes Johnny Foreigner sees things differently from John Bull. Telling it like it is overseas is a thankless and sometimes repetitive job, like cleaning the latrines; but it has to be done well if the UK is to prosper.

8. It is a distinctive job. The UK's membership of the EU has modified it, especially in relation to internal EU policy. But it remains very different. Unfortunately, for some years the FCO has bought uncritically into the business philosophy of management by quantified objectives. This is not a sensible straitjacket for an organization already constrained by dealing with countries that have their own priorities. Targets are, of course, helpful for many parts of the FCO. It has to manage its budget responsibly (and its estate in the UK and overseas); but it does not (yet) have to operate profitably (by selling foreign policy services to other government departments and commercial companies?). But it makes no more sense for foreign policy specialists to draw up elaborate annual objectives than it would be for a newspaper proprietor to judge journalists on a monthly wordage target. Cultivating reliable contacts, accurate and timely reporting and intelligent and persuasive analysis (and honesty) are among key professional values which diplomats should share with journalists. These values are often not best served by excessive micro-management.

9. It does not help FCO morale that on a number of key issues the Prime Minister takes much of his foreign policy advice elsewhere—at unrecorded meetings with staff in No 10 and friends. Of course the Prime Minister (and the Foreign Secretary) need to weigh many conflicting pressures that bear on foreign policy decisions—international and bilateral commitments, public opinion and domestic economic and political consequences. But diplomats cannot do a good job if they are not listened to on foreign policy, however well they meet their management objectives. There is currently an unhealthy climate in which senior FCO officials and Ambassadors believe they will only prosper if they express views palatable to No 10.

10. The tyranny of micro-management in the public services was analysed in Onora O'Neill's 2002 Reith Lectures, *A Question of Trust*, as a conflict between accountability and trust. The increasing micro-management of FCO departments in London and of overseas posts stifles what the FCO needs to be good at—being quick on its feet to anticipate and cope with change. Many of the FCO's ten strategic international priorities do not cascade naturally into a set of measurable targets for each post and each officer each year. Posts need to turn around their working priorities rapidly when the Berlin Wall falls and plane bombs or tsunamis strike. Remember, too, that many Ambassadors (not just to Islamic states) could bin many of their key targets because of the UK's invading Iraq when it did and the way the decision was taken. The appreciation overseas of civilized British values continues to take a battering, especially when UK criticism of Guantanamo Bay was so late and feeble. The FCO has been too cowed by No 10 to report honestly on how much more difficult policy on Iraq has made it to protect many UK interests besides the risk of being attacked by Saddam's weapons.

11. Two ways in which the FCO has not done well in protecting its assets have been maintaining its collective memory and its local knowledge overseas. There is a relatively rapid turnover of staff at posts overseas (and often faster for jobs in London). Many development and environmental NGOs have the experience of needing to re-educate their FCO contacts from scratch because knowledge in London or at posts is not retained. In some cases Ministers has been unable to refute criticism by an overseas counterpart of lack of UK involvement because officials have not been aware of bilateral meetings or FCO-funded projects only a few years before. This is largely because the FCO has adapted poorly to new information systems. It will be hard for future historians to discover how the interactions between different FCO departments and overseas posts shaped foreign policy decisions in the past 15 years.

12. Of equal concern is how the FCO has weakened its global network by recent post closures. In the Pacific and the Caribbean there is a distinct sense that the UK has been losing interest; and over many years the FCO has undervalued the importance of the institutional links with Commonwealth countries, such as the professional and educational networks of Commonwealth judges, journalists, doctors and universities. The British Council has tried (sometimes without enough support from the FCO) to make better use of these important UK assets overseas. "Commonwealth Co-ordination" often seems to mean little more to the FCO than defensive planning for the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

13. However, the most striking recent example of a post closure that made no sense in terms of trade, development and the environment, was not in the Commonwealth but the decision to close our resident Embassy in Madagascar. This was done at a time (2005) when the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer were devoting more time to Africa; the FCO was launching its first Sustainable Development strategy, including support for the 2010 biodiversity target; and a new government in Madagascar was showing its wish to move beyond the Francophone world by opening an Embassy in London. The closure of this Embassy (a small one, costing little to maintain) has adversely affected UK and Malagasy organizations in the forefront of the challenge to coordinate development with protecting global biodiversity. Sadly, the decision was not the result of careful planning but of a haphazard process in which there was no serious consultation with the Ambassador nor with UK companies and development and environmental organizations working with Madagascar. This incoherent decision needs to be reversed.

OVERSEAS POSTS AND MANAGING FCO PROJECT FUNDS

14. Foreign policy is about applying settled values and long-term collective knowledge of other countries to meet changing tasks and opportunities. One of the tools for this should be funding which overseas posts can deploy to support their work. Our diplomats need to maintain good links with those parts of civil society—very often human rights, development and environmental NGOs—which help shape change in ways that promote our own core values. Such funding is different from the strategic funding for poverty reduction and disaster relief that are managed by DFID. It needs to be deployed by trusting the judgement of posts about the best use locally of limited resources to promote FCO policies and develop the post's influence. Such locally targeted small project work uses and enriches posts' understanding of the country where they are working. Seeing how helping a local NGO prevent a wetland from being destroyed involves land ownership issues, commercial bribery and local power brokers has been an eye-opener for more than one diplomat into the linkages between environmental policy and human rights, democracy and good governance.

15. If the FCO's Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) is to provide posts with this essential tool, it needs to be managed with greater flexibility, so that it can respond to opportunities that come up at short notice, often identified by posts. Consider one tiny and one substantial project, neither of which could probably be carried out now because of the time scale for allocating funds and criteria that currently limit the

environmental theme in GOF to climate change and sustainable development. In one, the High Commission in Mauritius discovered that if £2,000 could be found quickly, the historic first joint visit of French and British naval vessels to Mauritius could be marked by the visiting sailors building an aviary on an offshore island to help the reintroduction of egrets that previously bred there. In another, the FCO was able to respond within a week to an urgent request for the Charles Darwin Research Station in the Galapagos Islands for £50,000 to tackle damage caused by a serious oil spill. In both examples the posts were responding to locally identified needs (within policy parameters) rather than London pre-empting local decisions on value for money.

16. Two useful changes would be for the GOF to recognize that projects addressing the global crises over biodiversity and access to fresh and unpolluted water should also be supported. These are both areas where supporting local environmental NGOs can also contribute to capacity-building in civil society organizations which will often do most to build political support for responsible environmental policies.

FCO INTERNAL HOUSEKEEPING

17. For the FCO to be serious about the environment, its estate and transport policies in the UK and overseas must use (where possible) the best UK and local standards of energy and resource efficiency, recycling and design.

“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means.” Albert Einstein.

This is particularly important for new buildings and renovations; and is not just a task for estate and transport budget managers. Whatever technologies are used (local will sometimes be best), commercial and public diplomacy sections should use this in their work, reporting back to UK industry and investors on innovations abroad from which we can learn and perhaps develop for wider use. Travel should be carbon balanced (Note 5), with input on the value of different offset schemes being provided by the FCO climate change team (in consultation with Defra). Posts should be given flexibility in choosing schemes that suit local circumstances.

18. But do not forget that above all the UK’s national environmental housekeeping will determine posts’ influence on environmental issues. Embassies will be listened to with more interest and respect overseas when the UK has domestic success stories on recycling, good design, energy efficiency, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, access to environmental information, management of environmental risks and mitigation measures to tackle the unavoidable effects of climate change that are already in the pipeline

WORKING WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, COMPANIES, AND NGOs

19. Some of the FCO’s links in the UK need strengthening. One surprising contrast between working in London and at an overseas post is that it is when overseas that diplomats learn most about the UK. If you are Consul-General in Shanghai or Ambassador in Madagascar you will see most significant UK visitors, because they value your local knowledge and wish you to support their interests. To do that, they will invariably teach you much about their organization and the sector in which it works in the UK; and they will enrich your local knowledge from their own experience dealing with the country. In London you are far more likely to operate within the narrower confines of the desk you occupy.

20. The FCO’s role in policy coherence (“joined-up government”) arises because it has to ensure that account is taken of the external policy aspects of issues where the policy lead (especially for legislation) and the big budgets lie with Defra, DFID and DTI. Other departments also matter, even if they have smaller budgets, notably the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) because of its lead on World Heritage Sites (including those in the UK’s Overseas Territories), UNESCO and the huge contribution of the media, arts and sport—the 2012 Olympics—to the UK’s public diplomacy work overseas. That is likely over the next decade to include the growing contribution of the arts in the UK to raising awareness of human impacts on the environment. (Note 6)

21. On trade, development and environment, the FCO could do considerably more to build up its links with other stakeholders in foreign policy. There should be more secondments (outward as well as inward); and more of the FCO’s public diplomacy work should be done in partnership with companies, universities and NGOs. The FCO has had quite a good record in secondments from Defra. This has not included the sections of Defra based in Bristol that deal with both UK and international conservation issues. Secondments involving biodiversity and the UKOTs (see paragraphs 26 to 29 below) are desirable; as are secondments with DFID, DCMS, UK and international NGOs and leading UK companies engaged in sustainable development overseas.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: BIG AND SMALL

22. The FCO has been an active participant in cross-departmental Sustainable Development Dialogues with five countries: Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. Those with China and India are particularly important for the UK's promotion of green technologies. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), renewable energy, resource efficiency in design and engineering and many other green innovations will only develop fast and have the global take-up that the planet needs if there is good collaboration between the UK and other rich countries with the burgeoning factories and software developers in China and India—who can make green products and software available at prices which ensure the rapid elimination of high carbon and resource-wasteful economies everywhere. Will the UK be showcasing what it can provide at the Shanghai International Expo in 2010?

23. However, the FCO should not neglect smaller countries. They are the equal of G8 countries when it comes to votes in international trade, development and environmental negotiations. In some areas they are also disproportionately important. Two of these are biodiversity and the governance of the oceans. Because of the biogeographical role of islands as drivers of evolution, the world's island states and sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIJs)—like the Galapagos Islands, Hawaii, Hainan, New Caledonia and the UKOTs—have a huge proportion of the world's threatened biodiversity. The UK has also had a historic role in the discovery and colonization of many oceanic islands; and Britain's earlier imperial expansion contributed not only to the knowledge of that biodiversity (with many of the type specimens in the Natural History Museum) but also to the deliberate and accidental introduction to them of alien and often invasive species.

24. The oceans are the parts of the planet where we still know far too little about the way land-based activities are changing natural processes on which we depend—the Gulf Stream and many other deep ocean currents. It was a small Commonwealth country, Malta, which took a leading role in developing the fundamental framework for governance of the oceans—the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. But UNCLOS was developed well before we understood the crises in climate and biodiversity. And small island states have few resources with which to address their responsibilities for using their Exclusive Economic Zones in ways that are truly sustainable, including the management and monitoring of foreign fishing fleets. These are issues to which the FCO and other departments need to pay greater attention, starting with the UKOTs, whose combined EEZs cover a far greater area than the EEZs around Great Britain and Northern Ireland (see Appendix).

25. The development and environment priorities of small islands are sometimes difficult to address: in financial terms the projects they need are small, but so is their capacity to frame bids to the Global Environment Facility, the EU or other funding sources. One decisive contribution the UK could make to the 2010 biodiversity target would be for the FCO, Defra and DFID to put together a strategic island project, and attract to it international partners with shared biodiversity interests and skills. This would be to undertake to eliminate the major invasive species which threaten global biodiversity on both inhabited and uninhabited oceanic islands, including those in the UKOTs. For some invasive species on some islands there are still technical obstacles to eradication projects; but if we are genuinely committed to biodiversity there must not be financial problems. The project could be launched in the next Chinese Year of the Rat, 2008; and a target of completion by the next Rat year, 2020 would be a good way to start setting and tackling post-2010 biodiversity targets.

THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES—BRITISH, NOT FOREIGN

26. Question 13 in the list of issues the EAC wishes to address should not be only about the FCO but about HMG's responsibilities towards its overseas territories. Even more fundamental are British attitudes towards them. The FCO has traditionally regarded all colonies as foreign (part of the imperial baggage imported in 1968 when it merged with the Commonwealth Office). The British public makes distinctions between those that were wholly or partly colonised from the UK (eg Falklands, Bermuda, Tristan, Pitcairn); those seized with their people as part of imperial rivalries in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean—and Gibraltar; and those without resident populations that were occupied for their military or economic strategic value—St Helena, Ascension, South Georgia.

27. With decolonisation firmly underway, the FCO was left with a hodgepodge of anomalous territories not destined for independence and over which the UK would continue to exercise sovereignty. Some provided benefits to the UK (eg getting favourable terms for upgrading Polaris in exchange for leasing a military base on Diego Garcia to the US), some were seen as a burden (the disputes with Argentina and Spain). But it was impossible to give coherence to these anachronistic remnants of empire as long as one of them was Hong Kong. Once Hong Kong returned to China in 1997, the FCO set out with commendable vision to frame a new relationship with the territories (no longer called “dependencies”) in the 1999 White Paper—*Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*. However, the FCO has little institutional experience of partnership within the British family of nations and territories. Diplomacy is about forging alliances, fashioning accommodations and managing conflicts with those who are not family members. One telling sign of that is that the elected governments in the territories were not consulted on drafting the White Paper.

28. It is not surprising, then, that the UKOTs are still seen by many officials and ministers as problems rather than as overseas relations sharing a common British heritage; and that the rest of Whitehall often treats issues involving the UKOTs as for them or the FCO to “sort out” (depending on whether they think the FCO solid or weak in the promotion of metropolitan UK interests). The territories are British, not foreign: like Northern Ireland part of the UK by choice and necessity, not by coercion. Maybe that gives a clue to why mainland Great Britain has such a shaky identification with its overseas territories as far as the UK’s international rights and obligations are concerned: their local social and political concerns (like Northern Ireland’s) are not the same as those of the Westminster Parliament.

29. However, the environmental richness and diversity of the UKOTs make the UK (to much surprise) a key state in terms of coral reefs, albatrosses, tussac grass, active volcanic geology, albatrosses and endangered endemic plants and insects. One of the FCO’s prime undischarged responsibilities is to convince every part of HMG (especially the Treasury and Defra) that only by a sea-change in attitudes to the UKOTs will the UK be able to meet its commitments to the global 2010 (and beyond) targets on biodiversity; and its commitments in the 1999 White Paper and the 2001 Environment Charters.

NOTES

1. Earth—too many people using land and natural resources as if both were infinitely renewable; water—too little freshwater and growing pollution of rivers, lakes and oceans; air—smog, acid rain, ozone depletion and increasing atmospheric CO₂ and other greenhouse gases. The fourth traditional element, fire, uses manifestations of the other three elements to provide man with the energy to transform the planet, as no other known part of the universe has been transformed. Earth provides fossil fuels and uranium ores; water powers mills, hydroelectric stations and wave and tidal power; air gives oxygen and winds to fill out sails and turn turbines.

2. Some of the earliest legislation to deal with two impacts of globalization on biodiversity—alien invasive species and over-harvesting of wild resources—were in two distant islands which Britain colonised and which remain sovereign British territories. Early Governors of St Helena identified, and took local measures to counter, the destructive effects of goats on the local vegetation (see Richard H Grove: *Green Imperialism—Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Bermuda adopted the world’s first marine turtle conservation legislation in 1620. One of the first modern international treaties on an environmental issue was the 1946 *International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling*, which established the International Whaling Commission. The IWC’s precarious agreement to maintain a moratorium on commercial whaling needs all the diplomatic support the FCO can provide.

3. “Our ability to manage our transactions with the planet around us is usually discussed in the context of environmental or, more rarely, economic policy. Yet I believe these issues go right to the heart of the new diplomacy. Foreign policy will increasingly be about the tensions and difficult choices that arise from environmental stress and competition for resources. In responding, we must not let yesterday’s notions of sovereignty and national interest get in the way of solutions that are bound to transcend the limits of those ideas.” Peter Hain (written while Minister of State in the FCO) *The End of Foreign Policy?—British Interests, Global Linkages and Natural Limits* Fabian Society, Green Alliance and the Royal Institute for International Affairs 2001 p 22.

4. The World Heritage Convention gives protection to “parts of the cultural or natural heritage [which] are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole.” The elemental ecoservices we all need cannot be given delimited boundaries as the Convention requires, but they certainly meet criterion (ix) for listing, as “outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals”.

5. The January 2007 issue of BBC Wildlife assessed several schemes, with three getting the highest marking (7/10): www.worldlandtrust.org, www.envirotrade.co.uk and www.climatefriendly.com.

6. There were two notable examples in 2006 of the arts engaging with environmental issues. Orlando Gough’s choral work *We Turned on the Light* was a highlight of the BBC Proms season. The words—by the playwright Caryl Churchill—and music, give dramatic expression to the linkages of which we need to be aware between our daily actions and consequences on people and places remote in space and time. For example, between international aviation and losing glaciers and polar ice: “. . . We flew to the sunshine/ And saw the ice falling”. Similar climate change themes were explored in a magical exhibition at the Natural History Museum inspired by David Buckland’s Cape Farewell project, with its related book, *Burning Ice—Art and Climate Change* (Cape Farewell 2006, ISBN 0-9553109-0-3).

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Witness: **Mr Iain Orr**, Director, BioDiplomacy, gave evidence.

Q23 Chairman: Good morning, Mr Orr. It is a pleasure to see you this morning. I apologise for the delay to this particular hearing from last week. Could you, too, briefly introduce yourself and where you think the importance of this issue lies, particularly with the FCO and the UK Government?

Mr Orr: In introducing myself and what I have been concerned with, the main point is that I spent most of my diplomatic career dealing with China. Interestingly, when I started in China, China was being opened up to the world through ping-pong diplomacy. I was diagnosed at the age of 50 as being mildly dyslexic. That means that I am very keen not just to give oral evidence but visual evidence as well. With your permission, Mr Chairman, I would like to introduce some of things that I have been involved with through what one might call T-shirt diplomacy. I am very keen on that.

Q24 Chairman: Could you give us just one example? If there are other things you have brought, perhaps they could be circulated later.

Mr Orr: I did want to tell you that my last overseas post was in Accra where at one point, and this was a country where we were simultaneously accredited to Togo, I was involved as an EU election observer in Togo. The relevance of that to the FCO and the environment is that Togo then was an extremely ill-governed dictatorship, somewhere where biodiversity was suffering very badly. It is very much, if you like, the politics of good governance that, in my view, is the fundamental reason why the environment and biodiversity within it are important for good diplomacy. I worked, as I say, for a full career within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with a primary interest in China, but latterly in one of my jobs I had a great deal to do with the Overseas Territories. I would agree with some of the evidence already given about the lack of sufficient attention being given to the Overseas Territories. As for the priority that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has given to environmental issues, some encouragement can certainly be taken from what is said in the foreword to the *Sustainable Development Action Plan 2007*, which the Foreign Office has just printed. There is very good political guidance given in that in the foreword by Mrs Beckett. What I am a little more concerned about is the extent to which the Foreign Office understands how and why biodiversity and other environmental aspects are crucial to achieving the other goals of security and prosperity. I think the environment is not as fully integrated as it should be. I also think that there is a great deal more that needs to be done in terms of better liaison with other parts of Whitehall and certainly with civil society, with NGOs.

Q25 Chairman: How does it filter down to our overseas posts, particularly with the senior officers there? Do you think they will be avidly reading the Foreign Secretary's foreword and revising any local practices, approaches or procedures?

Mr Orr: It is difficult to say. These documents are meant to be guidance within an organisation for work. A great deal depends on the leadership. I have heard some of those giving evidence previously talk of very strong support on certain issues from ambassadors in post. In some cases that will be true. There are some very good sentiments within that document. In terms of delivery, it is important to liberate the enthusiasm that quite often you get on the ground. The extent to which people have mentioned getting support from embassies is quite striking. I think there is a slightly regrettable tendency for over-management from the centre. It is absolutely vital that clear political guidance is given, but within these guidelines it is very often posts that will themselves see opportunities that arise and make the most of it.

Q26 Chairman: I can see that you have brought one exhibit which is on the table, quite a large one. Having made the effort, I guess it would be remiss if the committee did not see it. Explain it to us.

Mr Orr: Let me explain one or two of the things that I have brought. I can make certain points on all of them. This print of penguins is a very easy one. I would urge you all to go to Falkland House and see a magnificent exhibition of art from the Falkland Islands. I certainly have a strong belief that the creative arts and the environment belong very much together. I do not know if any of you saw the exhibition at the Natural History Museum last year called *Burning Ice: the Art of Climate Change*. It is very important to have that whole creative spirit involved. I see three crises: climate change; huge global extinction in terms of biodiversity; and the crisis that is going to impact most quickly and directly on most people, water. I am particularly interested in water issues because of my time spent in China. The water table in Beijing has dropped in the time that I have been dealing with China something like 30 metres, which is quite extraordinary. Another of these displays shows something that I wish was in every embassy and I do not think you have perhaps heard enough about yet today. It is the trade aspect of your investigation: it is trade, development and the environment and the FCO. This magnificent book is the *Eco-Design Handbook* from Thames & Hudson. I have nothing to do with Thames & Hudson or with the author but it is a magnificent guide to good technologies. There are huge areas of environmental work where we need to integrate better the work between those who are involved in the political relationships with other countries and those who are involved with trade promotion work. **Chairman:** I think it must be true that raising questions of biodiversity might also raise questions of culture, but that is perhaps a little outside our remit. You have made an interesting connection.

Q27 David Howarth: What you have said does come into the questions I am going to ask. There was a very striking phrase in your written evidence where you said that the FCO's instinct is to focus on the "traditional muscle-power" of diplomatic carrots and military sticks in its international work. The

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question is: how effective is that approach to advancing environmental objectives, and what are the other approaches that could and should be used?

Mr Orr: In the case of many environmental issues, it is in a sense fairly obvious that people are in it together. In terms of, say, biodiversity issues, the Convention on Migratory Species, which I am involved in and doing some consultancy work for, is trying to bring China on board. One of the concerns with migratory species, looking at it from a sustainable use development point of view, is: whose birds are they? I have been at meetings where Cuba talks about what they are doing with “their turtles”, and the Bahamas says, “Hey, now, they are our turtles, not your turtles”. The same goes for birds and crucially also for marine species. There are disastrous developments in the world’s oceans. You cannot regard it as yours, so it is not a question of using your political or military power to defend your territory. The earth’s biodiversity, its climate and indeed its water are not any one country’s territory. There has to be a different approach to understanding and certainly to working towards much greater justice in the relationship between countries at different stages of development.

Q28 David Howarth: I was thinking of specific techniques. Is this a case where public diplomacy is very important as opposed to threats and inducements, for example?

Mr Orr: Yes, I certainly think it is. The United Kingdom has shown itself quite good at that from time to time. That is very important. This phrase has been used elsewhere; it is a coalition of the willing and a coalition not just of countries. There are signs that the Foreign Office is showing a greater understanding of the importance of working with businesses and civil society. It is about the culture of how you approach environmental issues. Much of that, in my view, has to do with good governance. What concerns me in certain areas, both in the UK and in a variety of different countries overseas like China, is that in some of our Overseas Territories the issue is not to do with cuddly animals but with whether people have access to the information that they need. I was very disappointed to find last year that a decision was taken to disapply the Freedom of Information Act to St Helena and that at a time when there is major development work going on with the proposed first ever international airport for St Helena. It is not as easy now for anybody concerned to get information about that.

Q29 David Howarth: You mentioned working in business, NGOs and civil society in general. You say that a start has been made on that. How far down the line has that reached? There is obviously a great deal of potential there. How much of that potential has been activated?

Mr Orr: Nothing like enough has been activated. We have done quite good things. As I remember, the UK was one country at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg that really had quite a big role for NGOs within its delegation. We provided something of a lead on

that. That is all right on the very big occasions. It is difficult to get that into the working psyche of day-to-day working. Certainly I had experience when working within the Foreign Office that one of the important things is not just working with NGOs but working across government with other government departments. I can remember being at many meetings where I thought that it was going to be useful to find out what the views were of a number of NGOs on an issue while we were taking some policy decisions but where the attitude quite often was within the FCO, because we have other departments in the FCO, and with other departments in Whitehall: yes, it is very important to consult the NGOs but first we have to get our act together. That is the wrong attitude. There is no point in consulting people unless you are ready, and this goes for how you conduct diplomacy with other countries. You are only going to influence people if you show that you are open to understanding their interests and being influenced by them. There is a great deal of expertise within not just the British NGO community but also the academic community in Britain. An awful lot of that expertise is not tapped into by the Foreign Office early enough in the process of policy formation.

Q30 David Howarth: That is the important point. You also say that the FCO lacks in its Sustainable Development Strategy strategic vision, which implies that you also think they ought to get their original lines straight. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that and say how that could be improved, especially since your previous answer shows that it is also important to consult more widely with civil society, the academic community, NGOs, and so on.

Mr Orr: That is a big question. That is very difficult to do. It is a bit like telling people to give up smoking or to go on a diet: the motivation has to come from within. To some extent, the difficulty is how to get motivation within the culture of the Foreign Office to understand. I do not think there is yet a sufficient understanding—it is gradually developing—of the nexus in the trade development environment. How do you bring it all together? I have considerable admiration for the perspective that is set out in the FCO’s Sustainable Development Action Plan, and indeed within that there are some very good sentiments. One of the earlier witnesses talked about support for lobbying on whaling issues. That is built into the Sustainable Development Action Plan. It is much harder to do that if some of the important posts are not there. This should be dealt with on a regular and strategic basis so that people realise that it matters to them if the UK, along with other countries, does not want the moratorium on commercial whaling to come to an end. They need to have that at the forefront of their minds. The FCO needs to talk a lot more to people at very senior levels within NGOs, ministerial and also permanent under-secretary directors. You only achieve results with leadership, and that means that the politics have to be decided at the national level and

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secretaries of state and ministers should have that as a priority. That really has to feed into the top levels and then permeate the culture. It is a tough job.

Q31 David Howarth: You were specifically critical in your written evidence of the introduction of targets and objectives into the FCO. You say these can actually hinder the FCO's work. I suppose the question then arises about how could sustainable development priorities be better delivered without targets?

Mr Orr: It is not that anyone wants to get rid of targets; they do not want to be driven by them. I think this is related to the tensions between accountability and trust. Excessive targets mean that you are just not filling somebody with a vision of what their job is about. You would imagine that by the time somebody becomes an ambassador or high commissioner, if they do not know what their job is about and they need it to be written down as 20 targets to reach by the end of the year, then you have appointed the wrong person. The people who need to be given targets are those who are work shy, and I do not think people in the Foreign Office are work shy, or people who need to be kept going. Sometimes that will apply in business. There will need to be one or two crucial targets. We have seen evidence of this in plenty of areas in the National Health Service and elsewhere where your life and indeed the amount of money you get from the Treasury is judged by how well you are hitting particular targets. Often they are interrelated and you cannot hit more than one interrelated target at the same time. It is like fundamental physics. You have a range of things that you want to achieve and there have to be trade-offs as you go along. You have to be guided by a strategic vision of what you have to achieve. There will be targets or things to remind you that you are not doing as well as you might be. As with sustainable development, you do not just stick a label on it saying, "We achieved that target". You have to understand why it was a target and make good use of it. One area that applies to is the project work with which the Foreign Office is becoming increasingly involved. You will be aware of their Global Opportunities Fund. My experience of the FCO's work on projects is that it fills a very important gap. The overseas development work of DFID is in many ways understandably geared to huge targets where money needs to be well spent. DFID now finds it very difficult to spend money that is less than several hundreds of thousands of pounds, whereas very often, particularly when you come to influence countries, small amounts of money to support little projects of £5,000 to £20,000 can be very useful indeed. You do not want a philosophy of having a great fund and needing to be able to tick off how it has all been very well spent in accordance with a set list of priorities. Yes, you need overall guidance, but you need to be able to respond flexibly when opportunities arise and you need to trap the value of the projects. Very often when they have been completed, that may, in the country concerned, be only the start of the project's value. I have certainly seen examples of embassies and high

commissions forgetting and somebody complaining that the embassy is not doing very much with them, only to find that the minister may not be aware of a pretty important project carried out only three years before. I think the FCO has a real problem keeping alive a good collective memory.

Q32 Mr Caton: Like our previous witnesses, you have criticised the closure of the embassy in Madagascar. Does the Foreign and Commonwealth Office need to have a post in a country in order to have real influence?

Mr Orr: It does if it has sufficiently important interests there. The point I make about post closures is important. There is certainly scope for working more closely with our European partners and more closely sometimes with Commonwealth partners in certain countries. If you are only visiting there are always going to be some penalties. The penalty is that very often the ambassador is simultaneously accredited to four countries and he will have to organise his life. He will have to make a plan for when he goes to a country. That is almost certainly going to be related to the interests of different government departments. Of course, embassies work for the whole country and they are tasked. In very many embassies the bulk of the work comes from outside the FCO; it comes from elsewhere in Whitehall. They will then target the right time of the year from their point of view to hit that country. That country becomes used to being visited when there is something that Britain wants out of them or wants to tell them to do or persuade them to do, but if they suddenly have an issue, yes, you can send an e-mail, yes, you can get on the phone. There may be language and other difficulties. You simply do not feel that you have the same ability to talk to somebody who understands your day-to-day background. There is always a penalty in being non-resident, wherever you are. I was in Ghana. I would not argue that we ought to have an embassy in Togo but I accept that there are certain penalties. In the case of Togo, no, we did not have a sufficiently great interest. The case of Madagascar was a shocking decision, I would say, and a stupid one because it was inconsistent with the Government's policy on development priorities for Africa. It was inconsistent with developing trade, given that the newly-elected Madagascar Government was sending out a very strong signal of wanting to move outside the Francophone world. There were plenty of UK companies and UK interests but the Foreign Office did not listen to any of them. In that particular case, the decision was not taken as a result of strategic thinking. It was a last-minute trade-off. They had to make certain closures. Somebody fought very strongly not to close the Gambia as a post, and you could argue about that, but then said that we cannot trespass on any of our other geographical areas; if we are going to keep the Gambia, who do we close down? They decided to close down Madagascar without any consultation with outside stakeholders. That is not the way to decide whether or not to close a post. I would say that before any post is closed, or indeed opened, that

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decision ought to be based on a serious consideration. It may take a lot of time. Obviously you know the stakeholders in that country and in the UK and very quickly, if you were doing your job at all, you could consult them.

Q33 Mr Caton: Looking more widely, are you aware of moves to shift to a system of having regional ambassadors rather than single country ambassadors? If that is on the cards, can it work?

Mr Orr: I am aware of it slightly. I have been alerted by reading some of the material sent to this committee. I am certainly going to look at that. It could work if you have a regional ambassador with real clout who can deliver in terms of our interests in particular countries and who has an effective relationship with those countries. I am pretty certain that if a government with which we want a good relationship has found under the present system that because it is not a priority country within the FCO's current list and it is not one where we have a sustainable development dialogue and therefore it is not managing to get the resources that it would like from the UK and somebody operating regionally could deliver, yes, but I would be a little sceptical about it. The resources are not necessarily aid or development resources but also questions of trade and investment that they would like to see coming from the UK. I would like to see the case made and tried out. It should be driven by a vision of how it is going to improve not just as a cost-cutting exercise but as an exercise in being more effective in influencing countries. I think there is still a great deal to be said for keeping the small posts relatively lightly managed from London and working within very clear guidelines. Relatively young diplomats can gain experience in small posts managed by three or four other UK-based staff, if they are lucky, but probably up to 20 local staff, and coping with really tricky issues like how to handle visa operations. That can be very good experience for a young diplomat and the costs of keeping small embassies open are really quite small.

Q34 Mr Caton: In thinking about costs, the FCO, the same as every other government department, has had to make staff reductions as efficiency measures. At the same time, the role of the FCO seems to have spread to cover considerably more issues. Do you see those twin factors affecting the ability of the UK to influence the environmental and sustainability agenda on the international stage?

Mr Orr: I agree that the agenda is widening and some of that is apparent. We are now much more aware of the fact that degraded environmental conditions can sometimes be a factor in causing refugees and conflict. We have terms like "environmental security" and "climate security". These are new terms but they relate to something that is not entirely new. One way in which you can get better results out of the same or smaller resources is by working more effectively throughout Whitehall. There is scope for that by understanding other cultures. I would like to see a good deal more in the way of both inward and outward secondments

in the Foreign Office. You can achieve better results if you put together the right team to work on something; it may well be led by Defra or by DFID with an FCO component. I do not think that is done enough. You can put forward particular strategic objectives if you have a cross-departmental team that really gels and operates. I know there is an inter-ministerial group on biodiversity. If that does better work in giving guidance to Whitehall as a whole, then you will need possibly to have a better co-ordinated approach between DFID, Defra and the FCO. One particular area, which it is important to mention, is the Foreign Office and its responsibilities in respect of the Overseas Territories. I have a great deal of sympathy with the view in the Foreign Office that the Overseas Territories are British. They are not part of the Foreign Office. They are not like embassies or high commissions. They are not even countries that we are seeking to influence in particular. They are part of the British family, if you like. Undoubtedly, the point that was made in your committee's review of the UN's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment that Defra should have a much bigger role is very important. To that extent, the FCO will much better fulfil its responsibilities in relation to the Overseas Territories by dealing with good governance and freedom of access to information. At the moment, in St Helena there is the problem of the one independent newspaper coming under a lot of pressure from the government in St Helena, partly because it sometimes publishes things they do not like. There is huge value in having a free press.

Q35 Mr Caton: I would like to come back to the Overseas Territories in a moment. Can I ask you a broader question first? You identified what you called three crises: biodiversity, water and climate change. The Government and the FCO have clearly prioritised the latter, climate change. Are they right to do that?

Mr Orr: They are certainly right to prioritise it. It is very important. They should not do it at the expense of the other crises. At the moment, these three crises are interrelated. Even if you have the magic technological solution to climate change, and that still seems to be the Holy Grail of some people in the United States who say that you will be able to have a big shield, I find it very hard indeed to imagine equity between different countries. If you manage to reduce global temperatures by putting up these great umbrellas of one sort or another, that is presumably going to affect different countries to a different extent. How do you compensate those that do better or worse out of that? The danger lies in saying that climate change is causing the crisis and that there is no point in spending anything on biodiversity if you are going to get climate change. All these crises have all to be tackled. Please do not make climate change the only priority. You have to look at the environment pretty holistically.

Q36 Mr Caton: Coming back to the Overseas Territories, we understand that you were involved in the original negotiations on the Environment

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Charters signed with the UK Overseas Territories. In your view, how successful has that proved to be in protecting the environment in those places?

Mr Orr: It has been successful up to a point. It has certainly given those, as much within government both in the Overseas Territories themselves and in the UK, something on which to base their requests for resources for priorities. The Environment Charters followed from the 1999 White Paper. That solidified some of the values and changes of attitude in that White Paper. If that had not been there, even the small amount of funding that is presently available for the environment would have been lost in cuts or it would have been subsumed in much larger projects. The delivery is patchy and that is very largely because a lot of the environmental issues in the Overseas Territories demand resources. Some governments in the Overseas Territories are quite well off *per capita* but, like the Cayman Islands, may not have all the capacity needed to deal with difficult environmental issues. The Cayman Islands is an interesting example. You can argue that they have done very well in recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Ivan. There are things that we in the UK can learn from the Caymans about preparing for natural disasters. There are not enough resources. Policy comes first. There are not necessarily the right policies. Sustainable tourism is something of a joke in some places. There can be conflict when a company is developing a marina; they may be able to take a lot of sand or attack some mangroves. The development could be made a bit more expensive if it carries out the necessary mitigation measures. There is no doubt at all that if HMG is to fulfil its responsibilities in respect of environmental issues in the Overseas Territories a real step change is needed to fund the hard choices that need to be made. If you were given £10 million and asked what you could do to meet the 2010 biodiversity target by spending it in metropolitan UK or in the Overseas Territories, you will get infinitely better value for money out of that £10 million when you spend it in the Overseas Territories.

Q37 Mr Caton: You mentioned the lack of capacity in some of the Overseas Territories to deal with environmental issues. That was certainly confirmed in the previous report we did that you have already mentioned. What can the FCO and DFID do to build that capacity?

Mr Orr: It is simple. There is relevant expertise in a host of institutions but it is not in the FCO. The FCO does not need biodiversity experts or climate change experts; it needs people who understand the science and the politics of this. For a time in the FCO I was the FCO's lay expert on peaceful nuclear explosions. I had to understand a fair amount about the physics but that was as a layman and not as an expert. I had to understand it from a political point of view. A lot of expertise needs to be made available. I am concerned that there are people in Defra, in DCMS and in the other part of DFID, apart from DFID's Overseas Territories Department, for whom Overseas Territories do not figure in the list of issues they should be considering. I will give you one or two

examples. One is to do with any of the important multilateral environmental agreements. There is a real need for engagement in these issues with the Overseas Territories. That is a huge in, say, something like the recent Albatross and Petrel Agreement, which is vitally important for several of the UK territories in the South Atlantic. Undoubtedly it needs experts in the UK who know about how to deal with the international fishing industry and what is involved. They have to translate that expertise, where necessary, to help the Overseas Territories develop the right sort of legislation and get the right sort of training. One concern of mine is that both in the Overseas Territories and in the UK there is a split between the natural environment and the built environment and heritage. There are some real issues about that. There is the current issue in St Helena to do with the Dutch East Indiaman the *Witte Leeuw* (*White Lion*) which is a historic wreck that needs to be handled properly. St Helena is being got at by a professional salvage company in the States whose main interest is in just leaving one or two little things with a local museum but making considerable profits from the wreck. There are people like the Crown Estate who have a maritime cultural heritage in the Code of Practice for Seabed Development and the Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee. I am pretty certain that no effort has been made to transmit the expertise that lies in compiling a document like that to guide the Overseas Territories for whom it is relevant, of which there is quite a number, so that they know the right sort of people to contact. Obviously, as well as the expert knowledge, there may well be the need for some agencies within the UK Government, not necessarily FCO, to give adequate support. I would like to see far more people in a variety in different government departments and other institutions in the UK with interests that can be vitally affected as applied to the Overseas Territories, particularly in the marine environment, building into their annual travel budget the fact that they need to visit some of them. You cannot really help properly those places that deserve your help unless you know something about it. You learn by going there. You have to know the politics as well. Nearly all environmental issues are fundamentally political issues. You do not get anywhere without getting the politics right.

Q38 Mr Caton: That brings me on to my last question. Do you perceive any conflict or potential conflict between the UK's international responsibilities on something like biodiversity and the right of the Overseas Territories to determine their own solutions to some of these problems?

Mr Orr: Yes, but really only in the sense in which you do not look at them as being foreign; do not look at it as being them against us. You get exactly the same thing in the UK. Talk to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport about some of the sites that they want to put forward as UK sites within the World Heritage list. Very often there is a tension

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about how a management plan will affect the rights of people living in that area. You will find that there is conflict when DCMS is waiting to get what seems a very worthy site on board and the fact that people are reluctant to put together the type of management structure that will pass muster with the demands of

the very rigorous assessors from the UNESCO's World Heritage Centre. These issues will arise but it is within the family.

Chairman: Thank you very much for coming, Mr Orr. You have given us a wealth of evidence and it is fascinating. I look forward to reading the transcript.

Wednesday 7 February 2007

Members present:

Colin Challen, in the Chair

Mr Martin Caton

David Howarth

Memorandum submitted by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

1. Three of the strategic priorities in the 2006 White Paper *Active diplomacy for a changing world* are particularly relevant to international nature conservation:

- (i) we agree that sustainable development is a strategic priority and are pleased to see that due regard has been given to achieving environmental sustainability and tackling global climate change;
- (ii) we support the priority given to the UK's Overseas Territories and in particular the specific aim to promote biodiversity conservation but we would prefer to see the environment specifically mentioned in the high-level priority, to accompany security and good governance; and
- (iii) we acknowledge the need for the UK to engage effectively with the European Union, although we have some concerns about the apparent emphasis on economic growth and competitiveness.

2. Our experience is that there is currently less focus on environmental issues within the FCO than there has been previously, especially prior to the White Paper and the internal re-structuring that accompanied this. We urge that this trend is reversed in the future. We recommend that higher priority is given to the environment throughout the FCO's work and that this is reflected in the FCO's next Public Service Agreement.

3. We believe that the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity (IDMGB) provides an important mechanism for co-ordinating cross-departmental working on biodiversity issues. However, for the group to be fully effective we recommend that:

- (i) it meets more frequently;
- (ii) it addresses substantive cross-cutting policy issues, such as issues arising from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; and
- (iii) it involves a wider range of departments than is currently the case.

4. Greater attention to biodiversity conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories is essential if the UK is to meet the World Summit on Sustainable Development commitment to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The Overseas Territories Environment Programme plays a significant role in supporting environmental protection but we believe that a much greater investment in sustainable development in the Overseas Territories is needed from the UK.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) is the statutory adviser to Government on UK and international nature conservation, on behalf of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. Its work contributes to maintaining and enriching biological diversity, conserving geological features and sustaining natural systems.

We welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to this inquiry on matters relevant to our statutory remit. Our response is provided to each of the questions raised by the Environmental Audit Committee in turn.

The UK is a key player in supporting the conservation of the world's biodiversity and Earth heritage and, more generally, in supporting sustainable development. The FCO has a critical role in implementing UK strategy in this regard internationally. The JNCC plays an active role in supporting the FCO and other government departments in meeting the UK's international nature conservation commitments.

1. *How do environmental protection and sustainable development relate to international security, good governance and democracy?*

1.1 Poor governance, corruption and internal or international conflict undermine attempts to protect the environment and the ecosystem services it provides (and which contribute to sustainable development). In addition, democracy is more likely to enable civil society to contribute to debate on how development is taken forward, to enable citizens to have access to environmental information (and justice), and to ensure that steps towards sustainable development are likely to be genuinely sustained in the longer term. Full expression of human rights is likely to help minorities and the most disadvantaged members of society to

benefit (for example, through recognised tenure over environmental resources) from the ecosystem services provided by a healthy environment. Indeed, the world's poor are often more dependent on such ecosystem services than their wealthier counterparts.

2. *What are the main stumbling blocks to international environmental diplomacy, how successful has it been in the past, and how might we ensure better that negotiations lead to effective global environmental protection?*

2.1 We are not able to offer any comments on this question.

3. *How does the FCO account for the environment in its work? Is the FCO's current structure and capacity effective at promoting UK international environmental and sustainable development priorities? Are FCO officials, at all levels, aware of the importance of the environment for development and security objectives, and vice versa?*

3.1 Three of the strategic international priorities and associated aims for the FCO in the 2006 White Paper *Active diplomacy for a changing world* are particularly relevant to the environment (see 6.1-6.4 below). However, our experience is that there is currently less focus on environmental issues in the FCO than there has been previously, especially prior to the White Paper and the internal re-structuring that accompanied this. For example, FCO staff now less frequently form part of UK delegations to multilateral environmental agreements and the number of contacts within the FCO with whom we deal on environmental issues is reduced.

4. *What more could the FCO do to advance the UK's environmental objectives?*

4.1 In broad terms, we would like to see the FCO integrate environmental issues into all of its work programmes (in line with the principles of sustainable development) and ensure that adequate resources are made available to enable it to contribute effectively to the UK's international nature conservation obligations. More specific recommendations are made in other parts of this submission.

5. *Are FCO sustainable development attachés effective at promoting sustainable development internationally? How do they work and how might this be improved?*

5.1 We believe that the network of sustainable development attachés serves a valuable purpose in allowing relevant FCO staff to share knowledge and experience on issues related to sustainable development. Their annual conferences are a useful opportunity to bring together dispersed staff to focus on key issues and to enable greater consistency of approach and improved intra-departmental working. Given the rapid turnover of staff in FCO posts, the network is also a means of retaining and transferring institutional knowledge within relevant posts. All our links with the network have been positive; we hope the network will be maintained as a means for taking forward FCO input to sustainable development.

6. *Do FCO policy documents, such as the 2006 White Paper, reflect sufficiently sustainable development objectives? Has the International Energy Strategy led to better consideration of climate change in international energy supply policy in the FCO and across government?*

6.1 We comment on three of the strategic priorities in the 2006 White Paper that are most relevant to international nature conservation.

6.2 We note that sustainable development (along with poverty reduction) is one of the nine strategic priorities in the White Paper, and we are pleased to see that due regard has been given to achieving environmental sustainability and tackling global climate change in the specific aims for the FCO. We also welcome the FCO's focus on the Millennium Development Goals and the targets from the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

6.3 We support the strategic priority of supporting the security and good governance of the Overseas Territories. We note that there are specific aims dealing with the environment and biodiversity conservation. This is very welcome, and acknowledges the global importance of the Overseas Territories for biodiversity. However, we would prefer to see the environment specifically mentioned in the high-level priority, to accompany security and good governance, as this would send a stronger message about the priority which the UK government sets for sustainable development within its own sovereignty.

6.4 With respect to the priority to build an effective and globally competitive European Union, we agree that engagement with the EU should be a strategic priority for the UK Government, but are concerned at the emphasis on economic growth and competitiveness in isolation rather than as components of sustainable development. Since the inception of the Barroso Commission, we feel the ethos of sustainable development has taken a 'back-seat' under the pressure to improve economic growth and employment levels through implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. Ignoring the environment when planning for and encouraging economic growth will limit competitiveness for the sake of short-term gain and, by exporting environmental problems, contribute to an erosion of neighbourhood and global security. Environmental regulations and policy do not have to be barriers to growth; they can be (and often are) the drivers of it.

7. Is there adequate funding for projects in the FCO Sustainable Development Programme? Are all projects funded by the FCO, including under other programmes, leading to truly sustainable outcomes? How are FCO-funded projects screened to ensure their sustainability?

7.1 The funds available through those components of the Global Opportunities Fund relevant to sustainable development (including the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP)) provide a means of supporting a range of small projects that contribute to the FCO's strategic objectives. Whilst greater funding would always be desirable, it is equally important to ensure that funds are properly targeted to achieve the greatest impact and legacy. Accordingly, periodic reviews of the effectiveness of funding programmes are desirable, such as the review recently completed for OTEP. In particular, it is important that projects supported by such funds are not all applicant-driven but that, to retain a focus on strategic priorities, direction is given to applicants or work is commissioned to address key issues. We also believe it is important that the results of projects are widely disseminated (noting that failures can sometimes be as informative as successes) and that there is some form of post-project monitoring (perhaps after several years) to assess whether projects have truly achieved a sustained legacy. Our experience of OTEP, with which we are involved through participation on the assessment panel, is that the projects are given fair and adequate scrutiny to ensure they meet the fund objectives and are likely to provide long-lasting benefits.

8. How well does the FCO work with other departments, and in particular DEFRA, DFID and DTI, in relation to sustainable development objectives?

8.1 We are not able to comment on how the FCO works with other departments across the full spectrum of its activities. However, we recognise the strong links and close working arrangements they have with DFID with respect to the Overseas Territories and in their joint management of the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (see also 7.1 and 13.3).

8.2 We recognise that the strategic priorities identified in the White Paper are for UK Government as a whole, while noting that the FCO has a key role in the achievement of many of these priorities. It is essential that different parts of Government share coherent objectives and actively co-operate in their delivery. Suitable structures and processes need to be put in place to achieve this. For example, the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity (IDMGB), which comprises Ministers with biodiversity responsibilities from the FCO, Defra and DFID, together with the Chairman of the JNCC, is an important mechanism for co-ordinating cross-departmental working on biodiversity issues.

8.3 However, we believe that if the IDMGB is to be fully effective it needs to meet more regularly and to address substantive cross-cutting policy issues. Given the recent recommendation of the Environmental Audit Committee for a cross-departmental Ministerial group to address the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment,¹ it seems to us that the IDMGB is ideally placed to take on this role. We also recommend that the IDMGB should involve a wider range of departments than is currently the case. In particular, given the strong links between the environment and trade and economic growth in achieving sustainable development, the absence of a DTI minister reduces the effectiveness of the group.

9. How well does the FCO meet the competing demands placed upon them by different departments such as DTI and DEFRA, and is there evidence that the environment and development are given adequate priority?

9.1 We are not able to comment on the first part of this question. With respect to the second part, we draw attention to our comments in 6.1-6.4 above, where we note an imbalance in some elements of the 2006 White Paper between the priority afforded to economic development and the treatment of biodiversity and environment issues.

10. To what extent does the FCO work with non-state actors in achieving sustainable development objectives? Has the FCO made full use of such organisations?

10.1 We are not able to offer any comments on this question.

11. Should the FCO be required to extend its environmental policy statement to its foreign estate? How well does its foreign estate perform in relation to the policy statement? Is the FCO foreign estate providing an example of our international environmental aspirations, such as the use of less polluting vehicles or renewable energy?

11.1 We note that the FCO encourages its overseas posts to operate in ways that reflect the FCO environmental policy applied to its UK estate but that it does not feel it would be proportionate to apply the policy to the entire overseas estate immediately. While we recognise that standards applied in the UK cannot always be applied so readily overseas, the FCO is typically the face of the UK government abroad and it is important that the UK, and so the FCO, leads by example. Accordingly, we feel it is desirable that

¹ House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. 2007. *The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. First report of session 2006-07*. The Stationery Office, London.

the FCO environmental policy is applied to the greatest extent feasible in overseas posts. A shift to sustainable practices and procurement by these posts would set a valuable lead for other countries to emulate. We welcome the local environmental initiatives undertaken by some overseas posts.

12. *How well are environmental objectives reflected in the FCO Public Service Agreements?*

12.1 Within the FCO's Public Service Agreement (PSA) for 2005–08 there is only one target with an explicit environmental component, namely PSA8 relating to sustainable development. There is an objective relating to the Overseas Territories, but regrettably there is no associated target. We strongly recommend that as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review the FCO's revised PSA should contain a specific target for the Overseas Territories that explicitly refers to biodiversity and/or the environment more generally.

12.2 We also recommend that there should be more shared ownership of PSA targets between departments. For example, the 2006 White Paper contains an aim for the FCO to support delivery of the commitments made at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). This links very closely to one of Defra's PSA targets for 2005-08. We believe there would be considerable merit if the two departments were to have a shared target relating to WSSD commitments in their next PSAs.

13. *Has the FCO met its responsibilities towards the environment in UK Overseas Territories?*

13.1 As recognised in the Environmental Audit Committee's recent report into the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the UK's Overseas Territories are of global significance for biodiversity. The successful conservation of biodiversity in the Overseas Territories is fundamental to the UK being able to make an effective contribution to the WSSD commitment to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

13.2 As noted in 6.3 above, we welcome the strategic priority in the 2006 White Paper to support the security and good governance of the UK's Overseas Territories and, especially, the specific aim to promote biodiversity conservation.

13.3 The joint FCO/DFID Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) plays a significant role in supporting environment protection and sustainable development in the Territories. We believe that the continuation of OTEP, as a means of supporting the implementation of the Territories' Environment Charters and achieving the UK's strategic international priorities, is vital. We endorse the recommendations of the recent OTEP review, and the Government response to this, namely that the fund should focus on key priorities rather than simply being demand-led.

13.4 The financial support provided to the Overseas Territories needs to be commensurate with the challenges that they face. Compared to the funding available in the "metropolitan" UK to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable development more generally, funding for the Territories is much smaller in both absolute and relative terms, despite the importance of the Territories for biodiversity. While initiatives such as OTEP are very welcome, we believe that a much greater investment in sustainable development in the Overseas Territories is needed from the UK.

13.5 We recommend that greater cross-Government co-ordination is needed to fully deliver environmental benefits in the Overseas Territories. The Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity (see 8.2-8.3 above) provides a potentially powerful mechanism for achieving effective co-ordination.

14. *How effective have public diplomacy activities funded by FCO been in promoting sustainable development principles abroad?*

14.1 We are not able to offer any comments on this question.

January 2007

Witnesses: Mr Marcus Yeo, Director of Resources and External Affairs, and Dr Vin Fleming, Head of Global and Overseas Territories Advice Programmes, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, gave evidence.

Q39 Chairman: Welcome to this afternoon's session. It is good to see you both here. I wonder if you could introduce yourselves and briefly outline your perspectives on where the environment and sustainable development fit within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and UK priorities.

Mr Yeo: I am Marcus Yeo, Director of Resources and External Affairs of JNCC.

Dr Fleming: I am Vincent Fleming. I am Head of the International Unit and I have responsibility for our Global and Overseas Territories Programmes.

Mr Yeo: I will start by giving you our general perspectives on the FCO and also say a little about the JNCC's involvement in international work. We are, as you know, the statutory adviser to the Government on UK and international nature conservation. Our international work is broadly divided into four programmes. First, we have a global advice programme, which includes advice and support we give to government on the development and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Convention

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on Biological Diversity. Secondly, we have a global impacts programme. This is a new area of work for us and this is concerned with evaluating the impacts the UK has on biodiversity globally—for example, from trade and tourism—and advising government on mechanisms to mitigate any adverse effects. Thirdly, and of particular interest to this sub-committee, we have a programme concerned with advice on biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories. Fourthly, we have a European advice programme, which is concerned with advising on the development and implementation of policies for or affecting the environment, principally within the European Union. We therefore work very closely with the UK Government on all aspects of our international work, and it is government ministers and officials who are our main customers for advice. The principal government stakeholders we work with are FCO, Defra and DfID. We have experience of working with FCO on a fairly wide range of environmental issues. The UK, we believe, is a key player on the world stage in terms of the environment. It has shown very strong leadership on some issues, notably global climate change, and we believe that the FCO has a crucial role in helping to implement the UK's international objectives in relation to the environment. It can act, for example, as the face of the UK Government abroad; it can help to provide an understanding of the social, political and cultural context of environmental policies in other countries; and it can also—and I think that this is particularly important—provide leadership across government for international issues. The FCO does undertake some very valuable work currently on the environment. Notable examples would be work on climate change; supporting biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories; measures to reduce illegal logging; and pressing for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. However, the impression one gets when one reads documents such as the 2006 White Paper is that global environmental issues could have a rather higher profile within the FCO. For example, only two of the ten international priorities contained in the White Paper explicitly mention the environment. Those are the priorities to do with sustainable development and climate change. So, despite the global importance of the Overseas Territories for biodiversity for example, the priority associated with the territories only refers to ensuring security and good governance; it does not mention the environment at all. It is only when you drill down into the specific responsibilities of the FCO that you find some reference to biodiversity conservation. It is certainly true that most of those international priorities are solely concerned with social or economic issues. We believe that it is really important that government and FCO do not treat environmental issues in isolation; they are intimately entwined with social and economic issues. That, after all, is at the heart of the concept of sustainable development. We would therefore recommend that the environment does need to have a higher profile within the FCO and that environmental issues need to be better integrated with other concerns. We also

believe that such an approach would be much more in tune with what has come out of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which stresses that ecosystem services underpin economic growth and social equity. It is no surprise therefore that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment states that, for example, environmental degradation is likely to hinder attempts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Another key message from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is that reversing environmental degradation so that the flow of ecosystem services is maintained will require us to address the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss; these are social, cultural and political factors. It will not be enough just to deal with the proximate causes of biodiversity loss; we need to delve deeper and address the more intractable issues that are the root cause of environmental degradation. I am sure that these are messages which are very familiar to you from your recent inquiry into the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. I also believe, or at least hope, that they are messages that are beginning to have a greater political resonance. We believe that the FCO has a critical role to play in taking forward the UK's responsibilities for the environment internationally, but clearly it cannot do that on its own. It must be supported by other government departments, in particular Defra and DfID, and also by bodies such as ourselves, who are well placed to give the Government scientific and technical advice on specific issues, and so ensure that policies are based on sound evidence. We therefore believe very strongly that government needs to put in place appropriate mechanisms and processes to ensure that there is effective collaboration between departments. Coherence between different policies, we believe, is essential; and we need strong cross-departmental leadership on international environmental issues. The Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity, which as you all know comprises ministers from FCO, Defra, DfID and the Chairman of JNCC, we believe offers an important mechanism for achieving this. We also recommend that shared targets, for example in departmental Public Service Agreements, may help with this process. That gives you a brief overview of where JNCC is coming from, what our role is and also our perspective on the work that the FCO does in relation to the environment. We would of course be very happy to talk in more depth about some of these issues.

Q40 Chairman: Looking at your evidence, there is the suggestion there that the environment is taking a lesser priority in the FCO—so it is not being maintained at a certain level but it has actually gone down—at a time, as you have said this afternoon, when they should be increasing the priority given to the environment. What do you think has effected that change? What has made them perhaps not give it the attention that it deserves?

Mr Yeo: It is certainly the case that there are fewer staff working directly on environmental issues within the FCO at the moment. There are fewer staff than there were just two years ago. This is following

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the establishment of a Sustainable Development and Business Group in place of the previous Environmental Policy Department. We do have close contacts still with some parts of the FCO, in particular the Overseas Territories Department where we have very good working relationships with officials; but, in general, the frequency of our contacts has dropped off considerably. I think that to some extent the lack of expertise within FCO can be offset by having expertise, for example, within Defra or within JNCC. We can offer that specialist advice. I also believe that there are considerable advantages in mainstreaming the environment within other policy areas. However, I have to say that, at the end of all that, I still believe that you need some central core within FCO that has responsibility for overseeing that integration and mainstreaming, and making sure it is effective.

Q41 Chairman: Would they not argue that the appointment of John Ashton as the special representative on climate change perhaps provides some of that focus? Do you not welcome his appointment and the creation of that position?

Mr Yeo: Absolutely. I think that is a very important appointment. It sends out a very strong signal of just how seriously FCO takes climate change; but that is just one environmental issue, after all, is it not? It is not dealing with core losses of biodiversity through other causes.

Q42 Chairman: You could argue that it is *the* key issue to deal with. One could see some people saying that the loss of biodiversity is a consequence of climate change, so perhaps that is where our priorities should lie. Is that what the argument is, do you think, from the Foreign Office?

Mr Yeo: I think there is some sense in that. It is abundantly clear from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment that climate change will be *the* big driver of biodiversity loss over the coming few decades. It is only right and proper that FCO, and government more widely, puts appropriate resources into that. However, I would say that government still needs to put resources into other aspects of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. I think also that the FCO needs to take seriously the interdependencies that exist between environmental, social and economic issues when addressing climate change. For example, taking some measures that will mitigate the effects of climate change or help the environment adapt to the effects of climate change can have benefits for biodiversity. To give a couple of examples, protecting ecosystems that are significant sinks for carbon dioxide, such as tropical rainforests and peat bogs, will help to mitigate the release of greenhouse gases but will also deliver biodiversity benefits. The protection of coral reefs, mangrove swamps and other coastal ecosystems will help to lessen the impacts of climate change through sea level rising and increased storminess, but, again, will deliver benefits for biodiversity. Measures such as this will also deliver social and economic benefits; for example, protecting the livelihood of local communities.

Q43 Chairman: Does it really matter if the FCO does this work or not? Perhaps the argument could be made that their role is to open doors for other departments with much more specialist knowledge—Defra perhaps and DfID, perhaps even agencies like the Environment Agency—and that FCO should be there as the sort of diplomatic lubricant to make sure that those other departments have good access overseas.

Mr Yeo: What is clear is that all these departments need to work together very closely. We have already talked about the relationship between FCO, DfID and Defra, and that really has to be a very close, almost seamless, working relationship, I believe, on international issues. One way of achieving that, which I have already mentioned, is this Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity, which does have the potential to be highly effective in providing the co-ordination of policies on international biodiversity. What we recommend is that it needs to have a very clear focus, concentrating for example on the WSSD target to reduce the rate of global biodiversity loss by 2010, and also possibly to include a wider range of government departments; for example, perhaps DTI or the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. What is essential here, however, is that the FCO shows strong leadership; that it works across the range of government departments to make sure that we have coherent policies; not just on the environment of course, but on other issues as well. It is very important that FCO plays that leadership role, because, if they do not, there is a danger of having incoherent policies. To give an example that is quite topical at the moment, there is the issue about biofuels. At the moment, there is a big rush to increase the amount of biofuels that is used in the UK because it is a low-carbon energy source, but the impetus to do this can lead to the destruction of tropical forests through South East Asia and in South America. That can be tremendously damaging for biodiversity, threatening species such as the orang-utan for example, and also loses the forests' capacity to store carbon, so that actually the advantages for climate change may be rather slight. It is an example of where we need policy coherence across different departments. It is also a good example of the impacts that the UK has globally through activities within the UK, which we think is something that the FCO should take very seriously.

Q44 Chairman: You say that the FCO staff have been less frequently involved in international negotiations on those national environmental agreements.

Mr Yeo: Yes.

Q45 Chairman: Why is their involvement at that level so important?

Dr Fleming: I can perhaps offer some experience from my participation in UK delegations to some of these MEAs, for example CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. I think that, in some earlier evidence you took from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, they

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talked about the basking shark proposal from the UK, which went to two conferences of the CITES parties. I was a member of the UK delegation to those conferences, in our role as a CITES scientific authority. I think that what we saw there, from the input from the FCO staff member who was part of that delegation, was that they played a fairly key role in lobbying, helping to bring other parties together, and perhaps acting as an honest broker, if you like, which I think is a role where the UK is held in high regard in a number of areas. As well as having an FCO member on the delegation, FCO, before that, had been able to lobby through its posts throughout the world, to find out what the views of other parties would be on voting, and so on, but also to gather intelligence on their views on the proposal beforehand; so that when we went to the conference we were then able to know which countries we may wish to target, to persuade, or where other countries would be more difficult to persuade. I think that sort of network, having the FCO support at the conference, was quite important. Also, having the back-up of the FCO network of posts was equally vital. Coming to the future, I am sure that FCO will continue in some supportive role, but I understand that it is unlikely to be as intensive in future.

Q46 Chairman: Is that to be made up somewhere else, by some input from somewhere else in government? Is it simply a swapping of responsibilities within the departments, or is it a net reduction in our involvement?

Dr Fleming: It is not necessarily a net reduction in the UK's involvement but, looking at FCO participation in those sorts of negotiations, it seems to be somewhat diminished. Of course, those UK delegations are multi-departmental. There will be people from Defra there, ourselves, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, perhaps Her Majesty's Customs and Revenue, and so on. So there are other members of the delegation who can try and fill the gap. However, in terms of the FCO role there, we would reiterate that in our experience—or in my experience, at least—they played a fairly helpful and important role.

Q47 Chairman: I was going to ask if there had been any noticeable difference in our success or otherwise in international negotiations. You can have a large delegation but it is totally ineffective; you can have a very small one that is very effective. Has that impacted on our effectiveness in these negotiations?

Dr Fleming: As you say, the effectiveness of delegations can vary and it does not necessarily depend on the size of the delegation. Of course, it is a question of how you measure effectiveness. You may work very hard as a team, and so on, and still not be able to persuade sufficient other countries to your way of thinking. I think that it is a little hard for us to say what impact there has been, because some of these changes are fairly recent, and conferences of the parties are at two- to three-yearly intervals. So, in the CITES example I gave you, our next conference of the parties will be in June this year in

The Netherlands. There will be some FCO support, but I do not think that it is likely to be of the nature that we have had hitherto.

Q48 Chairman: Given that this involvement from the FCO, as you say, is so important, has there been any stated reason given for this reduction?

Mr Yeo: I do not believe so. I have not heard an explicit reason; just that reorganisation within the FCO has been in line with their White Paper and their strategy.

Q49 David Howarth: Other witnesses have said to us that the problem has been with the internal restructuring of the FCO; that the Environmental Policy Department was subsumed into something called the Sustainable Development Business Group and that contributed to a loss of focus and perhaps a loss of expertise in FCO. Is that your view too?

Mr Yeo: Yes, to a large extent. I would reiterate the points I made: that to some degree FCO can rely on Defra, JNCC and other bodies for specialist expertise; but I would re-emphasise that I still believe there is a role for some central co-ordinating function within FCO that has oversight of its environmental responsibilities.

Q50 David Howarth: You mention those other departments, Defra—and DfID as well, presumably, although we have had an interesting time investigating DfID's involvement in environmental issues—but I suppose the crucial question is this. If FCO is relying on those other departments, how effectively does it work together, especially that threesome? And, if it is not working particularly effectively, how can that be improved?

Mr Yeo: It is working very effectively in some areas. A very good example would be the Overseas Territories Environment Programme, which is jointly administered by DfID and FCO, and which I believe has been very effective in helping to implement Environment Charters within the territories. Overall, however, there are areas where those three departments and others could work more closely together. Having mechanisms such as this Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity can therefore help and also, I believe, having shared targets—in particular, shared targets in Public Service Agreements, which would really ensure that departments have a clear goal that they were all aiming for.

Q51 David Howarth: Might it be a good idea, for example, for all those departments to have a climate change objective?

Mr Yeo: I would be very much in favour of that or, for example, commitments entered into at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. I think you can make a strong case there that you could have a shared target, at least between Defra and FCO.

Q52 David Howarth: In your memo, you particularly mention Europe and the FCO's role in our relationship with Europe. You say that there is a problem with the EU pursuing the Lisbon Agenda,

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because that focuses on conventional economic goals and perhaps draws attention away from the broader sustainable development picture. Are you saying that the FCO is responsible for this, because it is not emphasising the Government's environmental goals, or are you saying that it is the Government's problem and not the FCO's? That the FCO is carrying out its mandate and that is where the problem is, or is it to do with the FCO itself?

Mr Yeo: I have no criticism of the FCO in this respect. In my experience, the main problem is within the European Commission. We occasionally get rhetoric, for example from Barroso, that sustainable development is what the European Union is all about and that is the overarching framework for all European policy. In reality, however, that does not seem to be the case. It is the Lisbon priorities of jobs, the economy and competitiveness that seem to take priority. I think that this overlooks the fact that there is now a substantial body of evidence that good environmental management and good environmental regulation can stimulate the economy; it can foster innovation; it can lead to the creation of jobs; it can create new markets. Strong environmental policies, therefore, do not hinder economic growth.

Q53 David Howarth: We have another example of this today, do we not, with emissions standards from cars? On the one side there was heavy lobbying by car manufacturers, and perhaps the governments of countries that manufacture the cars; on the other side there was lobbying from environmental groups. The outcome is often, from the environmentalists' point of view, not particularly satisfactory. Could you criticise the British Government, the FCO in particular, for not coming strongly enough and lobbying on the environmental side?

Mr Yeo: That is not an area I have any experience of.

Q54 David Howarth: What about in general? Does the FCO put itself about in Brussels on behalf of the environment?

Mr Yeo: They obviously have the Permanent Representation there in Brussels and JNCC has good, close links with them. I am really not in a position to say just how effective they are in promoting environmental issues within the Commission and other institutions.

Q55 Mr Caton: You have been very positive about the sustainable development attaché network. These posts, as I understand it, deal with sustainable development in general. How well do they address environmental sustainability specifically?

Dr Fleming: I think that the sustainable development attaché network began as an environmental attaché network and it subsequently changed its title and its role a little bit. Our experience with them has always been fairly positive. It seems to us to be a very useful network for sharing information, experience, and so on, within and between posts, and is probably quite useful as a buffer or maybe as a reservoir of institutional

knowledge which, when there is often fairly rapid turnover of staff, can be very useful. To get back to your question of how important the environment is in that, I have to say that, again, our links with the network have probably diminished somewhat of late. We do see their regular newsletter, and I believe they have annual conferences still. From the content of their newsletter, there does seem to be a fairly broad focus on the sustainable development agenda across all its pillars. Environment certainly does appear in that sort of perspective, therefore.

Q56 Mr Caton: Can we turn to the work of our overseas posts, like our embassies, on the environment agenda? Other witnesses have expressed concern about, for instance, the closure of the Madagascar embassy, with the significance of that country for biodiversity. Do you believe that we need posts in other countries that have environment close to the top of their agenda?

Dr Fleming: It is not an issue that we have looked at in great detail. Clearly, there may be advantages in having posts maybe in every country, but I assume that is not feasible technically or from a resource perspective. In some respects I do not think that we can offer any significant comment on that. I think that there is merit in focusing on priority countries from a variety of different perspectives, and the environment might be one of those. In some of the work that we have done related to our global impacts work, and indeed for work with the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group, we try to highlight what countries might be the most important if you were interested in conserving tropical forests or if you were interested in conserving tropical marine habitats, and so on. Very often, there is quite a strong overlap with those countries which are already priorities from an FCO, DfID or other departmental perspective. I do not feel able to offer a particular comment on the Madagascar situation, but clearly we recognise that FCO have to prioritise where they place posts and retain embassies, and so on.

Q57 Mr Caton: I guess that what some of our other witnesses felt was that, when you are prepared to close an embassy in somewhere like Madagascar, with its huge environmental importance, that tells you something about the priority order we have in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—but you do not have to comment any more on that. You have already mentioned your supporting work in the implementation of the Overseas Territories Environment Charters. How successful have these proven to be in protecting the environment in those places?

Dr Fleming: I think that the Environment Charters were a very important first step. The fact that they set out guiding principles and reciprocal obligations or duties on both the Government of the United Kingdom and the governments of the territories was clearly valuable, in terms of setting down goals, objectives, principles, and so on, that the territories might abide by and by which the UK Government might support them. The question of how you

measure their effectiveness is a little more difficult. First, we would be a lot poorer without them; so I think that we should welcome the fact that they exist. There perhaps does need to be a mechanism to follow up and monitor their implementation and their success. As I recall, that was one of the recommendations from the review of the Overseas Territories Environment Programme. One of the principles from the charters was that territories should establish stakeholder groups and develop their own strategies to implement the charters. I am aware that some of these are underway or are happening. OTEP have supported such strategies being developed in the Turks and Caicos Islands and for the Falkland Islands. I think that work is underway in St Helena. Bermuda has developed its own biodiversity strategy, and the Cayman Islands are also developing a biodiversity strategy of their own, supported by the Darwin Initiative. These are the next steps, which enable the territories to set out clearly where they intend to go and maybe how much that might cost them. We are always very conscious that the territories are self-governing and autonomous, and I think it is important that they own the charters and seek to lead and develop action plans, and so on, from them.

Q58 Mr Caton: How does the JNCC provide direct support for Overseas Territories?

Dr Fleming: We have done a number of projects over the years. As you are probably aware from previous evidence, we have recently recruited a post—who started work on 1 February and so is very new, but who came to us from Ascension Island. Her role will be entirely on supporting Overseas Territories work. We are also initiating a range of different projects, some of which depend on external income, which at this stage is not yet guaranteed, that would, for example, look at helping to provide guidance on how to do economic valuation of the environment in some Overseas Territories. That is in collaboration, hopefully, with Montserrat, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda. It may help to answer questions such as, how much is a mangrove swamp worth to the economy and environment in hard cash figures? That may help them—

Q59 Chairman: Do you have an answer to that question?

Dr Fleming: No, that is what the projects are designed to find out—but, hopefully, over the next few years. We have started work already on producing a toolkit for economic valuation for environmental services, for ecosystem services, and so on. The hope, subject to OTEP approval, is that these projects will take place over the next couple of years and will maybe conclude with a workshop, which helps to bring these examples together as case studies, which can then perhaps be promoted elsewhere within the Territories. We have done a review of all the non-native species across the Overseas Territories. Non-native invasive species are of course one of the major causes of biodiversity loss within the territories, especially in the small island environments, which characterise most of our

Overseas Territories. We hope to support work on looking at mitigation of climate change. We are also hoping to establish a post based in the Falkland Islands, which would support work on the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels within the South Atlantic Overseas Territories. Again, it is subject to some OTEP funding but this would be a jointly funded post between Defra, the Overseas Territories in the Atlantic themselves, and the JNCC. So we are putting in place a number of projects like that, to try to build and enhance our support; again, stressing that we seek to do so in a collaborative way; that we are not able, nor do we wish to, to go out to the territories and say, “You should do x, y and z”; that we seek to build on areas where (a) we have the expertise within JNCC; (b) where there is a demand from the territories themselves, and (c) where we can put together a good, collaborative project to provide support. As an example of that, I was in the Cayman Islands last week where, at their request, they were looking for support in implementing their new legislation on CITES, which has been passed by their government but has not yet been brought into effect. Together with a colleague from Defra, who was from the CITES Management Authority in the UK, we spent a few days over there, looking at the fairly substantial issues they have to address on trade in endangered species, trying to help them get the processes in place which they can implement in future. Those are a few examples of where we want to be going. To summarise the sorts of areas where we want to work, ideally we want to look at projects which have a strategic overview across the territories. We have limited resources ourselves, of course, and we will probably not engage in a single-species project in this territory and then another somewhere else. We may therefore be looking at projects that take a strategic overview, which may then help to advise on the implementation of OTEP or where resources might be targeted; and also examples where we might get involved with in-territory projects but those which have a broader application elsewhere. We hope to engage with economic valuation work over the next couple of years—and I should add that we have recently appointed an environmental economist and this will be a substantial part of her work, perhaps up to 50% of her time if everything comes together. So there are projects like that, which look at issues within territories but then may be exported to other territories, or indeed also the UK, for broader application.

Mr Yeo: Perhaps I could add a couple of points, to indicate the scale of resources that JNCC is intending to put into the Overseas Territories. From 2007-08 onwards, we are aiming to direct at least £200,000 per annum towards work on the territories; that is including direct costs as well staff costs. About half of this is dependent on funding from external sources such as OTEP; so it is approximately £100,000 per annum from core government funding. It is small beer in the grand scheme of things, but we are able to make a small amount of money go a long way.

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Q60 Mr Caton: That really leads me on to my next question. In your written evidence to us you said that the Overseas Territories do not have the financial capacity to deal effectively with their environmental challenges. Have you assessed the level of funding that is required?

Dr Fleming: The simple answer to that is no, but I think it is an important question, because various figures are being suggested and I am not entirely sure of the grounds for those. I think that it is an important step to take and one which could, and should, arise from territories doing their own action plans or strategic plans to implement the Environment Charters. If you set out the steps that you want to take, then you are better able to cost them and to estimate what resources may be involved. So I think that it is an important step to do that sort of analysis of what is current funding, what is desired funding and maybe what is necessary funding, and to see how big the difference between them actually is. The question then is where might those resources come from, and we are not necessarily able to say. Equally, however, there is another important point in relation to resources, namely that, regardless of how much resource you have available—and that may be funding, it may be help in other ways—it is quite important that it is targeted effectively and that it has a strategic direction: where do you want to spend this money? One of the—I would not like to use the word “difficulties”—with OTEP is that, in the past, it has largely been applicant-driven. There is nothing wrong necessarily with that; but equally, when a fund is being driven by applicants, it does not necessarily take you in the strategic directions that you may wish to take. This year, for example, OTEP have set out fairly clear guidance that they want to provide support “in the following areas”, and most of the applications that I have seen are falling very closely into those categories. I think that it is therefore quite important that you focus your money on strategic priorities, and maybe seek to guide applicants towards those, but it is also important to see what returns your money has provided. In other words, there should be some form of follow-up monitoring; some form of looking at what legacy previous projects have provided, and how successful they were or not—because, of course, failures are sometimes as instructive as successes. If you look at the Darwin Initiative, they have similar processes of post-project monitoring; equally, they have to look at this challenge of legacy: how do you determine what the legacy from your spend has actually been?

Mr Yeo: Perhaps I could make one additional point. It is certainly the case at the moment that most of the support the UK provides to the territories for biodiversity conservation is through time-limited projects; primarily through OTEP, but also to some extent through the Darwin Initiative. This is very valuable but it is not any substitute, in the end, for much more secure, long-term support for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection within the Overseas Territories. We firmly believe, therefore, that the resources that are

made available to the territories for biodiversity conservation must be commensurate to the challenge—and the challenge is enormous. The global importance of the territories for biodiversity conservation is undoubted and it is huge. If the Government are really going to deliver their contribution towards the target to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, it is clear to us that more resources are needed to support suitable measures within the territories.

Q61 Mr Caton: Yes, more resources are needed, but as you said, Dr Fleming, it might not necessarily be financial resources. Is enough being done to build up institutional and knowledge capacity within the territories themselves?

Dr Fleming: That is fairly difficult to answer without having a detailed knowledge of all the territories. Within the territories, we see very talented and very dedicated staff on the environmental side, but very often limited by the size of the territories themselves. Even those territories which have high GDP per capita, clearly if there are only 50,000 people in the territory it does not generate an enormous amount of income to use internally; and, of course, some of the territories themselves have very small populations. Therefore, how you generate internal, institutional capacity is potentially quite difficult.

Q62 Mr Caton: Would one way be for the FCO or DfID to directly fund environmental posts in the territories?

Dr Fleming: Clearly, some means of supporting posts, regardless of who it came from, might be desirable. It does not happen at the moment, to my knowledge.

Q63 Mr Caton: What about those Overseas Territories that are not inhabited, by humankind at least? Are funds and management at the required level, and are there particular problems with these because of the remote nature of the territories?

Dr Fleming: The remoteness of some of the territories does give rise to particular challenges. If you take some examples, within the Tristan da Cunha group or within the Pitcairn Island group there are inhabited islands but there are also uninhabited ones. Some of the uninhabited ones are some of the most important seabird islands in the world, of course. I think that you have heard from earlier evidence that non-native species—maybe rats in the Pacific, maybe house mice and other species on Tristan, or Gough Island in particular—pose a significant threat to breeding seabirds, albatrosses and petrels in particular. Clearly, they pose significant logistical challenges in terms of undertaking conservation action. You have to get people out there and, if you were seeking to do an eradication programme, you would need to be able to ship out tonnes of poison, and so on. Certainly for Gough Island there is a study underway at the moment into the feasibility of eradicating mice. That will come up with a cost-benefit analysis and also a costed action plan. I suspect that the resources required to do that will be substantial and above the

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level that is available through OTEP at the moment. With these big challenges, therefore, some means ideally need to be found to be able to support them. OTEP can fund the feasibility studies perhaps, but it would probably take more than its annual resources to undertake the task which would deliver the greatest conservation benefit.

Q64 Chairman: Do we share some of this knowledge with other countries, which may themselves only be at a developing status—I am thinking of the Galapagos Islands—which also have serious problems in terms of biodiversity being threatened by, in that particular instance, tourism and the arrival of cruise ferries, and hordes of Americans trampling over everything? Is there a good mechanism for sharing our knowledge and expertise?

Dr Fleming: There are a variety of mechanisms for sharing knowledge. I will come back to tourism and cruise ships in a moment but, coming back to non-native species, New Zealand has the greatest capacity and technical knowledge for eradicating non-native species from islands. New Zealand specialists have been used in these various feasibility studies that I have referred to. There is also, through the World Conservation Union, an invasive species specialist group, a global invasive species database—all of which enable knowledge to be shared throughout the entire community of those interested in non-native species. On the tourism side, clearly that issue is quite a significant one, especially for our Caribbean territories where cruise ship tourism is very high. I am less certain about the mechanisms for sharing information on that, but there are some web-based knowledge-sharing mechanisms. The Global Island Network, if I have remembered it correctly, is one such means. I think that there have been sustainable tourism initiatives, initiated in part by FCO in the past, which can clearly help with that. However, I have to say that the tourism side *per se* is not really my main area of expertise.

Q65 Chairman: So your organisation may not have made any representations on that sort of thing, where we hear now that green tourism is the way out of poverty for many of these areas?

Dr Fleming: We may not have made many representations on that side of things in the past; but, as I mentioned before, we now have an environmental economist on our staff who is able to help look at that. We are also very interested in taking the ecosystem approach to a whole range of issues involving biodiversity. One of the advantages that the Overseas Territories have is that they are fairly small, discrete units, which enable you to take

a holistic view of the planning and management of development and the environment, without having the complications of being a country the size of Britain with a population our size. Perhaps in future, therefore, we will look increasingly to advise on that. I think that the ecosystem approach as promoted by the Convention on Biological Diversity is one such means to try to take this bigger picture, tied in with valuation of the environment. It is also important to consider that, as you suggested in your question, the reason people go to Caribbean islands is not necessarily to see thousands of other people; it is for those features which make those islands special, and those features are very often linked to the natural environment. People go to dive on coral reefs or perhaps to enjoy bird-watching, and so on.

Q66 Chairman: Do you think that there are areas of biodiversity which are not related to climate change but which, in terms of the FCO's priorities, may lose out because of more of a focus on climate change?

Mr Yeo: If all the environmental resources of the FCO were directed to climate change, it would mean that there was not much left to address issues such as non-native species, which are such a big issue for Overseas Territories and other small islands. So, yes, certainly an exclusive focus on climate change would be to the detriment of other areas of environmental work.

Q67 Chairman: I just want to come back briefly to the issue of where the environment sits as a priority in the work of the FCO. If we have seen, as you have suggested, this reduction in effort at the core of the FCO, is that also filtering out into our overseas posts?

Dr Fleming: It is very hard for me to comment on that, not having a great deal of contact directly with overseas posts. Where we do have such contact, it tends to be through someone in Whitehall and therefore I do not feel qualified to answer that.

Q68 Chairman: The concerns that you do have, though—and no doubt you have expressed those to the FCO—what has been their response, if any?

Mr Yeo: Their response is simply that they are aligning their structures, their priorities, with the 2006 White Paper and their Sustainable Development Strategy. That is what is guiding their work and the structures to deliver it.

Q69 Chairman: So they are listening kindly, but not necessarily paying attention?

Mr Yeo: Possibly.

Chairman: Thank you both very much for coming and giving us your evidence this afternoon. That concludes the session.

Wednesday 21 February 2007

Members present:

Colin Challen, in the Chair

Mr Martin Caton

David Howarth

Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

1. The FCO welcomes this inquiry, and we are grateful for the opportunity to highlight our role and priorities on the environment and development. The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has recently audited our progress on sustainable development and we have just published a new FCO Sustainable Development Action Plan, which responds to the SDC's recommendations and sets out our specific aims and commitments for 2007–08. (see annex).

The FCO's role on environment and sustainable development

2. With our network of bilateral and multilateral Posts overseas (which provide advice, information and analysis to support global delivery of UK objectives) and our experience and expertise in negotiating and influencing, the FCO is the Government's principal vehicle for promoting sustainable development internationally.

3. Sustainable development is central to foreign policy and the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). It underpins, and will help to achieve, many of the Government's international priorities, which are driven forward by the FCO. Our 2006 White Paper—*Active Diplomacy for a Changing World*—established a specific international priority on “promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment”. It highlighted the importance of the environment and natural resources for development and recognised environmental degradation and an unstable climate as major threats to the UK's ability to secure its political, security and economic objectives. To strengthen our commitment to promoting sustainable development and tackling climate change, in June 2006 the Foreign Secretary added an additional international priority on “achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy”.

4. The FCO supports sustainability through our efforts to promote improved environmental governance and democracy, and sustainable natural resource management in priority countries, a stronger international framework for sustainable development and climate security, and sustainable tourism. We lead for the Government on promoting human rights, democracy and good governance which are critical for sustainable development, and we seek to embed sustainable development principles in all our activities. This includes leading by example by managing our estate and corporate activities sustainably.

FCO Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan

5. Our Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) was published in March 2005 and launched by the Foreign Secretary. It provides a framework, up to March 2008, for promoting sustainable development through our bilateral and multilateral work, through international partnerships, through our work with the governments of the UK's Overseas Territories and through our corporate activities and estate management. It focuses on how the FCO can help deliver the international commitments in the UK SD Strategy—*Securing the Future* (which was also published in March 2005, one week before our SDS).

6. We reviewed progress towards our SDS in September 2005 and March 2006, and published our conclusions on our website (www.fco.gov.uk/sustainabledevelopment). We also asked the Sustainable Development Commission—as HMG's “watchdog” on sustainable development—to audit our SDS and progress. The SDC's audit, published in October last year, highlighted in particular that we need to:

- demonstrate top level commitment to sustainable development (SD);
- ensure all staff understand SD and their role, and that SD acts as our underpinning principle;
- root climate security within SD;
- boost efforts on sustainable tourism;
- consider working with the MOD on the links between natural resources and conflict;
- ensure our Posts—especially in the major emerging economies—are adequately resourced for SD; and

- lead by example, in terms of the way we manage our estate—both in the UK and overseas—and minimise the environmental impacts of our operations.

7. Our recently launched Sustainable Development Action Plan responds to these recommendations, focusing on where we can most add value. It includes activities to raise awareness of sustainable development across the FCO, to ensure that it is embedded in all our work.

FCO sustainable development priorities

8. Our Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) identifies five main aims and five supporting activities to help us achieve these aims:

Aims:

- Promoting good environmental governance and sustainable management of natural resources.
- Strengthening international governance for sustainable development.
- Supporting the private sector as a driver for sustainable development (including promoting sustainable tourism).
- Promoting international action to achieve climate security and the transition to a low carbon economy (in partnership with other government departments, we are developing a separate strategy on international climate change).
- Promoting sustainable development through our corporate activities and operations.

Supporting activities:

- Working with stakeholders.
- Working with other government departments.
- Focusing on priority countries and working through our Posts.
- Using programme funds strategically to build capacity overseas.
- Raising awareness and building skills within the FCO.

9. Our SDAP sets out specific actions—from January 2007 to March 2008—under each of these areas. To make the most of the resources we have for sustainable development, it identifies a set of priority countries where we will focus our efforts. These are countries which face particular sustainable development challenges, possess significant natural resources, or are major emerging economies; and where we can make the most impact. Based on these criteria our sustainable development priority countries for 2007/8 are: Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, the Caribbean Region, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa and Thailand. We work particularly closely with the major emerging economies of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, and are working with DEFRA to take forward bilateral high-level Sustainable Development Dialogues with these countries.

Multilateral work

10. We work with DEFRA and DFID to meet the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) commitment on strengthening international governance for sustainable development. We promote the integration of sustainable development across the UN and want to see a stronger UN Environment Programme (UNEP). We see the EU as a vital platform for promoting—and building consensus on—sustainable development. We support the implementation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and help ensure that its principles are considered in EU decision-making.

11. In 2005 the UK raised the profile of sustainable development issues through its presidencies of the EU and G8. Climate change was a key priority of both presidencies and we succeeded in achieving a step change in the attitude of the international community towards tackling climate change. The FCO played a key role in ensuring that progress was made at the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) conference in Montreal (in December 2005) towards a post-2012 international framework by mobilising our network of posts. The UK also initiated the G8 Gleneagles Dialogue for the 20 largest energy consuming and producing countries. In October 2006 the FCO worked with the Mexican Government and other government departments to ensure the success of the second Gleneagles Dialogue Ministerial meeting in Monterrey, Mexico.

FCO structure for sustainable development

12. The FCO has two policy groups in London (see question three for more information on the teams working on sustainable development and climate change) focusing on sustainable development, climate change and energy—the Sustainable Development & Business Group (SDBG) and the Climate Change & Energy Group (CEEG). Both are within the Global and Economic Issues Directorate, which reports to the

Director-General, Globalisation who has overall responsibility for sustainable development and environment issues on the FCO Board. In 2006 the Foreign Secretary appointed John Ashton as her Special Representative for Climate Change.

13. In addition to staff in London we have networks of attachés in Posts across the world, who lead on sustainable development, climate change, energy, economic, and science and innovation issues within their host countries. We also have attachés in our multilateral Posts, such as our Mission to the UN in New York, our Representation to the UN Environment Programme in Nairobi and our Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels. The Director-General, Corporate Affairs has overall responsibility for sustainable operations and environmental management, and this work is taken forward by the FCO's Environmental Manager in the Estates Directorate.

II. QUESTIONS

Q1. *How do environmental protection and sustainable development relate to international security, good governance and democracy?*

14. The Government's Strategic International Priority 7 (as detailed in the Government's White Paper *Active Diplomacy in a Changing World*) emphasises the importance of democracy, good governance and human rights. They are major objectives in their own right, but they are particularly relevant to realising sustainable development. Democracy gives all citizens a voice in policy-making and good governance will contribute to the fair and efficient management of resources. Development may be achievable without democracy, human rights and good governance, but it is rarely sustainable.

15. Sustainable development underpins many aspects of our foreign policy. It requires co-operation in an increasingly fragile world and is an integral part of the FCO's work. Global peace and stability depend on economic and social development and on protecting the environment. Threats to our security—such as conflict, terrorism and international crime—may thrive where there is poverty, mismanagement of natural resources, or social and environmental injustice. We will struggle to resolve conflicts unless these underlying issues are dealt with.

International sustainable development governance

16. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, highlighted the importance of strengthening International Sustainable Development Governance (ISDG) in order to deliver on commitments made at WSSD, and on earlier agreements such as the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Financing for Development process and the Doha Development Agenda. The UK and FCO Sustainable Development Strategies underline the need to improve ISDG, and our SD Strategy included an ISDG Delivery Plan.

17. The UN World Summit in September 2005 also recognised “the need for more efficient environmental activities in the UN system” as well as the need “to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework.” The Summit document also mentions the need for “better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework at the operational level”.

18. The FCO and DEFRA, along with DFID, the Treasury, DTI and other government departments, work within the UN system and with international financial and other institutions, to promote a more integrated and coherent approach to environmental, social and economic issues. All share responsibility for delivery.

Environmental democracy and governance

19. To help improve the management of natural resources and local environments we seek to apply the principles of good governance and democracy to environmental issues. We are the lead UK Government department for fulfilling the WSSD commitment to “acknowledge the consideration being given to the possible relationship between environment and human rights” (paragraph 169 of the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*; www.un.org/esa/sustdev). The FCO therefore promotes improved environmental governance to help achieve better protection, and sustainable and equitable use, of natural resources. Of the UK Government's three key objectives on environmental governance, the FCO leads on:

- (i) Supporting the implementation of Rio Principle 10 overseas at the local and national level, including through our support for the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10).
- (ii) Strengthening capacity-building to enable governments to manage the environment better (on which we work closely with DFID).

Principle 10 and PP10

Principle 10 refers to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) which promotes increased access to information on environmental matters; more public participation in environmental decision-making; and greater access to environmental justice.

The Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10), of which the FCO is a founder-member, is an international partnership to promote improved environmental governance using these principles. We work closely with the World Resources Institute (WRI) which convenes the secretariat of PP10 and support projects that contribute to the goals of PP10 through our Sustainable Development Programme under the Global Opportunities Fund (GOF). GOF also provides funds to help governments enforce and strengthen environmental legislation.

International security

20. The UN Secretary-General's 2005 report *In Larger Freedom* emphasised that "we fundamentally depend on natural systems and resources for our existence and development." The UN World Summit's outcome document reaffirmed that "our common fundamental values, including freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for all human rights, respect for nature and shared responsibility, are essential to international relations". It importantly also reaffirmed that "sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects constitutes a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities".

21. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7 demonstrates a worldwide aspiration for development to be sustainable and for pursuing environmental objectives; it underpins achievement of the other MDGs. Sustainable use and management of environmental resources is critical to poverty reduction. Poor countries depend on environmental resources to a much greater extent than richer countries. Environmental wealth—natural resources—is one of the main sources of growth in developing countries, and central to the livelihoods of poor people. Environmental degradation can contribute to conflict, can undermine security and will result in development being short term and unsustainable. The FCO has been working with DfID to understand the links between sustainable development and sustainable peace better.

22. The delivery of a stable climate, as an essential public good, is an immediate security, prosperity and moral imperative, not simply a long-term environmental challenge. Increased tensions from overpopulation, resource scarcity and environmental degradation, which we spend a great deal of effort trying to resolve, can be exacerbated by climate change. As the Foreign Secretary said in Berlin last October "our obligation to our citizens is to put in place the conditions for security and prosperity in a crowded and interdependent world. An unstable climate will make it much harder for us to deliver on that obligation."

23. To address the root of the security issues we face we must tackle the global insecurities underlying them and focus, amongst other things, on the four resource pillars on which the security and prosperity of the international community rests: food security; water security; energy security; and climate security. These pillars of security are interdependent. For example, many in the world will need affordable energy to lift themselves out of poverty. Energy services are crucial for sustainable development, for promoting better health, access to education, increased productivity, enhanced competitiveness, and improved economic growth. Without a concerted shift towards cleaner energy production and use (such as the adoption of supercritical coal fired power stations, increased energy efficiency, and new techniques such as carbon capture and storage), the increased use of fossil fuels will accelerate climate change. Thus in our search for growth we risk undermining the most fundamental conditions for prosperity and security.

24. Climate security is central to national and international security. Without a stable climate it will become ever harder for governments to deliver other national and international priorities necessary to tackle the underlying problems that contribute to instability. Chief amongst these will be prosperity. The Stern Review shows that climate change poses a serious threat to growth and development, potentially reducing global GDP by as much as 20%. It will be the poorest and most vulnerable countries that are hit fastest and hardest, severely damaging the prospects for achieving poverty alleviation and stability.

25. Climate change alone will not cause conflict. Conflicts always have multiple causes. Climate change will exacerbate existing tensions, increasing the risk of conflicts and making them more complex and intractable through its impact on food and water security. Rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, more frequent and more widespread droughts, increased flooding and rising sea levels will disrupt and damage the supply of these vital resources. Resource shortages will combine with growing populations to increase tensions in fragile regions. Climate induced resource shortages were one of the drivers of the recent conflict in Darfur.

Q2. *What are the main stumbling blocks to international environmental diplomacy, how successful has it been in the past, and how might we ensure better that negotiations lead to effective global environmental protection?*

26. Sustainable development is not just about environmental objectives; it is about achieving progress towards environmental, economic and social goals in a complementary and coherent manner. We need to demonstrate that good environmental management is consistent with growth and that future development is at risk without sustainable management of natural resources—such as forests, fish, wildlife, water resources, and clean air.

27. To ensure more effective negotiations on global environmental protection we need to encourage political leadership and ensure that there is a strengthened and more coherent multilateral system, which can help build consensus on the way forward.

Political leadership

28. In particular, on combating dangerous climate change, there needs to be improvements in environmental governance at the international as well as a national level. Greater coherence in the multilateral system and a much higher level of consensus on the way forward is required. Strong political leadership—which recognises the scale and urgency of the challenge of climate change—is essential in order to meet commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and agree on the international framework beyond 2012. The scientific and economic evidence grows ever clearer (particularly with the publication of the Stern Review in October). But without an injection of collective political leadership by some key countries, the UN process will not progress quickly enough. (As an example, see the box below on the UN climate change conference in Nairobi last year.)

29. Nairobi underlined to us the need for relentless pressure to keep climate change at the top of the global political agenda and to exploit major international summits, including of the EU and G8, to drive progress. In parallel with encouraging UN reform, and in order to ensure better that negotiations lead to effective action on climate change, we need to create the political conditions for policy change. In particular, we need to focus on helping to shift the political conditions in the major emitting countries whose emissions and political support will be critical to the establishment of a new international agreement: the EU, the US, India and China.

30. We need to change the terms of the debate so that key governments, leaders and international institutions understand the scale and urgency of the problem; that achieving a low carbon economy is necessary for economic growth; and the necessity of early rather than later action. We need to achieve recognition among the same leaders and governments that a stable climate must be a core policy goal not just in environmental terms, but also for foreign and security policy; energy; trade and investment; innovation and competition; poverty and development—thus mobilising political support for the requisite measures. Concentration on “traditional” climate policy alone, as if this is separate from those areas of decision-making that affect emissions, will not move us forward quickly enough.

UNFCCC, Nairobi, November 2006

At the last major UN climate conference, in Nairobi last November, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed the conference and described climate change as an all-encompassing threat to development, health, food security, shelter, peace and security. His message was very similar to that which the Foreign Secretary made in her address to the UN General Assembly in September. Annan dismissed climate sceptics as “out of step, out of arguments and out of time”. He also quoted Sir Nicholas Stern’s assessment of climate change as “the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen”, with the potential to shrink the global economy by 20%. Stern himself also spoke at the conference in Nairobi and the findings of his Review were much discussed in the margins of the conference.

But the warnings of these two notable external speakers were at odds with the tenor of the negotiations themselves. While progress was made on important issues for developing countries such as adaptation, discussion on future action continues to proceed at a pace insufficient for the ultimate objective of avoiding dangerous climate change. David Miliband (Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) has described an “After you, Claude” mentality, where the key countries and blocs of the developed and developing world seek assurances that any steps forward that they take are not taken alone. During 2007, the UK intends to work closely with Germany in its Presidencies of the EU and G8 to inject greater urgency and momentum into these discussions.

Achieving a coherent multilateral system

Within the UN

31. The outcome from the 2005 UN World Summit called for much stronger, system-wide coherence across the various development-related agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations. In response, Kofi Annan launched the High Level Panel (HLP) on System Wide Coherence (SWC) to make recommendations on how the United Nations system could work more coherently and effectively in these

areas. The Chancellor, Gordon Brown was the UK's representative on the Panel. The Panel's recommendations, launched in November 2005, called for reform to the development, humanitarian assistance and environmental system of the UN, including the UN Environment Programme and UN operations at country level.

32. The report highlights the growing awareness of the acceleration of environmental degradation and climate change, and its effects on agricultural productivity and food security. It concludes that globalisation makes multilateralism indispensable, and that without far-reaching and ambitious reform, the United Nations will be unable to deliver its promises and maintain its legitimate position at the heart of the international system.

33. But the Panel also recognised that the UN is not as effective as it could be. And that—although the UN contributes greatly to the discourse and practice of development—too often, it has insufficient influence. They believe that the UN has outgrown its original structure, with weak and disjointed governance and inadequate and unpredictable funding contributing to policy incoherence, duplicating functions and operational ineffectiveness across the system.

34. The HLP recommendations provide for a step change in the way that the UN operates across the development, humanitarian and environment pillars. Crucially, the HLP recommended that UN Development Program “continue its support to mainstreaming environmental issues into national development strategies at the country level”. The Panel also pointed out that greater co-ordination at UN headquarters should also improve coherence at the country level.

35. Alongside DFID and DEFRA, we are using our resources and influence to encourage UN reform. One of our objectives under our SD Action Plan is to promote the integration of environment, economic and social agendas within multilateral organisations, including the UN.

Within the EU

36. To ensure that environmental concerns, and wider issues in the sustainable development framework, are incorporated into both internal and external EU policies, FCO, DEFRA, DFID and officials from other government departments were actively engaged in the revision of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, launched at the European Council in June 2006. Prior to this, there was no single document that could be called a strategy, and the external dimension had never been properly integrated. The UK's aim for the revised strategy was a single, coherent and accessible document that effectively communicated the Community's internal and external sustainable development objectives, including on international development. Our Embassies in EU capitals lobbied in support of UK views. As a result the UK's interests are well reflected in the revised strategy, which also has more content and substance.

37. The strategy outlines objectives under seven key challenges (climate change and clean energy; sustainable transport; sustainable production and consumption; management of natural resources; public health; social inclusion, demography and migration; and global poverty and sustainable development). It also references cross-cutting EU policies, notably by setting out its relationship to the Lisbon Agenda on jobs and growth, as well as on the role of better regulation and impact assessment as tools for delivery.

38. We want to achieve better integration of sustainable development into EU internal and external policies and aim to embed environmental considerations in all our work. In particular we want to ensure that sustainable development is appropriately factored in to all external agreements made by the EU at an early stage and we are encouraging the European Commission to include sustainable development and climate change issues in the new free trade agreements (FTAs) it is planning with third countries. Draft FTA mandates have recently been presented to the Council for several such agreements with South Korea, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and India, as have Association Agreement mandates for Central America and the Community of Andean Nations. The draft mandates each contain sections on sustainable development. The UK has welcomed this and has also asked for more information about how the Commission intends to tackle climate change issues within the negotiations.

39. Correspondence on environmental issues of the cabinet's European Policy Committee is seen and co-ordinated by officials in SDBG or CCEG. This ensures that the FCO has the chance to input and comment on all environment related European policy issues. We also support DEFRA in its bi-annual briefing for our network of Sustainable Development Attachés in EU Posts.

Q3. How does the FCO account for the environment in its work? Is the FCO's current structure and capacity effective at promoting UK international environmental and sustainable development priorities? Are FCO officials, at all levels, aware of the importance of the environment for development and security objectives, and vice versa?

(see SDC audit in the annex and the introduction for more information)

How we account for the environment in our work

40. The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy provides an overarching framework for our environment and sustainable development work. We reviewed progress in September 2005 and March 2006, and provided an update on the sustainable development pages of our website. We have just published our Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP), which sets out specific aims for the period of January 2007 to March 2008, and identifies which part of the FCO is responsible for delivering each commitment. We will review progress towards our SD Action Plan at the end of each financial year, and report publicly via our website. Regular reviews will not only help us keep track of progress but will also help maintain awareness of the ongoing need to integrate environmental considerations and sustainable development into other areas of work.

41. We have specific international priorities on “promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment” and “achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy”.

42. Our aim is to embed sustainable development in all FCO activity and our new SDAP includes a series of actions to help raise awareness of sustainable development and build skills within the FCO. This is a long-term process, and since the launch of our Sustainable Development Strategy in 2005 we have focused on building understanding of sustainable development in overseas Posts and among geographical desks for our priority countries (see introduction for a list of countries). FCO Groups such as the Climate Change and Energy Group, the Human Rights, Democracy and Governance Group, Sustainable Development and Business Group, Conflict Issues Group, International Organisations Department, Europe Directorate, and the Estates Directorate (which has responsibility for sustainable operations and estate management) play a key part in this process.

Structure and capacity for promoting UK international environmental and sustainable development priorities

43. The Director-General, Globalisation has overall responsibility for sustainable development and the environment; he reports directly to the Permanent Under Secretary and acts as the sustainable development champion on the FCO’s management board. The Director-General, Corporate Affairs has overall responsibility for sustainable operations and environmental management.

44. Day-to-day responsibility for sustainable development, environment and climate change issues sits with the Sustainable Development & Business Group (SDBG) and the Climate Change & Energy Group (CCEG), which both report to the Director for Global & Economic Issues. SDBG’s role is to promote sustainable development, economic prosperity and favourable international conditions for business in a rapidly globalising world. The Group (22 staff) covers—among other issues—forestry and natural resource management, environmental democracy (Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration), international environmental governance (eg through strengthening the UN’s role on environment and sustainable development), sustainable tourism, corporate social responsibility, and anti-corruption work. Six members of staff within the group work full-time on sustainable development. They support DEFRA in ensuring that the EU position on sustainable development issues (including EU environment legislation) reflects UK priorities, and work closely with other government departments (particularly DEFRA and DFID) to promote UK sustainable development objectives in priority countries (see question four for more on priority countries).

45. CCEG supports OGDs, especially DEFRA and DTI in delivering the UK’s climate change and energy issues and has 24 staff in London devoted solely to pursuing these priorities, in addition to attachés overseas (see below for more information on attachés). In June 2006 the Foreign Secretary appointed John Ashton as her Special Representative for Climate Change. This has led to a step change in FCO’s approach to climate. (An example of the effectiveness of this structure can be seen in Europe.)

46. John Ashton has built upon the initiative taken by Prime Minister at Gleneagles and Hampton Court in 2005. His discussions with key Member States and parts of the European Commission; and the efforts of London and overseas staff and other departments enabled the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister to persuade EU leaders at the December European Council to recognise the strong link between EU climate and energy policies and agree to an integrated debate on the theme in Spring. The UK welcomed the European Commission’s Strategic Energy Review (SER), together with a Commission Communication on Limiting Global Climate Change, published on 10 January. This ambitious package focuses on two main strands, energy liberalisation and security, and climate change, including the aspiration that all new EU power plants be carbon neutral by 2020. It will form the basis of an Energy Action Plan to be presented to the Spring European Council in March.

Attachés in overseas Posts

47. Much of the promotion of sustainable development and climate priorities overseas is led by our network of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Energy Attachés in our embassies, High Commissions and multilateral Posts. We have around 150 Attachés who work on sustainable development and climate change issues, however, in most cases they work part-time on sustainable development as part of a wider portfolio. (See answer to question five for more information about the work of Sustainable Development and Climate Change and Energy attachés.)

Priority countries

48. To maximise limited resources, the FCO has focused its attention on a limited number of countries which face particular sustainable development challenges; possess significant natural resources; or are major emitters of greenhouse gases; and where the FCO can make an impact. The introduction sets out our priority countries for sustainable development. We encourage Posts in these countries to produce Country Action Plans on sustainable development and/or climate change and energy; see question five for more detail.

Programme resources

49. Our Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) supports projects on sustainable development, climate change and energy, human rights and economic reform overseas. Resources to support sustainable development and climate change public diplomacy work are also available through the Public Diplomacy Fund and the Chevening Programme. (More information about these resources is given in the answers to questions seven and fourteen.)

Raising awareness among FCO officials

50. To help all officials understand sustainable development, and the importance of the environment for development and security objectives we run a series of three one-day training modules covering Sustainable Development, Energy and Climate Security.

51. The Sustainable Development module helps participants understand what sustainable development is, why it is important for foreign policy, and what the FCO's role in promoting it is so that they are more aware of how it impacts on their own roles and how they can help deliver our aims. The course provides an introduction to the concept of sustainable development and an overview of the UK and FCO Sustainable Development Strategies and the FCO's sustainable development priorities. It includes the relationship between environment and development, through a specific slot looking at the importance of sustainable development for eradicating poverty and the need to include environmental development aims in poverty reduction strategies. Using the example of water and energy, participants explore why environmental sustainability is crucial to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

52. The Climate Security and Energy modules also look at why these issues are particularly significant for development, including energy use and supply in the developing world, fuel poverty, the potential impacts of climate change in developing countries, and the importance of adaptation and mitigation. The modules are being revised for 2007 and will include new sessions on how the mismanagement of natural resources can threaten security, the relationship between sustainable development and the private sector, and the importance of tackling climate change as a security—rather than just an environmental—issue.

53. Other activities to help raise staff awareness of sustainable development and climate change and their understanding of how these relate to their work include:

- regular communications with staff in Posts;
- asking attachés to work across their Posts to ensure that political and economic staff understand how sustainable development and climate underpin all our strategic priorities;
- ensuring that all staff covering international energy policy have a good understanding of climate and incorporate climate considerations into their policy work;
- discussions between the Director for Global & Economic Issues with geographical directors on how climate security and sustainable development fit into their work;
- using the staff magazine—*News & Views*—to promote sustainable development and the need to manage our operations sustainably;
- relaunching the sustainable development pages on the intranet and external website and ensuring the UK and FCO Sustainable Development Strategies and the FCO Sustainable Development Action Plan are easy to find and download;
- launching and developing SDNet (our sustainable development intranet site—see question five);
- holding a series of lunchtime seminars on sustainable development, climate change, energy and business—recent speakers include Sir Nicholas Stern and Prof Chris Rapley (Director of the British Antarctic Survey);

- a sustainable development newsletter (SDNews) for staff;
- ensuring that sustainable development is included in the briefing material for new heads of missions (HoMs) and that HoMs and attachés going to posts which are priorities for sustainable development all visit SDBG for an oral briefing;
- holding sessions on sustainable development at the HoMs Annual Leadership Conference in 2005 and 2006; and
- holding annual conferences for FCO Sustainable Development and Climate Change and Energy Attaches as an opportunity to exchange information and brief on policy priorities.

Q4. What more could the FCO do to advance the UK's environmental objectives?

54. To help us assess progress on sustainable development and how we can be more effective in promoting the UK's environment and sustainable development objectives we asked the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) to carry out an audit of our progress under the 2005 FCO Sustainable Development Strategy. According to the SDC assessment, released in October 2006, we have made a good start in implementing our Sustainable Development Strategy, but we must continue to embed sustainable development across the entire sphere of FCO activity. Responding to these recommendations, our Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) sets out our main aims and activities for 2007–08.

Priorities: countries and themes

55. The SDC's audit supported the findings of our own March 2006 review, which concluded that we needed to focus on a smaller number of countries and a smaller number of priorities for action where the FCO can make the most impact. The introduction includes more detail on this and sets out our main priority issues.

56. The FCO fully acknowledges that it cannot fulfil UK sustainable development objectives without working with major emerging economies so the Action Plan commits the FCO to continue its support of the bilateral Sustainable Development Dialogues with Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa (the +5). These Dialogues are led by DEFRA with assistance from across Government, particularly the FCO and DFID. They are a mechanism for engaging these countries in a sustainable development partnership with the UK. They aim to provide a framework for sharing good practice and work on joint initiatives to address sustainable development challenges such as natural resource management, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable communities, poverty reduction and urban development. Dialogues have already been launched with India (October 2005), China (November 2005), Brazil (March 2006) and Mexico (October 2006). And we hope to launch the South Africa Dialogue this year. In each case, we have worked with DEFRA to strengthen contacts and establish thematic workstreams which aim to involve not only governments but business and civil society.

57. The UK also has Working Groups on Climate Change (WGCC) with China and Brazil and a Structured Dialogue on Climate Change with India (SDCC). The aim of these groups is to further co-operation and sharing of knowledge between India, Brazil and China and the UK on climate change. The Groups provide a framework for engagement between the participants, and enable progress to be made on key issues and be usefully fed into and shape activities relating to the G8 Dialogue, the EU-China Partnership on Climate Change and activities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

58. Through the Groups the participants aim to complement and reinforce other initiatives in particular the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership ("REEEP"), the Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) projects on climate change, and other country specific projects on the impacts of climate change. This is a Defra-lead initiative benefiting from strong cross-Whitehall and in-country engagement by other government departments, and we hope with the assistance of FCO Posts to launch Working Groups in Mexico and South Africa later this year.

59. Our Posts play a crucial role in helping advance the UK's environmental and sustainable development objectives and we need to maintain the network of Sustainable Development Attachés in priority Posts in particular. See the answer to question 5 for more detail about the work of attachés.

A new strategic priority

60. Our 2006 White Paper—*Active Diplomacy in a Changing World*—recognised an unstable climate as a major threat to the UK's ability to secure its political, security and economic objectives. To strengthen our commitment to promoting sustainable development and tackling climate change, the Foreign Secretary established an additional strategic priority (SP6) on "achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy". The Government's strategic aim is to avoid dangerous climate change by stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. This is a highly ambitious and long-term outcome. To achieve this we need to:

- bring about a step change in global investment in low carbon technologies to enable a transition to a low carbon economy, including through an effective carbon market;
- build resilience through managing impacts and promoting adaptation to climate change; and
- secure international agreement to a realistic, robust, durable and fair framework of commitments to reduce CO₂ emissions for the post-2012 period.

61. It will be impossible to achieve these objectives without much wider acceptance of the scale and urgency of the challenge, matched by a major increase in international ambition. UK efforts are therefore directed at galvanising international collective action by shifting global attitudes towards climate change. This means going beyond traditional Government to Government diplomacy and mobilising a much wider range of constituencies. DEFRA is co-ordinating UK Government efforts to achieving these objectives through an international climate change work programme involving all relevant government departments. As the international delivery arm of Government, the FCO network of Posts is key to delivering all parts of this strategy.

62. The FCO also has a particular role to play in reframing the debate so that climate security is seen as a core goal in other policy fields, including foreign and security policy; energy; innovation and competition; and sustainable development. The Foreign Secretary and her Special Representative for Climate Change, John Ashton, are leading government efforts to reframe the debate. The Foreign Secretary raises climate security at most of her meetings with her opposite numbers, as well as with Heads of Government. Her speeches in US, Mexico, India and Berlin underlined links between climate change and foreign policy.

63. We will be making increasing demands on our Posts to run targeted political and public diplomacy campaigns aimed at raising the scale and urgency of the climate change challenge. This will involve mapping and identifying key players and constituencies, including Government but also parliament, business, and civil society; and engaging them in a way that brings them into coalitions that can deliver our desired strategic outcomes.

Q5. Are FCO sustainable development attachés effective at promoting sustainable development internationally? How do they work and how might this be improved?

64. Our network of Attachés in both bilateral and multilateral Posts helps build support for UK objectives; maintains the engagement of host governments; develops and manage projects to address specific sustainable development challenges; reports on progress and developments in host countries; and identifies areas where the UK can offer or develop expertise on sustainable development issues. Attachés build up networks of in-country contacts—including in civil society and the private sector, as well as with host governments—to help build understanding of other countries' positions. This is particularly important in advance of major international negotiations and meetings. Sustainable Development and Climate Change and Energy Attachés are often supported by locally-engaged (LE) staff who bring to bear local language knowledge and contacts, as part of integrated UK/LE teams.

65. Other parts of the FCO's network also support UK sustainable development objectives. For example, UK Trade & Industry (UKTI) officers overseas contribute through their support for UK environmental technology firms, our Science & Innovation Attachés promote the development of new environmental technologies, and our Economic Officers are working to raise awareness of the conclusions of the Stern Review and help the transition countries to grow their economies sustainably.

66. The arrival of the Special Representative for Climate Change, John Ashton, has helped the FCO direct the attention of its network of overseas Posts on climate security issues. Staff in priority countries have begun a series of political and public diplomacy campaigns. These are aimed at increasing awareness of the scale and urgency of the challenge and targeting a wide range of constituencies, including Government and business. The network contributed to the Stern Review through the provision of analysis and information, and by facilitating visits by the review team to a number of countries. Posts subsequently played an important role in maximising the global impact of the Stern Review when it was published and continue to work closely with Sir Nick Stern and his team to sustain international interest and debate on the economic impacts of climate change.

67. Given the limited resources available the FCO is exploring ways to create more flexibility in support of the government's international, environmental and climate change objectives. A key part of achieving climate security is building coalitions of the key constituencies that can effect political change, both in the UK and overseas. Through its overseas network, the FCO already interacts well with key constituencies in specific priority countries. But the network is less well configured to deal effectively with regional or sectoral interests. Through testing innovative working structures, such as CCEG's Regional Energy Advisors, or creating hub-and-spoke arrangements with a network of Posts in a particular region, we aim to improve effectiveness.

68. We also want to improve the way in which we communicate with Posts on these issues. SD attachés are supported by SDNet, an intranet site that provides information and briefings on key issues, policy developments, events and meetings (accessible to all on the Government Secure Intranet, at www.sdnet.gsi.gov.uk). In June 2005 we launched a newsletter—SDNews—to help keep staff (particularly attachés) up to date on developments and activities and guide them through the latest information on

SDNet. The newsletter is published every two months. To help us improve and make good use of SDNet, last year we commissioned Futerra, a sustainability communications company, to review the site. They have just finished their review, and we are implementing their recommendations to make the site easier to use and ensure that it is kept up to date and includes the most relevant information. We want to improve communications further, and ensure that SDNet becomes a “one-stop shop” for sustainable development information and resources for attachés and that it helps attachés share good practice, for example on project work or on ideas to improve environmental management in their offices.

69. Posts in our sustainable development priority countries are asked to produce Country Action Plans (CAPs), which set out specific objectives and activities to meet these. These CAPs are agreed with other relevant government departments (e.g. DEFRA, DFID and DTI) so that they reflect the Government’s—rather than just FCO—objectives, and so that any competing demands can be identified and resolved. We are increasingly encouraging Posts and attachés to work directly with other government departments. For example, attachés in many of our EU Posts already have a very good relationship with DEFRA colleagues in order to advance our EU sustainable development objectives. And colleagues in Posts in the major emerging economies of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa are working particularly closely with both DEFRA and DFID to take forward Sustainable Development Dialogues with these countries.

70. Every year we hold a conference for our Sustainable Development Attachés. This provides an opportunity to brief attachés on priorities and receive feedback from them about their work and the support they need. At the next conference in February we plan to talk attachés through the FCO’s new SD Action Plan and to commission SD Country Action Plans for 2007/8 for priority countries.

Q6. Do FCO policy documents, such as the 2006 White Paper, reflect sufficiently sustainable development objectives? Has the International Energy Strategy led to better consideration of climate change in international energy supply policy in the FCO and across government?

2006 White Paper

71. The FCO White Paper, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World* was published in March 2006. It spells out that “our long term interests and values are best protected by the spread of democratic values, good government, and respect for human rights. These make conflict less likely, reduce poverty and support sustainable development across the world”. This implicitly acknowledges sustainable development as a framework covering a wide range of issues throughout the FCO.

72. The White Paper sets out the FCO’s role in advising and working with other government departments on international handling and negotiating, and in promoting and implementing UK policies overseas, giving sustainable development and climate change as specific examples.

73. It also establishes one of HMG’s international priorities as “promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment” (known as strategic priority 7, or SP7). Under this priority, the White Paper sets out the following aims:

- Encourage the spread of democracy and good political governance, in particular through fair electoral processes, effective parliamentary institutions, public participation in decision making, independent judiciaries and freedom of expression.
- Press individual countries on core human rights issues and specific cases of concern and back up our policies with practical help.
- Lead a systematic strategy across Government for engaging with the Muslim world and work with our EU partners, the US, and Muslim governments to promote peaceful reform and increase mutual understanding.
- Help create the conditions in which developing countries can meet the Millennium Development Goals, in particular by working to ensure commitments made by the EU, G8 and African countries in 2005 are met.
- Help ensure a successful pilot of the International Finance Facility (IFF) for immunisation and promote the wider roll-out of the IFF and other measures to increase aid flows and deliver more effective debt relief.
- Maintain international momentum on climate change by working towards international agreement to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations through the UN framework, the Plan of Action agreed at Gleneagles and practical initiatives to develop sustainable energy technologies.
- Promote co-ordinated international action against global human health threats such as AIDS, pandemic influenza and major chronic disease
- Support delivery of the commitments made at the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg, with an emphasis on environmental sustainability.

74. In June 2006 the Foreign Secretary issued a follow-up document to the White Paper—*Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: the UK's International Priorities; Updated Highlights*. This established a new international priority on “achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy”.

75. The FCO also worked closely with DFID and DEFRA to ensure that sustainable development principles were embedded in the Government's July 2006 White Paper on *Making Governance Work for the Poor* (DFID White Paper).

76. The FCO Departmental Report reflects progress made on SP7, outlining our work on environmental governance (including PP10), forest governance, the Sustainable Development Dialogues, the Overseas Territories, and the cross-cutting three year strategy on human rights, democracy and good governance.

77. We also seek to embed sustainable development in specific policy strategies. For example, we are currently drafting the FCO Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy which will support and help deliver the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy and Sustainable Development Action Plan. The aims outlined in the CSR Strategy include commitments such as: developing international principles and codes of conduct (i.e. social and environmental); greater awareness amongst businesses of the risks of becoming complicit in human rights abuses; reduced emissions through a rapid shift to a low-carbon global economy; sustainable production and consumption: implementation of the International Labour Organisation's fundamental core labour standards, including the elimination of child labour, forced labour and discrimination in the workplace; sustainably managed forests and reduced illegal logging; effective management of revenues from natural resources; and sustainable tourism.

78. As the main portal to the FCO for the public, the FCO's external website also emphasises sustainable development; it has a full sustainable development section within the international priorities section. This gives information on priority areas, a downloadable version of the FCO SD strategy and review of the strategy, and sections on: The FCO's Sustainable Development Programme, under the Global Opportunities Fund; Environmental governance and natural resources; Forestry and illegal logging; Sustainable tourism; Action through the UN; Action through the EU; Priority countries; and Environmental management on our own estate.

International Energy Strategy

79. The International Energy Strategy (IES) was the first Whitehall document to bring together HMG's international objectives on energy security and climate change in an integrated fashion. It was signed by the three key government departments: FCO, DTI and DEFRA. This followed the establishment, for the first time, of an FCO Climate Change and Energy Group in September 2004. The group's primary task since then has been the implementation of the strategy.

80. Since the IES was published in late 2004, there is considerable evidence that it has led to more integrated policy making. The best example is the progress we have made on European energy policy. European Council Conclusions and high-level statements from the European Commission in 2006 show that the imperative to tackle climate change on an international basis is increasingly at the heart of the EU's energy strategy. The EU's Strategic Energy Review, published on 10 January, has confirmed this. The British Government has been highly active in shaping this agenda, which has required close and collaborative cross-working across Whitehall departments. The IES helped lay the foundations for this collaborative work.

81. As is generally acknowledged, the British Government has played a leading international role on climate change and energy security, from our Presidency of the G8 in 2005 to our launching of the EU Hampton Court initiative in autumn 2005. The Foreign Secretary's decision to adopt climate security as an FCO strategic priority, and her appointment of a Special Representative for Climate Change, are testament to her commitment to tackling climate change. In this area of work she is clear that the consideration of international energy policy is indivisible from the consideration of climate change issues.

82. The three main Whitehall departments continue to work together, with others such as No 10 and HM Treasury, on international energy and climate change policy. A major priority now is the Energy White Paper due for publication in March, where international issues will be an important element and to which a number of government departments are contributing.

Q7. Is there adequate funding for projects in the FCO Sustainable Development Programme? Are all projects funded by the FCO, including under other programmes, leading to truly sustainable outcomes? How are FCO-funded projects screened to ensure their sustainability?

83. Sustainable development is a strategic international priority but it should be noted that FCO resources devoted to sustainable development and climate change are limited. See question three “structure and capacity for promoting UK international environmental and sustainable development priorities” for more information.

Programme funds

84. The FCO's Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) includes programmes on sustainable development; climate change and energy; economic reform; and the UK's Overseas Territories (including the Overseas Territories Environment Programme or OTEP).

85. The GOF Sustainable Development Programme (GOF-SD) currently has two main objectives:

- (i) to promote greater respect for human rights, democracy and governance particularly on priority themes through support to priority countries in their adherence to international human rights standards and norms especially UN Human Rights Treaties; and
- (ii) to promote sustainable management of natural resources in priority countries through improved environmental governance and more effective implementation and enforcement of international and national agreements and legislation.

A review of the programme in 2006 recommended splitting the current GOF-SD to create separate Human Rights and Sustainable Development programmes. These new arrangements will be in place by April 2007 and will provide around £1.6 million of funding per annum for sustainable development projects and £3.4 million per annum for Human Rights projects. Furthermore, in response to the review we are revising the objectives for the GOF-SD programme and are developing a new strategy. Its aim will be to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice on environmental issues; the mainstreaming of SD into policies and planning; and the implementation of environmental legislation. To achieve this, and to maximise FCO impact in areas that are not necessarily being addressed by others in Whitehall, we expect the programme to focus on projects on environmental democracy, sustainable forest management and sustainable tourism.

*Project examples**Green Scorpions—South Africa*

The Global Opportunities Fund Sustainable Development Programme is providing around £180,000 to train South African Environmental Management Inspectors, nick-named the 'Green Scorpions', so that they are better able to deal with environmental crimes. Our support has helped to make the tackling of environmental offences a priority for the criminal justice system. This in turn raises South Africa's market profile internationally through the implementation of environmental enforcement, compliance and monitoring standards. This is a collaborative project between the Environment Agency (England and Wales), the British High Commission and the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Work has commenced on this three-year project supporting the implementation of new environmental legislation, needing capacity building support for enforcement, to help newly designated Environmental Management Inspectors (EMIs). This project will continue until March 2008.

Amazon Deforestation—Tackling a root cause in Brazil

We are providing £157,000 to support a project run by The Nature Conservancy in Brazil to help combat deforestation by developing and implementing an independent certification scheme for "forest-friendly" soya. The scheme will be modelled on advances in timber certification in the Amazon and thematic certification, such as dolphin-friendly tuna, in First World markets.

Post tsunami—Sri Lanka tourist industry recovery programme

This Travel Foundation project in Sri Lanka aims to contribute to the tsunami-recovery programme through a programme of sustainable tourism projects that will help restore the natural environment, provide new employment, training and income-generating opportunities, increase knowledge and awareness of the importance of the ecosystem, and contribute to the development and promotion of the Galle region as a tourist destination. As part of the project the Buena Vista Tree Nursery was officially opened at the end of December 2005, and nurserymen/women have been trained to produce plants for re-vegetation of tsunami-affected land, new housing developments and schools, and for sale to tourists through a "plant a tree" programme. The project also supports local crafts. GOF-SD has provided £35,000 to this project.

Other Government Departments' programmes

86. DEFRA and other departments and organisations have various funding programmes relating to sustainable development. Under our new action plan we aim to provide advice on project proposals under DEFRA's WSSD Implementation Fund (WIF) and their Environment for Europe (EfE) Fund (which also funds project under the Partners for Environmental Co-operation in Europe initiative). Our network of attachés receives advice on how to gain access to these funds for their own projects (most recently during the 2006 attachés conference) and, when appropriate, our Posts will also help to monitor and implement other WIF projects.

87. As already noted, we work closely with DEFRA on the Sustainable Development Dialogues and they have provided funding for additional personnel in Mexico, Brazil and China to assist with follow-up activities on the Dialogues, including project work.

Sustainability of projects

88. We aim to ensure that all projects are sustainable—both in terms of ensuring that they have a positive impact on local communities, environments and economies; and ensuring that projects continue to have an impact beyond the life-time of the funding.

89. Sustainable development is a strategic priority for the FCO so we aim to embed environmental considerations in all Global Opportunities Fund project work. The GOF programme office issues guidance notes for those bidding for project funds. The guidance asks that proposals assess the proposed projects' impacts on the environment—for example this includes considering the effect on the local environment (such as water supplies or waste disposal) and the wider impact on global warming and climate change (such as aviation or car emissions from travel). All potential direct and indirect impacts on the environment must be assessed, and alternatives, mitigating actions or justifications must be included in the proposal. The quality of these assessments varies and we are working to ensure that project implementers understand how to complete these assessments and what they can do to improve a project's environmental impacts. We are also working to make sure that policy leads who appraise projects know what they should be looking for in these assessments.

90. At the end of every project an evaluation report must be produced. The purpose of this report is to present information on the performance of the project and its impact. It is intended to allow programme managers to quickly assess how the project performed as well as to understand why such performance occurred. This is combined with what lessons have been learned and how implementation of such projects in the future should be modified in order to improve the chances of project success.

Q8. How well does the FCO work with other departments, and in particular Defra, DfID and DTI, in relation to sustainable development objectives?

91. The FCO helps to progress the UK's international sustainable development objectives, particularly through our network of Posts. We cannot do this effectively unless we work closely with colleagues in other government departments (as most sustainable development, climate change and energy policy issues are led by other departments) and encourage Posts to do the same.

92. The Sustainable Development Team (within SDBG) works extremely closely with their counterparts at DEFRA and DFID, with DEFRA personnel seconded to the team itself. The Business Team (also within the same group—SDBG) have their own close working relationships with DTI and DFID. The Climate Change & Energy Group (CCEG) also works closely with other departments—particularly DEFRA, DFID, DTI and the Treasury. Both SDBG and CCEG co-ordinate Government activity on sustainable development, and climate and energy security at a country level in priority countries, including through:

- developing Country Action Plans, agreed with Posts and relevant government departments;
- designing and implementing GOF projects: DEFRA, DTI and DFID are represented on the appraisal panel for GOF Climate Change & Energy projects, and DEFRA and DFID are also on the appraisal panel for GOF Sustainable Development projects; and
- co-ordination of “tailored conversations” on sustainable development, climate and energy issues with our priority countries, to ensure common and consistent messaging by Ministers and officials.

93. Our multilateral Posts—such as the UK's Missions to the UN in New York and Geneva, our Representation to the UN Environment Programme in Nairobi, our Representation to the EU in Brussels and our Delegations to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)—play a crucial role in advancing UK priorities on issues such as poverty reduction, environment, development, human rights, trade, debt relief, natural resource management, climate change and energy. The FCO ensures that our Attachés in multilateral Posts receive instructions that have been co-ordinated with Whitehall Departments. UK Missions also work directly with colleagues in DEFRA, DFID, HMT, DTI and other Departments on an ongoing basis and particularly in the run up to major international meetings and negotiations. For example, our International Organisations Department (IOD) coordinates UK policy on UN reform working across Whitehall. IOD also ensures a coherent UK approach to sustainable development issues in the UN, particularly for the annual session of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and during the UN General Assembly, working closely with DFID, DEFRA, HMT, DTI and other Departments.

Specific examples of cross-departmental working

94. Climate change: The FCO worked closely with other government departments, particularly DEFRA, DTI and DFID, in preparing authoritative advice before the UK undertook its international legal obligations under the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Convention on Climate Change. The UK ratified the Protocol on 31 May 2002. The UK has developed a policy to mitigate the causes of climate change and to secure UK and global energy supplies. Our achievements in 2006–07 on climate change were often the result of excellent teamwork with other Government Departments, particularly DEFRA, DTI and DFID. The FCO is represented in the UK delegation in all major bilateral and multilateral activity, for example at the UN negotiations on climate change and in the Gleneagles Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development.

95. Delivery of WSSD commitments: We work particularly closely with both DEFRA, DFID and DTI on delivery of the commitments made at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and to deliver the international commitments in the UK SD Strategy. We are part of an interdepartmental group (chaired by DEFRA and comprising representatives from DEFRA, DFID, FCO and DTI) which co-ordinates activity and monitors progress on these commitments. The FCO is the lead co-ordinating department on two UK WSSD commitments:

- (i) exploring the relationship between the environment and human rights, where we focus on promoting better environmental governance and the Partnership for Principle 10; and
- (ii) achieving more effective action by international organisations in promoting sustainable development. The FCO also helps other departments deliver other WSSD commitments, for example through our work on natural resource management, climate change and energy.

96. Poverty reduction and debt relief: The FCO uses its network of bilateral and multilateral Posts to support DfID's work on poverty reduction, including by encouraging the integration of the principles of sustainable development into poverty reduction strategies, policies and programmes. The FCO works with the Treasury and DFID to ensure that international financial institutions and the OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) make decisions on aid, lending and debt that support sustainable development. We also support improved co-ordination with other international organisations to help meet WSSD commitments.

97. International trade and finance: The FCO supports the commitment in the UK SD Strategy to work through the WTO to promote trade liberalisation and environmental protection, for example by strengthening links between the WTO and those Multilateral Environmental Agreements that have trade provisions.

98. Natural resource management: The FCO works with other government departments in promoting improved natural resource management, such as sustainable forest management and tackling illegal logging; protecting and managing biodiversity in the Overseas Territories, promoting sustainable tourism; and implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Q9. How well does the FCO meet the competing demands placed upon them by different departments such as DTI and DEFRA, and is there evidence that the environment and development are given adequate priority?

99. The formation of Global and Economic Issues Directorate on 1 April 2006 gave us the opportunity to bring together the FCO's work on sustainable development and global business issues in a single department, the Sustainable Development & Business Group (SDBG). Both issues continue to have their own FCO Strategic Priority. The positioning of the sustainable development teams within a policy group, alongside global and economic issues sends an important signal that sustainable development is a core business issue for the FCO. Similarly, the creation of Climate Change and Energy Group (CCEG) brought together climate and energy security within a single group as both are essential for maintaining security and prosperity and are core business for the FCO.

100. There is always potential for tensions between sustainable development and economic growth. However, if problems do arise we can address them constructively together because of our close working relationship across a range of issues. The FCO is uniquely positioned to harness the knowledge of both departments to achieve the UK's international objectives so FCO work with DEFRA and DTI can be mutually reinforcing rather than competitive.

101. For example, November was the FCO's "Responsible Business Month". As a part of that initiative we are working on a Stakeholder Plan for Business and a Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy. These documents recognise the FCO's role in supporting UK firms abroad but also acknowledge that business has the potential to be our most powerful ally in meeting the UK's international objectives and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

102. Furthermore, a number of sustainable development/business synergies have been realised as a result of our merger. For example, marine biodiversity (such as conserving whales) is now handled by the same team dealing with commercial exploitation of the oceans (bioprospecting, continental shelf delimitation etc.); policy on sustainable tourism and deforestation now takes more account of key market/business

aspects of these phenomena; and being the link department to UKTI the group is also helping to implement UKTI's new five-year strategy (which includes a new emphasis on supporting UK environmental technology firms internationally).

Q10. *To what extent does the FCO work with non-state actors in achieving sustainable development objectives? Has the FCO made full use of such organisations?*

FCO Stakeholder policy

“As the links between domestic and international issues grow, co-operation between Departments of Government and with the private sector, NGOs and the public must deepen.”

White Paper on the UK's International Priorities—Updated Highlights, June 2006

103. The FCO as an international network actively engages with non-state actors, such as NGOs, faith groups, businesses, trade unions and others, in delivering the Government's international strategic priorities. The White Paper highlighted a need for the FCO to strengthen its partnerships and build a future based on shared values and interests. The FCO is seeking to tap into the expertise and experience of a range of stakeholder groups and communities throughout this country, with an aim to set up strategic partnerships and networks in the UK and overseas to work towards common goals.

104. We also work extensively with stakeholders. A number of NGOs contributed to the FCO SD Action Plan, and will continue to help us with implementation. We have invited this group to meet again in March or April to help us review progress towards our SDAP and give us an external perspective. The Action Plan itself envisages extensive co-operation with non-government actors. One early example will be a round-table with NGOs in February to discuss collaboration in drawing the links between climate security and development.

Other examples of how we work with stakeholders

105. The FCO is developing a strategies for engagement with businesses, trade unions, NGOs, and faith groups, which recognise the achievement they can make to help achieve the Government's international environmental objectives.

106. Delivering projects through stakeholders: Non-state actors play a particularly effective role in cooperation with our FCO network overseas in direct implementation of GOF projects. For example, through the Global Opportunities Fund Sustainable Development Programme (GOF SD), the FCO is supporting various NGO run projects in 18 countries world-wide. GOF projects involve work with organisations as varied and diverse as the Argentine National Parks Agency, Conservation International Brasil, WWF, Centrex, the RSPB, and the Travel Foundation.

Examples of working through partnerships

PECE: The FCO, along with Defra and DfID, is a founding member of the **Partners for Environmental Co-operation in Europe initiative**, or **PECE** (www.pece.co.uk). PECE brings together organisations from the public sector, business and civil society—based in the UK, the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and multilateral organisations—who have a shared goal to help protect the environment and promote sustainable development. PECE's 87 member organisations include Shell, Imperial College London, UNEP, and the Environment Council. FCO officials, both in London and at Posts, are actively involved in assessing project bids, and we have a representative on the PECE board to select projects. Previous projects include providing local government officials in far-Eastern Russia skills needed to work effectively with the private sector and civil society on sustainable development. Current running projects include the establishment of a sustainable pilot waste management scheme (collection, transport and disposal) in at least one Azeri community, helping to tackle environmental and health and safety problems in both the short and long-term.

The travel foundation (www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk) was launched by Bill Rammell MP in October 2003 under the Prime Minister's Sustainable Tourism Initiative. An independent UK charity that aims to help the outbound travel industry manage tourism more sustainably, it offers a unique resource to the tourism industry, helping to safeguard resources on which business depends and balancing the need for sustainability with profitability. Crucially it brings together government, NGOs and the private sector to work in partnership. Though FCO core financial support ceased in 2004 (funding since has been from the travel industry, with partners such as BA, Thomas Cook, First Choice and Virgin), the FCO continues to work closely with the Travel Foundation. For instance, FCO officials have observer status on the board of trustees, GOF-SD money has been used to fund a number of the Foundation's projects and the FCO also hosted 2005 and 2006 AGMs for the Foundation.

The World Resources Institute provides the secretariat to the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10), a global coalition of civil society groups, governments and international organisations formed to promote transparent, inclusive and accountable decision-making at the national level. We work closely with WRI to

encourage other governments such as The Netherlands and Sweden to join the partnership. We will continue to explore how best to use the knowledge gained by NGO partners in implementing Principle 10 to encourage other governments to join PP10.

Q11. *Should the FCO be required to extend its environmental policy statement to its foreign estate? How well does its foreign estate perform in relation to the policy statement? Is the FCO foreign estate providing an example of our international environmental aspirations, such as the use of less polluting vehicles or renewable energy?*

Sustainable Operations on our Estate

107. The Environmental Policy Statement is part of the policy infrastructure of the FCO's Environmental Management System (EMS) in the UK. Awareness of and support for good environmental practice is high across our overseas network, and we have begun to roll out formal EMS principles to Posts, starting with a pilot project involving nine Posts in 2005–06, and extending this to a further tranche of twenty Posts this financial year. If resources allow, we will extend the principles to a further twenty Posts in 2007–08, and a further twenty in 2008–09. As part of their application of EMS principles, each of these Posts will be required to develop a local environmental policy (where not already established), based on our UK sustainability policies.

108. However, we do not think it would be possible to apply to the overseas estate our Environmental Policy Statement and the measures that support it in the UK, without adaptation. The overseas network consists of over 220 Posts in 160+ countries. There are significant differences in the size of individual Posts' operations, the age and nature of their buildings, and the local environmental and infrastructure background against which they operate. For example, 25% of our UK car fleet is now powered by alternative fuels. When purchasing vehicles, Posts' value for money assessment must take account of environmental performance. So sustainability is a factor in vehicle selection. But it would clearly be wrong to buy a technically advanced vehicle which could not be maintained locally.

109. We are currently engaged in a significant building programme overseas to improve the security of our Posts. In the UK, we apply the standard Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method to all new builds and major refurbishments. Working with the BRE, we have developed a bespoke environmental assessment method, which we now apply to our new builds and major refurbishment projects overseas. Equally, we insist that materials used in our new builds overseas are obtained from renewable resources.

110. As far as our existing buildings are concerned, we are currently extending the coverage of our property management database to all our properties overseas, owned and rented alike. When complete the system will give us the information we need to measure the full environmental impact of the overseas estate and, hence, the tools to mitigate this.

111. We are working with REEEP (the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership) to offset the emissions generated by the air travel of UK based staff and Ministers. We also encourage staff in our Posts to make a voluntary contribution from their travel budgets to an airline or other organisation to offset the carbon emissions from their air travel.

Q12. *How well are environmental objectives reflected in the FCO Public Service Agreements?*

112. We have a specific Public Service Agreement (PSA) target on sustainable development: "To promote sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights, particularly through effective delivery of programmes in these and related fields."

113. As mentioned in preceding answers, the FCO aims to embed environmental concerns throughout its work; actively engaging multilateral and bilateral contacts through our network of attachés and Posts to ensure that sustainable development is appropriately considered in a number of issues.

114. The Government's international climate change strategy has ambitious objectives on urgent collective international action. We need to scale up efforts and take innovative approaches across government in order to achieve a step change in international engagement and to implement the strategy.

Q13. *Has the FCO met its responsibilities towards the environment in UK Overseas Territories?*

115. Responsibility for the protection of the environment in the UK Overseas Territories is owned jointly by the Governments of the Overseas Territories and the UK Government as a whole. As the 1999 White Paper *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity* made clear, Britain is pledged to defend the Overseas Territories, to encourage their sustainable development and to look after their interests internationally. The responsibility for the environment of the Overseas Territories rests with the people and the governments of the Territories. The UK Government can, and does, support those governments to deliver sustainable development. The FCO has a role, as do DEFRA, DFID, the Ministry of Defence and a number of NGOs. All of these give support through either direct financial or technical assistance.

116. The Overseas Territories (except British Antarctic Territory and the Cyprus SBAs) signed Environment Charters with HMG in 2001. Gibraltar has a different type of Charter. The Charters have a list of commitments that both HMG and the OT Governments are working towards.

117. As a result of the Charters, the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP), a joint FCO and DFID funded programme, was initiated to support the OTs with the implementation of the Charters and environmental management more generally. It began with an initial budget of £3 million for three years, to March 2007. Further funding of £469,000 (FCO) and £500,000 (DFID) has been approved for FY2007–08. OTEP has funded projects in most territories, including: environmental legislation in Anguilla; eradication of rodents on Eagle Island in British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT); support for an Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) conference in the Falkland Islands; and habitat restoration in Bermuda.

118. OTEP was subject to an independent review in late 2005 by the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development. The review was led by Dr Stephen Bass, formerly Chief Environment Adviser at DFID. The review and the OTEP Secretariat's response to its recommendations are available at <http://www.ukotcf.org/otep/review2005.htm>. The review noted that "after only two years of operation, OTEP has become a highly valued source of support to environment stakeholders in the OTs—both governmental and non-governmental—and is a particularly key player in biodiversity conservation."

Q14. How effective have public diplomacy activities funded by FCO been in promoting sustainable development principles abroad?

119. We see public diplomacy as a tool to help us achieve our strategic priorities through engagement with the public overseas; it is vital for sustainable development. We are developing a new approach to public diplomacy work, focusing on three of the government's International Strategic Priorities: achieving climate security; promoting sustainable development, poverty reduction, human rights, democracy and good governance; and supporting the UK economy and business. This approach is being piloted by key UK governmental and non-governmental public diplomacy organisations in eight countries from January 2007 for two years. There are three objectives behind the pilot country exercise:

- (a) to concentrate our effort on priority issues in priority countries in order to achieve change;
- (b) to test public diplomacy approaches so we can see what works and what doesn't as a means of informing decisions on future activity; and
- (c) to test a new approach to measuring the impact of public diplomacy work.

Public Diplomacy Fund

120. Part of the FCO's Public Diplomacy Fund (PDF) is used to support public diplomacy projects globally through a competitive bidding process (the other part of the PDF supports the new pilot approach to public diplomacy). In 2006/7, projects to a total value of approximately £2 million were supported. Many of these projects help to deliver our sustainable development or climate security objectives, for example:

- Promoting awareness in Turkmenistan of climate change issues, to strengthen the Embassy's contacts with local governmental environment agencies, and to raise Britain's profile as the leading nation in matters of global concern.
- Developing the relevant capacities of media and civil society organisations on environmental issues in Sri Lanka.
- Promoting UK excellence in energy efficiency and energy saving and improving awareness of these matters among local communities and media in Ukraine.
- Translating the growing awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Singapore's tourism and hospitality sector into widespread commitment to put CSR into practice.
- Demonstrating the UK's leadership in tackling climate change in Japan and making Japanese businesses, decision-makers and policy formulators aware of the economic benefits of improved environmental performance.
- Highlighting UK leadership in innovative green city development by encouraging the sharing of climate change best practice between Woking, regarded as a model energy efficient city, and US cities.

Chevening Programme

121. The aim of the Chevening programme is to build influence for the UK among the leaders of the future in support of the International Strategic Priorities. The Chevening Programme—for which the FCO provides £32 million per year—is divided into Chevening Scholarships (generally one year Master's courses) and Chevening Fellowships (12 week tailor made courses for mid-career professionals).

Chevening Scholarships

122. Scholarships are offered in over 150 countries; they enable talented graduates and young professionals to study in the UK to gain skills which will benefit their own countries. Scholarships are used to fund studies in a wide range of subjects, many of which help build capacity on sustainable development—for example of the 1677 scholarships awarded in 2005/6, 79 were for environmental studies, 180 for international relations, 129 for development and gender studies and 59 for science and technology.

Chevening Fellowships

123. Chevening Fellowships are tailor-made short courses for overseas, mid-career professionals that focus on subjects aligned to the Government's international strategic priorities. In 2006 the University of Wolverhampton delivered a new Fellowship course on *Governance & Environmental Democracy* on behalf of the FCO. This course supports our strategic priority on "promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment". Fourteen of the fifteen participants valued the Fellowship as a high-quality professional development opportunity which also increased their professional network. The same number claimed the Fellowship gave them the opportunity to gather information and exchange knowledge at an international level. The course is being repeated in 2007. Other Fellowship courses—such as those on *More Efficient Energy Consumption* and *The Economics of Energy*—also support our sustainable development objectives.

January 2007

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Ian McCartney**, MP, Minister of State for Trade, **Mr Scott Wightman**, Director, Global and Economic Issues, and **Mr Fergus Auld**, Team Leader for Climate Change and Cleaner Energy, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave evidence.

Q70 Chairman: Good afternoon, Minister. It is a pleasure to have you here this afternoon in what is the final evidence session of this inquiry, indeed this series of inquiries of the Sub-Committee, and I think at some point, if we have not already, we need to welcome some Moldovian MPs coming to listen to our evidence this afternoon. I think you have a statement to start off with, so would you like to give us that.

Mr McCartney: Thank you, Mr Challen. Firstly, I would like to introduce my co-witnesses, Scott Wightman, Director of Global and Economic Issues at the Foreign Office, and Fergus Auld who is the Team Leader for Climate and Security and, like you, I welcome our colleagues from Moldova and, depending on the questions you ask me, I might ask them to substitute for me! First of all, I would like to start by saying that I genuinely welcome the Committee's inquiry and I hope that, after your report, we can work together on issues in terms of what you recommend, though I will not pre-empt that, but I genuinely want to work with you as a Minister in the Foreign Office. My friend of course, the Foreign Secretary, and I both recognise that the Foreign Office can play a unique role through its network of embassies and high commissions to forward the Government's agenda for the environment, particularly on climate security. Sustainable development is central to our foreign policy. It is not only a strategic priority in its own right, but it also underpins the FCO's other strategic priorities. For example, environmental degradation can drive migration or the impacts of climate change can threaten human security. In the last few months, I have seen at first hand myself environmental degradation threatening prosperity in places like Hong Kong and the impacts of climate change threatening human security in the Pacific islands through sea-level rises. Furthermore, Mr Chairman,

as I am sure your Committee is aware, in one of her first actions as Foreign Secretary, Mrs Beckett designated climate security and the transition to a low-carbon economy as a new strategic international priority for the United Kingdom, and appointed a Special Representative for Climate Change. The Prime Minister established climate security as a core British interest and put the UK in a position to lead a rapid transition to a global low-carbon economy. The commitment to climate security runs right through the Government. The Government's strategic aim is to avoid dangerous climate change by stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. This is a highly ambitious and long-term outcome. To achieve this, we need to: bring about a step change in global investment in the low-carbon technologies to enable a transition to a low-carbon economy, including through an effective carbon market; build resilience through managing impacts and promoting adaptation to climate change; and secure international agreement to a realistic, robust, durable and fair framework of commitments to reduce CO₂ emissions for the post-2012 period. It will be impossible to achieve this objective without much wider acceptance of the scale and the urgency of the challenge, matched by a major increase in international ambition. Our own efforts are, therefore, directed at galvanising international collective action by shifting global attitudes towards climate change. Our recent activities show how the Foreign Office has focused on a broad range of sustainable development work. We have supported the development of the Stern Review on the economics of climate change and amplified its global impact. While I was in New Zealand and Australia immediately after the report's launch, I delivered the key messages from the Stern Review, not just to my counterparts in government, but other political

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parties, the business community and academia as well as through the media, trying to get to the ordinary citizen of Australia and New Zealand. It was interesting to note, not because of my contribution, how quickly the Stern Review has had a tangible impact on the political debate in Australia and in New Zealand from a political perspective and a business perspective. We have persuaded the past and present United Nations Secretary General to describe climate change as an “all-encompassing threat” in speeches and in articles, and we are trying to mobilise United Nations machinery beyond the environmental sphere. We have secured a high-level EU engagement on climate and energy, as demonstrated at the informal summit in Lahti and in the European Commission’s recent Strategic Energy Review. We have persuaded the Commission to adopt a robust position on national allocation plans for Phase II of the European Union’s Emissions Trading Scheme, and we are working with Germany to put climate change at the centre of the G8 and European Union Presidencies. We have launched another sustainable development dialogue with Mexico in October and we are preparing for the 15th UN Commission for Sustainable Development to be held in New York. We have helped prepare, and participated in, the first ministerial meeting under the sustainable development dialogue and the structured dialogue on climate change between the Government and the Government of India. In addition to that and in parallel with that, I attended, and participated in, the World Economic Forum in New Delhi on this issue, addressing the world’s business community and, in particular, engaging businesses on the Indian Sub-Continent. We have also just published our Sustainable Development Action Plan which has commitments which focus on areas where the Foreign Office can add the most value; this includes activities to raise awareness of sustainable development across the Department and to ensure that it is embedded in all our work. I will complete it at that point, so you can challenge me and question me and I hope that myself, Mr Wightman and Mr Auld will be able to respond positively and in a way which helps you with your inquiry.

Q71 Chairman: Thank you very much for that statement. It does reflect, I think, the very clear and robust commitment made by the Foreign Secretary in the publication in January for the Sustainable Development Action Plan, the commitment to protect the environment. We have had evidence from witnesses who have felt that perhaps there was still a lack of knowledge within the FCO about the importance of the environment in meeting our goals on security and prosperity. Would you accept that a lot more still needs to be done within the Department to ensure that sustainable development permeates all levels in the Department?

Mr McCartney: Indeed, and that is why it is essential to start training both in the Department at the UK base and also throughout our embassies and our high commissions; this has become a priority area. Indeed, as we speak today, our attachés are here in

London and they are having a programme of training to develop their skills and knowledge not just on the intellectual issues, but on how they can actually at posts co-ordinate, on our behalf, the priorities that the Government has set itself, not just Foreign Office priorities, but the ongoing priorities and the work that is done in the DTI, Defra, et cetera. We have already appointed 100 sustainable development attachés, and some of these, though not all, I do not want to mislead the Committee, but we have now got 100 highly trained people at posts with responsibility for this area. Some are part-time with other issues and some are full-time, but they have all got a skill not just to deal with the issue in general, but actually to join up all the other issues that need to be developed in terms of a sustainable development approach. We have also put in place a significant training programme to ensure that, at every level, whether it is an ambassador or whether it is someone who trains in inward investment, they have all got a serious knowledge of the subject and understanding and will operate effectively on our behalf.

Q72 Chairman: The Sustainable Development Action Plan does contain some very welcome proposals on climate change and illegal logging, for example, but some of our witnesses amongst the NGOs are concerned that there seems to be a lack of weight put on the need to protect biodiversity. Would you say that biodiversity perhaps now is less of a priority within the FCO?

Mr McCartney: The short answer to that is no, and it might be helpful, in answering that, to say, for example, that the Action Plan has been adopted at all levels of the FCO and there is no question mark, it is not the case, it has been signed off by Martin McDonnelly, the Director General, myself and the Foreign Secretary, and all heads of departments, ambassadors, high commissioners and attachés in the countries are now working to the Action Plan. We held an open day for the wider officers and staff to promote the Action Plan and, as I said, we have an attachés conference, as we speak, to develop it, so that is important. On biodiversity, we have got an inter-departmental ministerial group on biodiversity, its next meeting is in the next few days, either Lord Triesman or I will attend, and this is to co-ordinate across government the role in biodiversity. We, as a Department, are not under any circumstances, and maybe a colleague could come in on this in a minute, underplaying or downplaying it; it is a critical part of the work that we are doing. Perhaps at the end of the discussion this afternoon, we can show some of the practical measures we are taking where we are investing in countries across the globe in protecting biodiversity either to prevent a degradation or, where a degradation has taken place, how to improve on that biodiversity, so it is a critically important factor.

Q73 Chairman: The RSPB did say that they felt it was a shame to see the loss of some FCO programmes on biodiversity and environmental work in recent years. Are you saying that those

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programmes or new programmes might be reinstated? Is that something which the FCO would look at?

Mr Wightman: Perhaps as an overall comment, what we are seeking to do with the resources that we have available is to ensure that we are focusing on the areas where we feel we can add the greatest value and achieve the greatest degree of impact. To that extent, all of the work that we are doing on climate security has a major impact, or we hope will have a major impact, on protecting biodiversity in the medium to long term. Equally, one of the sustainable development priorities that we have in our Sustainable Development Strategy and as one of the streams of work in our programme activity is around environmental governance. So what we are trying to do in that is to identify where we can intervene most effectively. It is true that in the past we have supported a number of small-scale projects which have been extremely worthy in themselves, aimed at protecting specific species or specific communities, enabling them to work to nurture their own particular ecosystem. But we have come to the conclusion on the basis as well of expert advice on the effectiveness of our programmes from Stephen Bass, the former Chief Environmental Adviser at DFID, that the most effective way in which we can intervene is more at the policy, regulatory and legislative level. We feel that, by focusing our efforts on enhancing the quality of environmental governance both at the international level and also at the national level, we can have a much broader impact on biodiversity across the board rather than on specific activities. Having said that, in addition, as I think the Committee is aware, we do, through the Overseas Territory Environment Programme, support specific projects designed to protect the biodiversity of our Overseas Territories.

Mr McCartney: An example, Mr Challen, surely in terms of using our negotiating skills and Foreign Office contacts is our working in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund in terms of signing the Heart of Borneo Initiative by the governments of Borneo, Indonesia and Malaysia for sustainable development to protect one of the rarest and largest ecosystems in the world, and that is where our skill and knowledge is, that is where our capacity is. You could not put a price on achieving an agreement such as this. There are other areas where we are working just as closely at this moment in time to do the same thing.

Q74 Mr Caton: Some witnesses have told us that the FCO is failing to work adequately with non-governmental organisations in meeting our international objectives. Given that the March 2006 White Paper specifically acknowledged the need to work more closely with NGOs, what is the problem?

Mr McCartney: I did not know there was a problem. Without boasting about it, a great proportion of my time, whether it is at the DTI in the joint role with the FCO, is engagement with NGOs and NGOs across the board. It is a critical factor in my work. I cannot achieve what I need to achieve, the objectives, the priorities that we have set in regions

and in countries unless I have a proactive working relationship. I will take this to heart, I will take this back and, if there is more that I can do and that the Department can do, we will do it. For example, today, although it is not an issue for this Committee, we have just sponsored a big event jointly with the All-Party Group on Human Rights with the NGOs and we have refurbished completely the activities that ministers undertake, and I will give an example of this, and again, we are more than happy, if this is not working in the way it needs to work, and maybe my colleagues can come in in a moment on specific issues. For example, before I go to a country, I sit down with the NGOs and talk through what the priorities of the visit should be across all of the issues that the NGOs might have and we then agree priorities for that visit. Then, when I come back, I set out what we have achieved and what we have not achieved, and the next thing I would do is set a work programme out for future visits or contacts, so I am very keen to work with NGOs and I am sorry if people feel that they have not received that kind of contact. I will take it in the way it should be taken and we will go back and look at it and see what more we can do. It may well be in this area, as I am only one of the ministers across government who deals with these issues, that they may well have some legitimacy, so, if the Committee wants to provide us with any examples of where this is happening, I am more than happy to take this up and to resolve matters.

Q75 Mr Caton: Well, you will have seen the evidence that has come to us. Can I give you one example that at least one NGO has raised with us, that they said that often there has been a good relationship perhaps with a post on a specific project, but that once the project is done and dusted, then the relationship is not ongoing, and what they would like to have is some longer-term basis for the relationship with the Department. Is that something that will come through in the NGO strategy that you are developing?

Mr McCartney: For example, we will be engaging with them in terms of any new action plans, and I think Scott here will chair those discussions with the NGOs. I think that the NGOs, the business representatives, the trade unions, all the alliances that need to be there are going to be included, so it is not just consulting them about what we want to do, but we want to consult them about what they think we should be doing. We want to fit them with the hat of actually developing the policy itself so that it is more than just a consultation, I would say it is a consultation plus where they have the capacity actually to influence at the start of the policy development the actual outcome of what that policy should look like, and I am keen for that to happen. There is a lot of skill, knowledge and commitment out there and it would be folly not to utilise it. That does not mean we will be able to agree everything, that will never happen, the NGOs always have their case to put and they put it vociferously and that is to be welcomed, it helps people like me to focus, but I

give you an absolute assurance that, on all of the work we are doing now and in future work, they will be involved and invited to the table.

Q76 Mr Caton: You are putting together a strategy for international action on climate change with other departments. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Mr McCartney: In terms of cross-Whitehall co-operation, I think it is important, and I make it clear from the outset, that this is an area where we have actually spent a great deal of time attempting to improve outcome. You may well say, "Is this not the tale of governments at all times, working in silos both in development and outcomes?", but I think it is important that we have a clarity about this, that we are going to work, and are working, together. Now, on the working closely arrangements, I will outline the arrangements that we have. We have Defra, DFID, DTI and ourselves working on international climate change strategies, for example, the work programme is now to 2009, and part of our input into that is to make available to those departments not just our intellectual resource, but our network in order for them to deliver the strategy which has been agreed after consultation. We will work with Defra and DFID on sustainable development and, in particular, on sustainable development dialogues. We have a Defra expert seconded to our development team and we have officials who sit together on the programme board on the Global Opportunities Fund which is an important fund in terms of sustainable development investment. We also have, in terms of cross-government working, as part of the same group our business and investment teams, and this is important in terms of corporate responsibility, engaging with the business community to invest into other economies, and it is important, in investing in those other economies, that they have not only an overall view, but that they are part and parcel of the sustainable development story and are committed to that. In terms of our strategy for zero emissions and all those issues on carbon trading, it is even more important now with the Stern Report that the business community is locked into this debate and, therefore, we utilise those resources as well across all the departments, and that is very, very important. We also co-ordinate in terms of the United Nations Environment Programme in the governing council so that we can co-ordinate not just here in country, but co-ordinate at the posts out of country as well. That is the kind of structure of the process and what we are doing. I do not know if my colleagues want to add anything to that.

Mr Wightman: I could say something perhaps on the overall objective of the international activity on climate change. The overall thrust is to try to create the conditions that will lead to a comprehensive international agreement on the post-2012 framework and, to achieve that, there is cross-Whitehall agreement that one of the essential elements in that would be to try to reframe the international debate in a way in which we can engage the really key players in the negotiation, the key

major emitting countries, so China, the United States, India and the EU. And we are engaged in the FCO in supporting the Prime Minister and the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary in a series of dialogues and campaigns in target countries to raise awareness of the issues, to work with different interest groups and exploit the potential for leverage in different interest groups in different countries so that we can create the conditions in which the broad principles of an international agreement can be agreed and then folded back into the multilateral negotiation. A key element of where we want to get to, as far as the Government is concerned, is an international agreement that facilitates a global price for carbon. We are convinced that achieving that will be absolutely essential to help direct the investments, particularly in the energy sector, which will have 30- and 40-year consequences and on which decisions will be taken over the next five to ten years. So securing the extension and the expansion of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, for example, would be an important objective of ours as well.

Mr McCartney: Alongside of that, in my role, which straddles across the DTI and the Foreign Office, I will give a practical example. Recently, and in advance of the meetings between the Chinese and the Prime Minister, I went to China to negotiate with them, bringing forward, with the support of UK investment support and the European Union, the building of the first zero-emission, coal-fired power station in China. We achieved this objective and, when they came in, the memorandum was agreed and signed. The second phase of course is to find the 400 million euros or so to build it. Why? Because every five days in China a coal-fired power station is built and it has productive capacity for at least 45 years, so this is a co-ordinated approach, looking not only multilaterally, but bilaterally at how we can share our technology and the capacity to work because we can do everything we want to do in the European environment, but none of it works unless we have a global environment which is clean and healthy too.

Q77 Mr Caton: It is useful that you have mentioned your dual role, Minister. Is one of the aims of the strategy to align trade policy with climate policy?

Mr McCartney: As Minister for Trade, it is very important that we utilise trade in a number of ways. Firstly, as we hopefully get a successful conclusion to the Doha Development Rounds, linked to that will be a growing approach in regions to regional trade agreements, agreements between least-developed countries and developed countries, like Economic Partnership Agreements. These are areas where we are pressing the Commission, and particularly Commissioner Mandelson and his colleagues, to ensure, in our future development work on trade agreements, that these areas of sustainable development are part and parcel to the co-discussions and negotiations. I am pleased to say that, in the discussions last Sunday and Monday with the 27 trade ministers and Commissioner Mandelson, I think there was a growing awareness from all concerned and a positive atmosphere that

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we seriously need to look to ensure in the future that these are absolutely core to any agreements that are reached. Why? Without these, we will not get sustainable development. We will get development, but it will not be sustainable and we will not allow access to technology in terms of least-developed countries being able to develop their capacity. If we want not only to trade, but also to be able to do so and safeguard the environment and their ecosystems, we need to invest and help them invest in those situations. For example, I recently, on behalf of not just ourselves, but working with the European Union, went to Fiji. Why? Because their sugar industry needs restructuring and, without restructuring, it will fail in a global trading environment for all sorts of reasons. I thought it was an opportunity, when there, to look to see whether, in restructuring the industry, we could also restructure the way that they can produce, using sugar, safe fuels not just for themselves, but as an export to other parts of the Pacific region, so a benefit both in trade and a benefit in terms of building their capacity and not to leave them in a situation where they have thousands of unemployed with the social problems attached to that and, in ten years' time, looking to see their seas rising continually in the Pacific, endangering themselves and many other Pacific island communities, so it is putting those types of measures together to try and make a difference.

Q78 Mr Caton: Mr Whiteman, you mentioned in a previous answer that, in this cross-departmental strategy, one of the main objectives is influencing other countries. Are we doing enough on the domestic stage to show a sort of diplomatic leadership that others will follow? I am thinking that people will listen to you more if you are walking the walk as well as talking the talk. Thinking of our 2010 target for a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, which we look like failing quite badly, does that affect the attitude of other nations towards us?

Mr Wightman: I cannot comment on the domestic policy, but you are absolutely right that the ability for the UK to sustain the leadership that it has shown internationally and given internationally, I think, is dependent on how people perceive actions which have been taken by the Government domestically to pursue its own domestic targets and to pursue the general policies in relation to emissions and reductions, so I think, as a general principle, you are right, yes.

Mr McCartney: Okay, I am a politician, but the Government are already working now on the next stage of another Energy White Paper and we are working very closely in terms of the adoption of an energy paper and strategy for the European Union. We are a world leader in this and I do not say that in a boastful sense. It was us who developed the Stern approach and it is that, in my view, which has galvanised the world in a way it has never galvanised it before. There is still a long way to go both in terms of putting meat on the bones, as it were, but everywhere I go in the world now, the one thing that

is certain is that there is always a positive view about what the UK is trying to achieve. Yes, there needs to be more on R&D and the science base in terms of bringing about new forms of energy production and sustainable and affordable energy production, yes, we need to do more international collaborations, and yes, we need to get a new generation of power production in Britain which is not only sustainable, but environmentally sustainable too, and these are all big challenges, but they are challenges that the Government is actually planning to meet, but meet it in a way of doing it by co-operation and getting the British people to buy into it which is important. So there is still a lot to do, you are absolutely right, but let us not forget what has been done so far. Kyoto would not have happened if it had not been for the Prime Minister and his negotiating skills. We are now in the business of what happens after Kyoto, which is really, really important, and we are now in the business of getting agreement in the European Union, we hope, through the current German Presidency not only to achieve the emissions trading, but to look at actually how we develop R&D and investment in infrastructure in safe, effective and sustainable forms of energy production, so there are all these areas which are all challenges, but they are all areas which, as the Government, we are on top of.

Q79 Mr Caton: Your reference to post-Kyoto leads me on to my next question. John Ashton has been appointed Special Representative on Climate Change for about six months now. Has this enabled us to make more progress in reaching a robust post-2012 international agreement on climate change?

Mr McCartney: Yes, John asked me to send his apologies because at one point we were hoping he would come to the meeting, maybe at some point later, as I am quite sure John would like to meet the Committee and I am sure this is an issue you will return to again. The arrival of John has indeed helped us, and I do not want to be too flowery about it, but he has made a major and dramatic impact in terms of directing the attention of the network of overseas posts to this issue. Firstly, his intellect and his capacity to enthuse people has been very, very important and, in a very complex area, the one thing you need to be able to achieve to get people themselves to think and have confidence to go out and do the job for you is that they know that the people they are working with actually will direct you, and we have a very strong leadership, so you have got leadership in the Civil Service and leadership from Margaret Beckett and the two of them working together is actually important. Going back to the question earlier about the public and policy campaigns, we need to do more campaigning on this issue and again John is working on that and how best to do that with civil society, with business, with NGOs, with parliamentarians, the academic science base, whatever, and we need to be able to do that and John is very effective at working in that. In taking forward the Stern Review, he is also someone who has got an international reputation which is very, very important in these matters, and I am pleased we have got him. I think, from our

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perspective, the way in which we have been able, in a very short space of time since Margaret came to the Department, to change the priorities and the effectiveness of the team is down to his leadership.

Mr Wightman: The Foreign Secretary and John Ashton together have been instrumental in changing the focus of the Foreign Office's work internationally on climate change so that we are no longer simply approaching climate change as fundamentally an environmental issue, but seeing it as a much broader issue which fits into economic development, poverty reduction, energy security and national security across the board, and I think that we have had quite a considerable degree of success, thanks to John's intellectual input, in changing the way that some of our international partners are addressing the question as well.

Q80 Mr Caton: I am just wondering how the Foreign Office is presenting the Stern Review to foreign audiences. It has obviously had a huge impact and is a very serious body of work, but it does contain a great number of variables, probabilities and uncertainties, yet it is now being cited almost as a final reference work and a textbook for action. To what extent is the Foreign Office actually trying to nuance its messages to actually relay the reality of the Stern Review in that regard?

Mr Auld: I think exactly what you were saying about nuancing the messages is the key point. Not every post in the world is going out and trying to present a 700-page document to the key people in those countries, but the important thing is that, through the use of the Stern Review and the debate that that has opened up, there is a whole new flank that has been opened to approach some of the key people in the debate on climate change who are the people who control the money. Now, posts have been using the travel of Sir Nicholas Stern and his team which is ongoing and he was most recently in Canada and will be continuing to travel for the next few months, and he himself is an irreplaceable tool in selling the messages, but it is also possible to take on that discussion with finance and economic ministries, with civil society and with business to carry on the discussion.

Mr McCartney: The question is a very fair one. It kind of mirrors when we are discussing the Stern Review and what happens next. We actually sat down as a Department and looked to see what we could bring to it. It is fair to say that we cannot get every single small embassy facility in the world to promote a 700-page report and, therefore, what we did was we established a priority country basis based on either whether they had significant natural resources, whether they were a major emitter of greenhouse gases, whether they were major economies and had particular relevance to international efforts to climate change or whether they were a country that could supply the UK with energy resources. Putting those factors together, we have a range of priority countries in climate change and energy and we are focusing a great deal of our efforts at the moment on those places, whether it is the United States, Canada, Japan, China, India,

Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, Germany, France, Russia, Nigeria, Angola, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and others, and there are reasons why those are there on the basis of what I said and the criteria. In the coming weeks and months, at government level, at business level and at civil society level, we will be working very closely in those countries in promoting not just what Stern has said, but promoting what we need to do post-2012 and what we need to do in terms of sharing technological advances, what we should do in terms of trading in carbon emissions, what we can do to encourage and engage and make it easier for the population to engage themselves in activities on environmental issues, say, on biodiversity and safeguarding our ecosystems, so all of those issues are all part of that, but we are prioritising it in terms of the countries concerned at this stage.

Mr Auld: In essence, the Stern message is very simple, that the scale and urgency of the challenge needs to be addressed in a way that it simply is not at the moment, and the overall thrust, as the Minister and Mr Wightman have said already, is getting recognition there, building the political momentum around the issue and hoping that that political momentum then feeds into the international negotiations in a way that is currently lacking.

Mr Wightman: We try to frame the pitch to the different priority countries in a way that is designed to appeal to their particular interest. So in the case of China, for example, our message is pitched around their requirements for energy security and how can they be satisfied in a climate-friendly way. What we are trying to do in a number of cases is to encourage either individual countries or regions to consider adopting the Stern methodology themselves in trying to identify at a more detailed level what the potential economic impacts of climate change are on their country or their region.

Mr McCartney: I am happy to share with the Committee the list of countries and why we are engaging with them because some have got the same characteristics and some have got different characteristics, and that is helpful both in terms of climate change and also sustainable development.

Chairman: That would be very useful.

Q81 David Howarth: I think what you have just been saying raises the question of the capacity of the Foreign Office to understand and transmit these messages. One of the things that has been coming through from the witnesses that we have been listening to is a concern about that capacity and, in particular, one specific restructuring which has caused a lot of worry, and that is the restructuring of the former Environmental Policy Department which has been blended into a larger group called 'Sustainable Development and Business'. Obviously there are good reasons to try and integrate the environment into wider concerns, especially to integrate environmental and economic thinking, but many witnesses have expressed to us a concern that this particular restructuring has led to a loss of

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expertise, and I was wondering whether you recognise that as a problem and, if so, whether you have any proposals for dealing with it?

Mr Wightman: I have seen the evidence and the discussion on that before. There is a slight misconception, I think, when the Environmental Policy Department was not melded solely into the Sustainable Development and Commonwealth Group, as it was. What came out of the Environmental Policy Department was the Sustainable Development and Commonwealth Group and the Climate Change and Energy Group. So what in fact happened was that there was an expansion of resources overall looking at environmental issues and climate change. There was a further reorganisation last year, as a result of which the resources that we, in London, dedicate to specifically the environmental strand of sustainable development work were reduced somewhat. But at the same time, along with the arrival of John Ashton and his support unit, we increased the resources that we are devoting to climate change and energy by over 25% in London. None of that restructuring has in any way affected the network of environmental attachés who are working on climate change and sustainable development on behalf of not just the FCO, but other government departments. Their work has been sustained. On the question of expertise, we have a regular flow of secondees from Defra into both the climate change side and the sustainable development side both to ensure that we have excellent working relationships with Defra, which we have, but also that we have a core of technical expertise which, with the best will in the world, we are not always capable of developing quickly ourselves. There was a specific question as well, I think, in the evidence in relation to international whaling.

Q82 David Howarth: I think we might talk about that later. My concern was specifically about structure. You are saying that people are coming into the corps from Defra and I think there was a concern from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee especially that what they saw as necessary was to have a permanent corps of expertise in the FCO as a way of making sure that you could mainstream environmental concerns throughout your organisation and a feeling that just having temporary people coming in and going out again would not achieve that. Can you see why that is a concern?

Mr Wightman: Yes, it is an alternative approach and I think each approach is equally valid, but, as the Minister said earlier in response to an earlier question, what we are trying to do is to raise the levels of awareness and expertise and understanding of sustainable development issues across the board within the Office so that it is not just people who are dealing with our strategic priorities on climate change and sustainable development that are aware of the implications, but also those who are working on conflict prevention, organised crime, migration, et cetera, so that we are making links across the organisation as a whole.

Mr McCartney: I think this is important, the issues about upskilling our complete workforce and getting to work using that additional skill and putting that together to work across all of the disciplines that the FCO deal with. For example, a few years ago, people probably turned their noses up, saying, "Well, those who are working in the estates in the Foreign Office should know about this", I would say, "Why?", "Well, it is easier for the estates here and the estates overseas who need to come up to international standards and requirements in terms of our own objectives", but, to that, we have to engage in a new skillset, so every aspect of the Foreign Office, whether it is our permanent core staff or people coming in to give us additional support, we are working on the basis of enhancing the skill mix in the Department, not increasing it. The second area that is across government, whether it is on trade, it is on investment or it is on this, is that increasingly you have to get a better skill mix, you have to multi-skill people. Five years ago, if you went to an embassy or a high commission anywhere in the world, you may have been lucky to find someone who had absolute expertise, say, in inward investment, whereas now you can probably find in every single high commission or embassy someone with that skill and either they are doing that job solely on its own, or they are being upskilled and reskilled. That is what we need to do now, given the challenges that we face as a country, to reskill and upskill, and it is what the private sector and the public sector are doing with their staff. You have to upskill to catch up and that is what we are trying to do, so I think there is a misconception of people, genuinely so, and it is up to us to make sure that people, when we make these changes, understand it and we engage with them so they have a certainty that what we are doing is not to undermine the work that we are doing, but actually to enhance it.

Q83 David Howarth: Can we talk about the figures because you mentioned that 25% increase, and I am still not sure how that works. In the central body, in the Sustainable Development and Business Group, I think you said in your written memo that there were six out of 22 who were working full-time on sustainable development issues, but you are also saying that some other people were taken out to work with John Ashton on a central basis, so overall how do the figures work?

Mr Wightman: We have got half a dozen people working exclusively on sustainable development and environmental governance issues within the Sustainable Development and Business Group. We also have within that group a Maritime Team which has five or six people, a significant proportion of whose time is work around fisheries and around whaling as well, so they are working on those issues as well. The Business Team in SDBG are working on business's role in promoting sustainability. Separate from that, we have the Climate Change and Energy Group which works on climate change and energy security, which increasingly we are seeing as two sides of the same coin and, in addition to that, John

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Ashton has his own dedicated team to support his work and they work intimately with the Climate Change and Energy Group. I should stress as well that all of these people work extremely closely with officials in Defra.

Q84 David Howarth: I hear what the Minister says about upskilling and multi-skilling, but that then does raise the question of how you tell internally whether you have done enough. How do you assess progress in increasing the knowledge of sustainable development issues across the organisation when you are not doing it solely with individuals, but you are saying that many individuals have to take on board this knowledge alongside other tests?

Mr McCartney: Again it is a very important point, from our perspective of this, in terms of our human resource strategy. One, it is about, as we are doing today, providing specific support and investment in skills and knowledge and that goes alongside our assessment strategy where everybody gets an individual assessment of their role and their work, so it becomes part of a process of people moving on and up the organisation, so there is, within the Department, a sophisticated approach where we can tell how our investment is working, if it is not working either collectively or individually, and that is whether they work within country or within posts. Posts are regularly assessed in terms of their skill and knowledge and what they are doing, so all those processes are in place, and I do not want to offer it too much because you may not want it, but I am happy, if you want it, to provide a note showing just exactly what these development strategies are because it does not just cover these issues, it covers every issue the Department has to take up.

Q85 David Howarth: That would be helpful. One final point, and you may already be prepared to answer this, but one point which has been made to us is that the mission statement of the Sustainable Development and Business Group does not seem to have a very tight focus on the environment because it talks about, “to help promote lasting development, economic prosperity and faithful international conditions for business in a rapidly globalising world”, and one would have hoped for a more environmentally focused mission statement for that part of the organisation, even given that there are other aspects of the organisation doing environmental work. Would you consider some rethink on that?

Mr Wightman: The underlying thought there, I think, is that, if British business is going to be able to operate sustainably overseas, then that is critically dependent on the sustainability of the communities in which it is active and the way in which those communities work with their ecosystems to protect their ecosystems and to exploit their ecosystems and, if that is not done in a sustainable fashion, then you will not get sustainable conditions for business. That is the logic of the position, but we can certainly consider the point you are making.

Q86 David Howarth: That sounds good, so perhaps it ought to say that.

Mr McCartney: Again that is a fair point, Mr Howarth. We could say, “Read the Action Plan; it is all part of it”, but you make a very fair point there. All of this is in the Action Plan, all of this is in the co-work we do with DFID in the agreement there on sustainable development, and perhaps we should bring it together in a more effective way, and I accept that in the spirit it has been suggested.

Q87 Chairman: We have heard that the Foreign Office has become less involved in certain international negotiations, and CITES is an example of that. If that is the case, is somebody else taking up the effort and is there a danger that the loss of the FCO’s negotiating expertise might harm our chances of success in negotiations?

Mr Wightman: We are still very strongly involved in environmental negotiations. Defra in general has the policy lead on most of the multilateral environmental negotiations and agreements, but our network in particular is there for Defra to use and to advise Defra on the best means of securing its negotiating strategies. In many of the international negotiations, FCO officials will be part of the UK Government’s negotiating team. Our posts, for example, in the last year have been lobbying in response to instructions and requests from Defra on specific issues relating to CITES and to other international conventions relating to the protection of biodiversity.

Q88 Chairman: Have you been involved in Defra’s attempts to get more non-whaling countries into membership of the International Whaling Commission?

Mr Wightman: Yes, we have. We have worked with Defra to develop a sort of targeted lobbying strategy to try to identify the countries that we thought were likely to be the most susceptible to lobbying and focused our efforts on those, and we have secured three additional members between the last meeting of the Commission and the next meeting of the Commission whom, we hope, will help to adjust the balance within the Commission.

Mr McCartney: There are another two areas. For example, on seals there is an initiative we have taken in the last ten days which requires us, as the FCO, to lobby extensively in the European Union to bring about a ban, and in areas of posts, again this is a great deal of work which will lead to a direct initiative aimed at lobbying expertise through our embassies and our contacts, so, even where we have not got the lead policy, we have a responsibility in taking a lead to get that policy across to other countries unilaterally and multilaterally, and that is a very important aspect of our work.

Q89 Chairman: I think we accept that there are benefits to working with a smaller number of priority countries in these regards, but what about the non-priority countries? Are their sustainable

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development needs important to them and how can we help them, even if they may not be in that priority category?

Mr McCartney: Again our staff in posts, there may be less in posts, but they will still have the opportunity of being skilled up in these areas. In those situations, and I give the Fiji example again, this is where, out of the discussions which took place in the Pacific Island Forum, our staff in posts there can draw down our services to continue the dialogue, say, for example, on the issue of the biodiversity of the sugar industry, and this will go on. The fact that they are not a priority in terms of the work we are doing on the investment, in formal agreements, joint working arrangements, getting the international forums to work with us closely and agree political strategies with us, particularly in those very small countries where the impact of global warming will be devastating to them, you can rest assured that our high commissioners and, where it is appropriate, embassies are working, and have been since the Stern Review has gone out, on the promotion of the issues around the Stern Review and trying to work with, and will be working with, for example, Australia and New Zealand in a very proactive way to help the island nations in the Pacific. The key people in that will not just be our high commissioners in Australia and New Zealand, but a whole diplomatic team across the Pacific islands, so no small country is left out in particular, and we are very keen to work effectively to ensure that those small countries which are disproportionately affected if things do not improve have our support, whether it is about helping them with development, building capacity or securing larger countries in the region to work more effectively with them; we are doing that as a matter of course.

Q90 Mr Caton: We had some evidence about the importance of maintaining posts in countries where we wish to have influence. It has been suggested that the closure of a number of posts has made it more likely that we will fail in some of our international environmental objectives, and whaling was one example given. There does seem a logic there, that, if you close the posts, surely you reduce your influence in that country?

Mr McCartney: Every time in the last few years there has been a post closure, there is a rigorous assessment made of the potential impact of any closure and what alternatives need to be put in place. I think we have got to be very frank, that there is no possibility of us having major networks in posts in every single country in the world, it is not feasible, but, in those countries where we have got little interest or the interest is such that there is no desire for us to take resources off other posts which need more effective and additional resources, what is feasible is to provide one hub-and-spoke arrangement, and that is what is happening and it works effectively. Again I would give the example of the Pacific islands because it is an area of not just

climate change issues, but of security, of failed governance, a whole range of areas which you will all recognise are important to resolve in terms of sustainable development. We have a hub-and-spoke arrangement there where we have coverage across the Pacific for the key islands or the small islands serviced or, in some instances, where they are serviced on our behalf by the European Union or, in some instances, we operate on behalf of the European Union. In the Solomon Islands, we take responsibility for all the countries in the European Union which have relationships with that country and it works very well. New Zealand and Australia are all beginning to share responsibility in regions in working on an effective and co-operative basis, and that is what we need to do. Therefore, we do take it seriously and we do not just simply close a mission, but it has to be thought through carefully and what alternatives are in place, so every time there is a closure to take place, there is an alternative position in place and we consult over it. We will never please everybody, there is always someone wanting to keep a facility open because, quite rightly, we have an interest of one form or another, but again we are absolutely clear, and I personally will give that responsibility for many of these small countries, I would not do anything whatsoever to undermine our capacity either to political, economic or social ties and, secondly, I would want to ensure, as we do, that the hub-and-spoke arrangement we have got works effectively and it can manage from a hub British citizens' needs and business needs and our relationships with the countries concerned.

Q91 Mr Caton: One post closure that outraged quite a lot of our witnesses was the embassy in Madagascar, the closure of which they described as "shocking", and they argued that the decision was taken on the basis simply of resource savings rather than for strategic reasons. They suggest that this highlights the lack of regard in the FCO for biodiversity conservation, given the importance of the flora and fauna of Madagascar in world terms.

Mr McCartney: Again I would not be happy to review the Madagascar situation because that decision is done, but I am absolutely certain, given what I said about the hub and spoke, that we have arrangements in place in terms of the interests in Madagascar, and we serve those interests and we serve an appropriate post in the area, which I cannot remember for which I apologise, but I cannot remember every post, I wish I could. I think I have had Madagascar raised with me on a couple of occasions and again it was a vested interest, which is a legitimate interest, by the way, absolutely, but, from our perspective in looking at post closure, it is whether we can manage it and are managing it because of the relationships and the partnerships with others who have a bigger interest in Madagascar, and there will be other countries nearby where we have got a post facility which will manage Madagascar for them, and that is how we do it and that is what we are doing. So far, to my

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knowledge, I have got no evidence that the arrangements we have got there are not working and working well.

Q92 Mr Caton: You mentioned earlier on, Minister, the fact that the UK looked after European interests—and I have to ask your forgiveness, I have forgotten the exact example—do you see that as a way forward to enable us to maintain some coverage, through the pooling of resources with our European partners, or indeed with others?

Mr McCartney: There will be from time to time other reviews, clearly there will be. All countries review, the European Union reviews, the United Nations reviews. The issue is can we get a collaborative approach on the big issues in the regions. There are some countries where for historic and other reasons we are the country of interest. I was duty minister over this weekend—and I apologise if I do not give the names of the countries for obvious reasons—and I have spent the whole weekend on behalf of another European Union country legitimately talking to another country where we have got more influence than they have over a specific humanitarian issue, and I think we have resolved it. It may be that in a few months' time in another part of the world that I will be asking this same country to do the same for us. The truth of the matter is that it is absolutely impossible to make a case for every single mission in all circumstances to remain open, and I understand that, so it is about co-operation, it is about partnership arrangements, as long as those are transparent and people know what they are, and that will be a continuing trend not just for the United Kingdom but a trend I think across the European Union. As long as we work well together on that I think we can provide a good service and in many instances a better service.

Q93 Mr Caton: Our last inquiry was on the UK Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and when the Defra Minister was before us he acknowledged that there are recognisable problems in helping the UK Overseas Territories to meet their environmental challenges. Given that this situation has now been acknowledged at the highest level, how will your Department working with DIFD and Defra make certain that these issues will be addressed in future?

Mr McCartney: The simple answer to that is yes. Can I also say that in terms of the Overseas Territories I think this is a very important issue in terms of our programme of work in those Overseas Territories. We take very seriously our activities in the Overseas Territories. Many of those territories have limited capacity and so it is important that we help build capacity, build resources and we utilise across government our resources, whether it is Defra resources or DIFD resources or our own resources, and to do it in a practical way, not just getting them to sign up to activities but to actually help them in a practical way forward. So in many of the countries you are concerned with we have got on-the-ground active projects in place, funded and resourced from various parts of government, usually through DFID, and I think that is important. In issues of

global significance where we have got Overseas Territories, then we have got to ensure that the Overseas Territories are part of the solution and not the problem. We increasingly get pressure on Overseas Territories when people misuse them to get round sanctions in one part of the world or another. So we have to make sure that we are very proactive in ensuring that our Overseas Territories are covered in an effective, practical way in international agreements or in any programme work that we are doing, whether it is in biodiversity or other programmes on sustainable development and that means in most instances putting practical programmes in place. Again, if the Committee wants I am happy to share with you a note on what those programmes are.

Q94 Mr Caton: One main tool that government has used to try to improve environmental management in the Overseas Territories of course is the Environmental Charters. How successful have they been?

Mr Wightman: I think they have been a very positive innovation in the work and the way in which we have been able to use the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme to support their implementation, as in some of the specific examples that the Minister has referred to and which we could provide to you in a note. It is maybe worth saying that, as was pointed out in the last FCO White Paper, responsibility for the Overseas Territories is a cross-government responsibility so the FCO has a role in this as well as Defra and DIFD, and the Environmental Charters provide the basis on which government departments here, individually and collectively, can work in co-operation with the governments of Overseas Territories on implementation.

Mr McCartney: In 2005, the Overseas Territories Environment Programme was independently audited and there was a range of recommendations made to improve the programme, which we have implemented, and I am happy again in the note we give you to deal with that. There is quite a bit about protection of species, capacity building, environmental governance and climate change adaptation, and in quite a lot of the programmes we have got in place—I should have said this—NGOs, like the RSPB and others, are actually on the ground implementing these programmes. Again here it is a practical programme building up capacity but doing it with the experts in the field, and I think it is important that we use our expertise out of country as well as in country.

Q95 Mr Caton: Specifically on Environmental Charters, which of the departments you have mentioned would be responsible for assessing the success of the various charters?

Mr Wightman: I think that is a joint responsibility.

Q96 Mr Caton: And that is done on a regular basis?

Mr Wightman: I would have to get back to you on that.

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Q97 Mr Caton: If you could, thank you very much.

Mr McCartney: You mean a yearly assessment or a three-yearly assessment, because again we will go back but, for example, on the programmes they are assessed for their effectiveness and at the end of each programme an assessment is made as to whether there should be a continuation of the programme, so that assessment process is in place but if it is a wider issue of whether the strategy in its totality is working in a country or region, then I will get back to you on that.

Mr Caton: Thank you.

Q98 David Howarth: Still on the Overseas Territories, the one thing that has come through very clearly from the witnesses on this topic, and indeed came through from the FCO's own review of the Overseas Territories Environment Programme, is the case for increased and longer term funding. We do know that there is a shortfall here and I am wondering what you were doing to assess that and whether we could look forward to any successful attempt to meet the shortfall as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review?

Mr McCartney: All of these issues are part of the Comprehensive Spending Review discussions. I am quite certain at official level if not at political level for those who are involved in discussions with the Treasury there will be those issues directed at each department's budget and issues where obviously there is a shared responsibility. Those discussions are on-going at the moment and rather than speculate with you, you can decide whether or not we are good negotiators later down the road. However, having said that, there is always going to be an issue of unmet need. Let us be honest about it. No matter how high the budget programme is, you will always find a project which is worthy, and in many instances the projects you get lots of complaints about is they will ask us to fund salaries for example for a range of people which we have got no responsibility for, so sometimes there is capacity there, sometimes there is not, unfortunately, and there is only so much you can do. In the note you will see there is a widespread programme of investment across quite a lot of small nations with very significant habitats and other issues that have got to be dealt with. The issue for us is not the size of the country; the issue for us is the uniqueness of the issues, and we need to help them build their capacity.

Q99 David Howarth: One final question, you have mentioned several times working with other departments and shared responsibility, and I think it has been a concern of the Sub-Committee and the main Committee for a while that shared responsibility often means that no-one does the required action. It has been put to us, especially with respect to the Overseas Territories there is a problem with the relationship with Defra because we have been told that environmental enquiries come into the FCO about the Overseas Territories and these are passed through directly to Defra, but it appears that Defra does not have any responsibility for Overseas Territories and so there is a risk that

queries of this type just fall between the gaps and are never really dealt with. Do you accept that it does happen that there is a risk of queries falling between gaps? If you do accept it, what can be done about it?

Mr McCartney: DIFD is the Department for International Development and therefore it actually invests its programmes on criteria and it is not a criterion whether it is a British Overseas Territory or a member of the Commonwealth. Its criteria are set on issues of sustainable development, good governance, all the issues that we all recognise, and it comes from their budget. So it is not a matter of saying it is a British Overseas Territory and in those circumstances it is funded by Defra. There have to be the resources found for it. I have no doubt that in the evidence that you have had people will give you examples of specific projects that they feel should have been funded, and they would say they should have been funded from Defra or should have been funded from DFID or the Foreign Office or the DTI, but there will be these requests and whether they fall between stools or whether more likely it does not fall within the criteria of the funding regimes that are available, that is the more likely cause. Again what evidence you have got, because as we did in the past we are looking at evidence and if there is any evidence of a need for us to make an improvement to ensure that legitimate claims are met, then by all means give us the evidence and we will look at it.

Q100 David Howarth: I think the suggestion was although it might not lead to funding, at least if there was a joint responsibility for the environments of the Overseas Territories with Defra so Defra had a formal responsibility to deal with queries that came in, that would at least clarify the situation for some of the people who were making this particular point.

Mr McCartney: The Overseas Territories Environment Programme is jointly funded by ourselves and DFID, so that fund is there and it is jointly funded and there is a role for it. I was not certain if you were talking about that funding or a more general view about people feel that projects fall between the Whitehall stools.

Q101 David Howarth: Or even requests for information or enquires about what is going on or what is happening or what might happen. What it seemed to some of our witnesses was if a question came to you about the environment in the Overseas Territories you would not deal with it yourself but just pass it on to Defra and then Defra would think, "It is nothing to do with us," and so they would not deal with it either and so it would end up not being dealt with.

Mr McCartney: I can reassure you that if anybody writes to me they will get a reply. I take responsibility for that. I do not take the question personally, by the way, but I take a view in government that if a citizen or organisation writes to it, it is not their job to guess who should answer it. We should take responsibility for answering it, and we do, and I would hope that that is what others do. If somebody wants to write to

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government about this issue and they write to us, we will answer it. If it means we have to go to somebody else to get the answer we will do, but we will answer it.

Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister. That is the close of our session and we look forward to seeing some of the information that you now have offered to send us. Thank you very much.

Supplementary Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I am writing to you and your Committee with additional information for your inquiry into the role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Trade, Development and Environment.

OVERSEAS TERRITORIES ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Your Committee expressed an interest for further information on the Overseas Territories Environment Programme. I enclose a list of the projects that have received funding from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme since its inception in 2004. The information is also available on the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) website (www.ukotcf.org). The projects approved for 2007 to 2008 will appear on the Forum website soon.

Your Committee also asked about an assessment of the Overseas Territories Environment Charters. The UKOTCF is currently gathering information on the progress in implementing the Environment Charter Commitments for each Territory (or the equivalent for those Territories without Charters). The Forum intends to publish a progress report towards the middle of this year. The FCO will use that information, in consultation with Whitehall colleagues and the governments of the Overseas Territories, to carry out a review of the Environment Charters which have now been in place for five years.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The priority countries for delivery of Strategic Priority Six are: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, US, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, Australia, Indonesia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Spain. All are participants in the Gleneagles Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development) with the exception of Saudi Arabia.

This prioritisation has been agreed with DEFRA and DTI. We focus on countries which are significant greenhouse gas emitters—the Gleneagles Dialogue includes the world's twenty largest energy-consuming countries—and countries that are important for delivering the Government's international climate change strategy. In addition, we engage through our overseas network in other countries, which are of significant sectoral or thematic interest, or can act as a multiplier for our efforts. For example, we work with FCO Posts in countries which are significant for developing initiatives to avoid deforestation (Congo basin countries, Costa Rica); build a global carbon market (EU, US, New Zealand), and which engage in important multilateral negotiations (the UK Representation to Brussels and the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York).

Written evidence

APPENDIX 1

Letter and memorandum submitted by the British Antarctic Survey

UK INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

The Environment Committee's enquiry into the role of the FCO in delivering UK International Environment Objectives makes mention of the Overseas Territories. That is right, because environmental issues loom large in many British Overseas Territories, and in some there are specific international obligations.

British Antarctic Survey (BAS) is heavily involved in managing the environment of two Overseas Territories: British Antarctic Territory, and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The attached paper sets out what we do, and why. The work is done in close cooperation with the FCO, and I think the Committee will conclude that it is highly successful. Indeed other countries often use the UK and BAS as exemplars of best practice in this field, which reinforces the position of the FCO in other areas of Antarctic policy.

BAS would be glad to provide oral evidence, or to send further written material, if the Committee would find that helpful.

INTRODUCTION

1. British Antarctic Territory (BAT) and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) are administered through the Polar Regions Unit of the FCO Overseas Territories Department. These territories have unique status in that they are also subject to provisions agreed internationally under the instruments of the Antarctic Treaty System. The British Antarctic Survey (BAS) provides much of the expertise for their environmental management, and is therefore submitting this evidence.

2. This paper explains how the UK has always met (and often exceeded) its responsibilities towards the environment in BAT and SGSSI, through supporting and promoting environmental protection and conservation, the sustainable use of marine living resources, and the management and regulation of scientific research and tourism.

BRITISH ANTARCTIC TERRITORY

3. British Antarctic Territory is an Overseas Territory, entirely south of 60° and therefore subject to the provisions and measures of the Antarctic Treaty and its Protocol on Environmental Protection, and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCMs) provide for the formulation of regulatory measures by consensus amongst the Treaty Parties. Today, these measures focus mainly on the protection of the Antarctic environment.

BAS provides scientific and technical experts for the UK delegation to ATCMs, coordinated by FCO. As one of the original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, the UK has played a major role of leadership in the development of environmental policy and regulations for Antarctica within the ATCM and its Committee on Environmental Protection (CEP), since the first ATCM held in 1961.

4. The Protocol on Environmental Protection includes Annexes on:

- I—Environmental impact assessment.
- II—Conservation of Antarctic flora and fauna.
- III—Waste disposal and management.
- IV—Prevention of marine pollution.
- V—Area protection and management.
- VI—Liability arising from environmental emergencies.

These provisions are enacted into UK law through the Antarctic Act, and form the basis for all UK activities within the BAT and elsewhere in Antarctica.

5. A permitting system is in place for visits to Antarctica by UK scientists, tourist companies and private expeditions. Permits are granted by FCO, with advice from BAS, under condition of compliance with the requirements of the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on Environmental Protection. An Environmental Impact Assessment is required for any activities that may have more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment. Additional permits are required for entry into specially protected areas, and the taking of any native fauna or flora.

6. BAS provides the permanent British presence in Antarctica. It operates four year-round research stations in the BAT, as well as one summer-only research station and two logistics depots. These stations are operated to the highest environmental standards required under the Antarctic Treaty System. BAS provides a model for environmental best practice in Antarctic science and logistics, and is highly respected amongst other national operators. It works to deliver UK obligations under the Protocol on Environmental Protection by undertaking oil spill contingency planning, waste disposal and management, environmental monitoring, and the clean-up and removal of unused buildings and facilities (for example, the recent removal of old station buildings on Signy Island and Bird Island).

7. As part of its ongoing commitment to delivering world-class science, BAS will build a new research station (Halley VI) on the Brunt Ice Shelf in BAT, and will demolish and remove the existing station (Halley V). This major project is being undertaken in close collaboration with the FCO, since it is a requirement of the Protocol on Environmental Protection that the building of new research facilities in Antarctica must undergo a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment process. The Final Comprehensive Environmental Evaluation (CEE) Report for the construction of Halley VI and the demolition and removal of Halley V is seen by the International community as one of the best of its kind, and serves as a model for similar projects by other nations. An electronic copy of the Final CEE for Halley VI is attached to this submission.

8. Inspections of other national research stations are carried out under the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty to ensure that all environmental regulations are being met. FCO has coordinated and participated in recent inspections of stations within the BAT.

9. BAS aims to deliver policy-relevant science, and FCO seeks advice from BAS scientists on a range of environmental issues. Scientific and technical expertise from BAS enables the UK to back its negotiating position at Antarctic meetings with the best available science.

10. CCAMLR provides an ecosystem-based, precautionary approach to Antarctic fisheries management, and its measures apply in the waters around both BAT and SGSSI. BAS and the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG) at Imperial College provide scientific support and advice relating to fisheries within BAT and SGSSI, as well as in the wider context of CCAMLR discussions on fisheries and conservation of the marine ecosystem throughout the Southern Ocean. Monitoring of other Antarctic species such as penguins, seabirds and seals provides an important indicator of the overall health of the ecosystem related to the effects of fishing. A recent measure of the success of CCAMLR's ecosystem approach to management has been the complete elimination of seabird by-catch by licensed fishing vessels. This would not have been achieved without the input from BAS.

11. Tourism is one of the fastest growing activities in the BAT, and operates through a self-regulating organisation (the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators—IAATO). FCO and BAS maintain a close relationship with IAATO to ensure that tourism remains environmentally sustainable. FCO recently coordinated and participated in a study of environmental protection requirements for frequently visited tourist sites in the BAT, in collaboration with officials from IAATO. Resulting from this work, a new system of Site-Specific Guidelines was agreed at the 2006 ATCM, to provide guidance for tourists at 11 of the most frequently visited tourist sites (and further Site-Specific Guidelines are planned).

12. The development of specially protected and managed areas under the Protocol on Environmental Protection is crucial. BAS scientists are working to develop management plans for new protected areas, and to review and update the provisions for existing protected areas. The development of marine protected areas (MPAs) is an important topic worldwide. FCO has funded a one-year project with BAS to assist in developing the scientific foundation for establishing a system of MPAs for the Southern Ocean (focusing on the BAT), and strategies for implementing such a system within the ATCM and CCAMLR.

SOUTH GEORGIA AND THE SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS

13. South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are an Overseas Territory north of 60°S, and are therefore outside the jurisdiction of the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on Environmental Protection. However, the SGSSI Government develops environmental regulations based on those provided under the Antarctic Treaty System, with assistance from FCO and BAS.

14. An updated Environmental Management Plan for South Georgia was published by the South Georgia Government in 2006, with assistance from BAS scientists. It outlines key policies on the conservation of native flora and fauna, the management of human activities to ensure minimal environmental impact, and the maintenance of sustainable tourism. It also designates Specially Protected Areas, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and Open Areas for visitors. This management plan is one of the most comprehensive for any of the sub-Antarctic islands, and a copy is attached to this submission.

15. Tourism and private expeditions to South Georgia are strictly controlled under a system of permits granted by the South Georgia Government, and the majority of tourist vessels are also subject to the regulations of IAATO. Restrictions and guidelines for visitors to the island include measures to protect sensitive wildlife colonies, to minimise disturbance to native flora and fauna, and to prevent the introduction of alien invasive species.

16. In 2003–04, FCO funded a major project to clean up the historic whaling station of Grytviken on the northeast coast of South Georgia. The aim was to remove asbestos, oil residues and other hazards from the station site, and to leave it safe for future visitors. The work was successful and the site is now open to visitors, providing an outstanding example of environmental restoration.

17. The waters around SGSSI are within the CCAMLR Convention Area, and all measures agreed by CCAMLR are enacted there. A major focus of UK involvement in the work of CCAMLR is on South Georgia fisheries, with great success. The licensed fishery for Patagonian toothfish within the SGSSI Maritime Zone has been independently assessed and certified by the Marine Stewardship Council as a sustainable and well-managed fishery. Inspections, licensing and catch monitoring are carried out by the South Georgia Government Officer based at King Edward Point in South Georgia.

18. Research on fisheries is undertaken by two scientific organizations, both under contract to the SGSSI Government. The Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG) undertakes scientific research and population modelling of the major fish, krill, crab and squid stocks, and provides scientific observers to collect data on fishing vessels. BAS maintains a research station at King Edward Point on South Georgia, where biological research includes inshore surveys of fish and crab species, and studies on samples taken by MRAG observers on board fishing vessels. Scientists from both organizations contribute to the CCAMLR scientific Working Groups. It is the quality of this research and expertise which reinforces the UK's leading role in CCAMLR. That in turn enables wider UK environmental and foreign policy objectives to be achieved.

CONCLUSION

19. The UK has consistently met, and often exceeded, its responsibilities towards the environment in the British Antarctic Territory and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, as a result of the long and successful partnership between FCO and BAS. It continues to deliver international environmental objectives through the instruments of the Antarctic Treaty System, and is a model for the effective integration of environmental science and policy. This has been possible because of the FCO investment of time and resources over many years, and because of the commitment of BAS to environmental work in both of these Overseas Territories.

Further information on any of the issues contained in this paper is available on request.

January 2007

APPENDIX 2

Memorandum submitted by the Building Research Establishment

In response to the questions put forward on the role of the FCO in promoting sustainable development the Building Research establishment (BRE) offers the following comments relating specifically to the practical knowledge and expertise available to the FCO.

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- Q 1 The case for sustainable development has already been made in the developed world. The UK has much knowledge in this area that could be made available (relatively easily) to other Countries. Although some aspects of sustainability are contextual (ie are related to location) the expertise to tailor sustainability standards to reflect the local circumstances already exists. Providing the “development” required to produce stable economic growth and improved lifestyle for minimum environmental cost, can only support good governance and democracy,—and hence assist in maintaining security.
- Q2 BRE believes that one of the major stumbling blocks to the delivery of the sustainable development part of international environmental diplomacy is the absence of agreed environmental standards or frameworks. The absence of such standards has proved a stumbling block in the UK too!
 For 20 years BRE has been developing methods of setting environmental standards for the construction industry. The aim of these standards, and their real worth in driving change, is that they provide a framework and a vocabulary for describing good environmental performance.
 One of the better known BRE methods is BREEAM for Buildings which provides targets and benchmarks of performance for buildings by ranking performance on a four point scale from PASS through GOOD VERY GOOD and EXCELLENT. Such targets can be used to set standards when negotiating development projects (and have been widely used in this context in the UK).
 This is an area in which the UK leads the world and on 13 December 2007 the Department of Communities and Local Government used the housing version of BREEAM—called EcoHomes to form the basis of the Code For Sustainable Homes.

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- What is less widely known is that it is possible to tailor the BREEAM method to cover buildings in any country or region by designing the criteria and the scoring to suit the location. This is called a Bespoke International BREEAM.
- BRE has specific packages of assistance for developing countries to help them benefit from the experience that has already been gained in the UK. The options for the country involved range from a simple membership package—giving access to training and technical information—up to the development of a fully accredited scheme (and all stages in between).
- Q3 BRE is not familiar with the detail of how the FCO accounts for the environment in its work, however FCO has sponsored the development of a version of International Bespoke BREEAM for use on its buildings across the world and ensures that it leads by example with its own stock.
- Undoubtedly FCO officials could benefit from some training on sustainable development and the environment. BRE could offer training for FCO staff in setting environmental standards for development projects. Such training has occurred with similar bodies in the UK responsible for the delivery of sustainable development (eg English Partnerships, Regional Development Agencies etc).
- Q4 FCO could take a lead role in facilitating other countries to equip themselves to deliver sustainable development and at the same time promote the knowledge and expertise of the UK in this area. For example by coordinating local experts to help tailor existing procedures to suit different locations.
- Q5 We were unaware that FCO employed sustainable development attaches!
- Q6 The UK has withdrawn from most of the International Energy Agency Implementing Agreements associated with improving the energy performance of the Built Environment. UK involvement was historically funded by DTI and DEFRA—funding has been withdrawn over the past two years, with the result that the UK is no longer involved in important international collaborative research associated with issues such as solar heating and cooling of buildings, combined heat and power etc. This is a major missed opportunity with serious medium/long term consequences.
- Q7 Transferring UK skills and knowledge associated with improving the energy efficiency and sustainability of buildings in the developing world is a major opportunity, however, very little funding (if any) is provided by FCO to support this activity. Without proper standards in sustainable development against which projects can be fairly measured, BRE believes that it is not possible to know how well FCO funded projects are performing in relation to sustainability.
- Q8 and Q9 Co-ordinating activities across government departments is always difficult—however all government departments in the UK are committed (through procurement policy) to deliver buildings to the BREEAM EXCELLENT standard.
- This provides the common language to assist the co-ordination process. In addition, once a simple answer to the question of sustainability is available, it becomes an easy question to ask. This makes sure that despite competing priorities—sustainability does not get left out!
- Q10 Historically FC had close links with organisations such as BRE. The lack of funding for buildings related initiatives has resulted in very little engagement between the organisations over the past 5 years (other than the use of BREEAM for FCO’s own buildings).
- Q11 Clearly by sponsoring a version of BREEAM for its own use FCO is intending to put its own house in order. This process has only just begun but ideally will lead to the FCO leading by example and then able to extend its policies and standards out across the world.
- BRE believes the tools are available to help the FCO achieve this.
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January 2007

APPENDIX 3

Memorandum submitted by Chatham House

1. This submission focuses on the issues the inquiry is focussing on that relate to international security, good governance, democracy, and effective diplomacy.

2. The links between environment and international security policy have become increasingly discernible over time. There is now a whole body of literature on how scarce natural resources can lead to instability and insecurity, especially in failing states. The strategic role that water, for example, plays in some conflicts is well researched. There is also a growing consensus internationally around how certain other natural resources can fuel insecurity, such as “conflict diamonds”, which led to the creation of the Kimberley Process of certifying diamonds. In other instances, timber, coltan, and ivory have also helped finance insurgencies.

3. More fundamental environmental stresses, such as climate change, also have links to massive insecurity. There is a large consensus that the impacts of global warming include pressures on vital ecosystem services, increased human displacement, and changing maritime boundaries as a result of sea level rise.

4. On a more positive note, environmental solutions have been part of solutions to armed conflicts. For example, the creation of a “peace Park” between Ecuador and Peru, ie a protected area, was part of the package to end the border conflict between those countries in the 1990s. More recently, it has emerged that the secret negotiations between Israel and Syria explored the possibility of creating a protected area in the disputed Golan Heights. In other words, “environmental peacemaking” is increasingly part of the toolkit in resolving insecurity.

5. While increased understanding of all the various linkages outlined above is positive, acting effectively on this knowledge is hampered by a lack of an integrated approach at national and international levels. The result is not only that progress tends to be piecemeal when looked at globally, but also the individual initiatives tend themselves tend to offer only partial solutions. A more effective approach to finding solutions would be processes that involve consideration of all the relevant factors—political, economic, social, and ecological. Much of this can be grounded upon notions of good governance and democracy. After all, these concepts offer the most promise in not only achieving good quality solutions, but also in leveraging the greatest buy-in by stakeholders.

6. At international levels, these issues tend to be discussed in an *ad hoc* fashion. Some initiatives, like the Kimberley Process, have attracted the attention of the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organization. In other cases, more flexible structures have been created around specific problems, such as the regional Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) processes involving the World Bank, governments, industry and NGOs. Indeed, the FLEGs emerged after the established UN processes on forest issues failed to tackle illegal logging. Some international environmental agreements touch on some elements of the link between environment and security. For example, enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) can be one tool in combating illegal logging, although only for those few tree species listed under that convention and trade internationally. The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matter helps to enhance good governance and democracy, through enhancing access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision-making. This could eventually have some trickle down effects on enhancing transparency in particular natural resource transactions and transfers, but at best the impact in this area will likely only be partial. Other instruments such as the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention can help enhance good governance, but while militating against negative behaviour, it cannot be the framework for finding solutions.

7. At the national level, joined up approaches to the environment in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction would be needed to bring together officials from the defence, environment, and development ministries. Even though many national departments in Europe and the United States have engaged on these issues, none of them have succeeded in being truly joined up. Institutional barriers between departments tend to impede any serious efforts at linking these issues in a more profound way. Without pressure from the highest political levels, it is difficult for such barriers to be broken down.

8. The key lessons to be drawn from how governments approach environment and security linkages are instructive for wider environmental challenges. Neither ministries of environment or defence, acting on their own, can be expected to have the expertise or the operational capabilities to act effectively. The complexity of the linkages, the range of actors involved, and the long-term nature of the problems and impacts, suggest that a host of instruments, incentives and processes will be required to provide lasting solutions. Such a dynamic and inter-connected approach is in contrast to the more traditional modes in which governments or inter-governmental organisations tend to operate.

9. Climate change, as the process that causes the most profound stress on the world’s natural systems, is a challenge which calls for the complex approach outlined above. Climate change is as much an energy, investment, and technological innovation issue, as an environment and development issue. Ministries of environment, or development, cannot deliver all that is needed on their own. The Kyoto Protocol alone, even if it was fully inclusive and leveraged meaningful reductions in carbon emissions, would not be sufficient to address climate change. The range of standards, mechanisms, and incentives needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change are vast, if the world is to be inclusive and comprehensive in this.

10. Therefore, the FCO’s prioritisation of climate change is a significant initiative. The creation of a programme on climate change and energy, combined with the appointment of an experienced diplomat as a Special Representative for Climate Change, is an important signal internationally that the UK views climate change as a very high priority. It also shows that the UK is investing in engaging not only in the usual international climate channels, eg the UN processes, but is using the FCO to open new doors and develop relationships with those outside the traditional frameworks. It is too soon to assess the success of this initiative, but in principle such a multifaceted engagement is precisely what is needed on an issue like climate change.

11. An evaluation of the FCO’s experience on climate change would not only be useful in the context of making progress on climate change, but also whether this could be replicated in other important environmental contexts. There would be little benefit in assigning the FCO with overall responsibility for

engaging in all environmental issues. But ones where there is a need for a sophisticated diplomatic strategy to leverage innovative bargains among a wide set of actors, combined with a higher-than-usual political weight, could merit greater attention by the FCO. These could be some of the environment and security problems alluded to above or even more global environmental challenges that current approaches are failing to effectively confront, such as biodiversity loss.

January 2007

APPENDIX 4

Memorandum Submitted by Greenpeace

Greenpeace would like to submit our report *Oil and Peace don't Mix*² as formal evidence to the Subcommittee's inquiry *Trade, Development and Environment: The role of FCO*. Our evidence is based solely on the content of this report as we do not have the expertise to answer all the questions asked by the Subcommittee.

Our report argues that reducing dependency on oil and tackling climate change are two sides of the same coin and are vital to building real global security. Global security can only be achieved when the social and environmental injustices that lead to conflict are alleviated. Allowing oil demand to continue unchecked would dramatically increase global insecurity as climate change intensifies and conflicts develop, particularly over Middle Eastern oil supplies. Research by Greenpeace indicates a range of measures that could reduce oil dependency by at least 27% over the next quarter century.

Whilst the FCO acknowledges the need to address these global challenges, this is at odds with the MOD's interpretation of national security. The UK's Government's Strategic Defence Review states that the UK military is now being transformed into an "expeditionary" offensive force capable of fighting alongside the USA to secure vital economic interests, "above all, oil". The Iraq War is a clear example of this, where the objective was to transform the politics and balance of power of the region in a way that favoured American interests.

Margaret Beckett has acknowledged that climate change is a threat to global security but does not draw the conclusion that climate change necessitates a shift in UK/US military policy towards supporting and developing multilateral cooperation. Instead of diverting vast amounts of resources to tackling the pivotal issue of climate change the UK Government has wasted money and lives in the use of aggressive diplomacy and deployment of military forces in the Middle East.

The Stern Review showed that unmitigated climate change could cost the world 5% to 20% of GDP. Stern calculated a mean cost of around 1% of GDP for stabilising greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In 2005, in the UK, that is equivalent to £12.3 billion. To put this in context, current estimates for the lifetime cost of replacing and operating Trident could be as much as £76 billion. Money is a telling measure of political commitment and Trident is probably the most expensive 'white elephant' currently under consideration.

Domestically, if the money was spent instead on tackling its oil addiction—through, for instance, fuel efficiency measures and the development of cleaner transport alternatives—the UK could be more self-reliant, global tensions would be lessened and the most disastrous consequences of climate change could be averted.

February 2007

APPENDIX 5

Memorandum submitted by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

THE FCO AND BIODIVERSITY

I am grateful to Ian Orr for drawing my attention to the fact that the Commons Environmental Audit Committee has been considering the role of the FCO in relation to Biodiversity and the 2010 Biodiversity Target.

I thought that it might be helpful in relation to the Committee's deliberations for me, on behalf of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, to comment briefly on how valuable the involvement of the FCO has been in underpinning and supporting some of RBGE's biodiversity related capacity building and conservation projects.

² <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/contentlookup.cfm?CFID=5789674&CFTOKEN=25080245&ucidparam=20061207111122>.

Biodiversity is, of course, of broad concern to all departments of government although, sensibly the focus is with DEFRA, especially in relation to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Concerns about biodiversity are now virtually inseparable from the issue of climate change since this greatly exacerbates the threats of habitat loss that have primarily been the cause of biodiversity loss until now.

Research institutes such as RBGE are involved in a range of capacity building and biodiversity conservation projects around the world. RBGE currently has active projects in some 40 countries and in each case there is an important relationship with key in-country institutions, often formalised through a memorandum of understanding. In many cases the FCO representatives in these countries have played a hugely important role in helping both to establish the relationships that have led to the signing of such MOUs and to sustain and develop them as project work progresses. I would like to mention a specific example, by way of illustration. In China a partnership between RBGE and the Chinese Academy of Sciences Kunming Institute of Botany (KIB) was forged with the close personal involvement of Sir Anthony Galsworthy, then Her Majesty's Ambassador to China. During Sir Anthony's term of office RBGE and KIB began the development of the Lijiang Botanic Garden and Field Station a project that is closely connected with the conservation of alpine plants in accordance with Chinese national biodiversity strategy. Successive Ambassadors have continued to take an active interest in the project, seeing it as a good example of Sino-British partnership. The Jade Dragon Field Station associated with Lijiang Alpine Botanic Garden has hosted several plant conservation events under the formal programme of Britain and China: Partners in Science and such campaigns serve as an excellent way of promoting scientific collaboration and public engagement with scientific issues.

I hope that this example from China serves to identify the importance of the FCO in developing and promoting science and development initiatives that underpin the 2010 Biodiversity Target. I further hope that the Committee will see the benefit of broad engagement across government department in biodiversity and climate change—the major challenges of the century ahead.

January 2007

APPENDIX 6

Letter and memorandum submitted by UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

This email covers the written evidence which the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum wishes to submit to the EAC for its current report on *Trade, Development and Environment: the role of the FCO*. Can we assume that the EAC will also take into account points made in our submission of May 2006 for the similar report on the role of DFID? As the submission notes, we were surprised that that report made no mention of the UKOTs. However, the Forum has been delighted to note that the EAC's recent MA report takes account of the huge contribution of the UKOTs—far more than the metropolitan UK—to global biodiversity. Given the recommendations in that report concerning Defra's engagement with the UKOTs, will the Trade Development and Environment Sub-Committee soon be doing a similar report on Defra?

For many years (including the eight since the 1999 White Paper on the UKOTs), the Forum has been closely involved in a dialogue—productive but also frustrating—with the FCO, including regular meetings every six months between the Forum members and the Government side (which the Forum has chaired jointly with a series of FCO officials). We have also helped to advise on priorities for the limited but productive funding (initially just from FCO, now jointly with DFID) available to support the Environment Charters.

In addition, I am attaching to a separate email electronic versions of the last two issues of the Forum News and our last two Annual Reports. There is also a richly illustrated brochure (supported by FCO funding over several years) which reproduces large display panels we use whenever there are opportunities to promote knowledge of and support for the natural heritage of the UKOTs whenever there are opportunities. Can we send you copies for every member of the full EAC Committee and for you and your colleagues?

There is much additional background on our website (www.ukotcf.org) and those of our member organisations and associates. If you need further information on specific environmental issues in the UKOTs, please let me know.

I apologise that this submission is slightly after your programmed date, but understand from Iain Orr (who, in another role, is one of our Council members) that you are able to give a little leeway.

I should note that, from tomorrow (Friday), I shall be overseas (in Montserrat) until the end of January. I hope to continue to access my emails during that period (but cannot be sure due to some re-arrangements imposed on us by the current volcanic situation there)—but would be grateful if any emails about the EAC report could also be copied (as is mine) to Dr Colin Clubbe at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Forum's Vice-Chairman (who, unfortunately, will also be overseas elsewhere from the weekend), and to Frances Marks, the Forum Co-ordinator. Frances can also arrange to supply printed copies of the publications noted above if these would be useful.

Memorandum submitted by UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

1. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF, hereafter “the Forum”) promotes the conservation of species, habitats and ecosystem services in the UK’s Overseas Territories and their contribution to the welfare of the people of the UKOTs. Its 33 member organizations and associates include leading environmental bodies in the UK, in the UKOTs, and in the Crown Dependencies. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man share with the UKOTs many special features of the biodiversity and governance of small non-sovereign island territories. These include relying on HMG to represent their interests internationally and in multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and negotiations.

2. The Forum draws on the expertise of its members and network of specialists (mainly working in a voluntary capacity) to provide advice and encouragement to HMG, UKOT governments and non-governmental organizations, companies and other stakeholders in the rich—but often undervalued—natural heritage of the UKOTs.

ENVIRONMENT CHARTERS BETWEEN THE METROPOLITAN UK AND UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

3. One question the committee will address is: “Has the FCO met its responsibilities towards the environment in UK Overseas Territories?” The UK has specific commitments to the UKOTs, set out in a series of environmental charters signed with the UKOTs (**Note 1**) on 26 September 2001. The charters have shared principles, followed by separate commitments made by each territory and by the UK. These follow a common pattern. The commitments on the UK side are:

“The government of the UK will:

1. Help build capacity to support and implement integrated environmental management which is consistent with [the territory’s] own plans for sustainable development.

2. Assist [the territory] in reviewing and updating environmental legislation.

3. Facilitate the extension of the UK’s ratification of Multilateral Environmental Agreements of benefit to [the territory] and which [the territory] has the capacity to implement.

4. Keep [the territory] informed regarding new developments in relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements and invite [the territory] to participate where appropriate in the UK’s delegation to international environmental negotiations and conferences.

5. Help [the territory] to ensure it has the legislation, institutional capacity and mechanisms it needs to meet international obligations.

6. Promote better cooperation and the sharing of experience and expertise between [the territory], other Overseas Territories and small island states and communities which face similar environmental problems.

7. Use UK, regional and local expertise to give advice and improve knowledge of technical and scientific issues. This includes regular consultation with interested non-governmental organisations and networks.

8. Use the existing Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories (**Note 2**), and promote access to other sources of public funding, for projects of lasting benefit to [the territory’s] environment.

9. Help [the territory] identify further funding partners for environmental projects, such as donors, the private sector or non-governmental organisations.

10. Recognise the diversity of the challenges facing Overseas Territories in very different socio-economic and geographical situations.

11. Abide by the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (See Annex 2) and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment (See Annex 3).

4. Baroness Amos, then a Minister of State in the FCO, signed the charters on behalf of HMG as a whole. However, the FCO does not have the responsibility or expertise to implement most of these commitments. It does not lead within government on MEAs or on international negotiations relating to, global biodiversity, conservation, fisheries, forests, marine pollution, climate change, World Heritage Sites, sustainable development etc. The FCO also has no significant budgetary line to support HMG’s responsibilities towards the UKOTs’ environment. The EAC recognised this in its recent report (January 2007) on the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), making the following comment:

“31. Considering the UK Overseas Territories’ (UKOTs) lack of capacity, both financial and human, we find it distasteful that FCO and DFID stated that if UKOTs are “sufficiently committed” they should support environmental positions “from their own resources”. The continued threat of the extinction of around 240 species in the UKOTs is shameful. If the Government is to achieve the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2010 target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss within its entire territory, the Government must act decisively to prevent further loss of biodiversity in the UKOTs. (Paragraph 133)”

 INADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR GLOBALLY IMPORTANT ISLANDS WITH FEW PEOPLE

5. The environmental significance of the UKOTs is far wider than the conservation status of their species and habitats as part of the earth's biodiversity. Ecosystem services like mangroves, seabird colonies fertilising coastal vegetation, coral reefs nurturing fish stocks, marine algae and phytoplankton supporting fish, whales and seabirds—these all bear directly on livelihoods and good governance in such areas as: economies based on healthy terrestrial and marine environments; protection against natural disasters; and illegal unregulated and unreported fisheries. In many territories, IUU fishing is a growing threat—of both known and unknown extent—to legal fisheries and to endangered populations of whales, sharks and albatrosses.

6. How can territories with a total population the same as Gateshead (some 200,000—most in Bermuda and a few Caribbean territories) be expected to provide from their own financial and human resources all the policies and programmes needed to care responsibly for over a thousand islands? These range from the Falkland Islands (12,173 km²) and South Georgia (3,755 km²) to tiny Boatswainbird Island in Ascension— islands that hold some of the most important seabird colonies in the South Atlantic. Many are remote and uninhabited, but require active (and resource intensive) management because of the threats from human-introduced alien invasive species, a legacy of earlier periods that paid little attention to the vulnerability of island ecosystems. How could HMG expect the management of the natural World Heritage sites of Gough and Inaccessible Islands to depend on the resources and skills of the 275 people on Tristan da Cunha; or Henderson Island on the 40 Pitcairn Islanders? A far wider question needs to be addressed to the FCO and HMG: what responsibilities are accepted for the good environmental governance of the 8 million km² of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the UKOTs (**Note 3**)? Industrial IUU fishing is a known threat in the EEZs of many South Atlantic territories and illegal Sri Lankan fishermen operate within British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) waters. Research is also urgently needed on the role of coral reefs in the Chagos Archipelago as spawning grounds that help recruitment to depleted fish populations off the coast of East Africa.

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS IN THE UKOTs SUPPORTED BY FCO (AND DFID)

7. There is, of course, a long list of environmental projects benefiting the territories. The Forum is grateful to the FCO, not simply for contributing to their funding (now shared with DFID) but also for their support in promoting improved environmental policies in the UKOTs. We wish to highlight here a number of projects that have not just produced improved environmental management and measurable results for the UKOTs. They have also contributed to meeting many UK international commitments, notably under the CBD, Ramsar, CMS and CITES—on all of which the lead department is Defra, not FCO. However the FCO has a direct interest in the way in which these projects have also helped to meet the UK's commitments to individual territories under the Environment Charters, notably by helping to build capacity within both government and civil society. Project implementation would often be impossible without government and local NGO support. Sometimes there has also been voluntary support from officials (and Governors) in a personal capacity. There are many environmental champions in the territories and in the UK. It was a great pleasure that one of them—who has been an official in the St Helena Government and President of the St Helena National Trust, and is currently a member of the Forum's Council—Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks—was awarded the MBE for services to conservation in St Helena in the Queen's New Year Honours List.

8. A few example projects are summarised below.

A—Rat eradication projects. A fundamental feature of island biogeography is that man has brought with him commensals—especially rats—that have devastated native and endemic animals and plants. OTEP funding has been responsible for pilot projects to eradicate rats from both government and privately owned small islands in the Falklands; and in 2006 Eagle Island in the Chagos Archipelago was the first island to be cleared of rats since BIOT was established. The long-term effects of such eradications can be truly dramatic, with native terrestrial insects, amphibians and plants as well as seabirds often able to re-establish natural ecosystems and provide better coastal protection (the birds fertilising vegetation that protects the coastline against erosion). Such projects are costly, especially when the islands are remote and uninhabited. However, regeneration ecology is a discipline that enhances biodiversity rather than simply slowing its loss. There are many islands in the UKOTs ripe for major habitat restoration work—but that will require serious money to make a significant impact: not small projects costing tens of thousands of pounds but serious strategic projects across complete territories, sometimes costing millions. However, there is no doubt that even a tenth of the estimated £460 million devoted to biodiversity in the metropolitan UK would produce far greater value for money if invested in the territories.

B—Ascension Seabird Restoration Project. This 2001–03 project tackled another invasive problem—the feral cats on Ascension. It was technically challenging for the RSPB and the Ascension Administrator to manage because of the terrain and because the cooperation of every island resident and visitor was essential. However, because of its scale the project has already produced benefits far beyond the complete elimination of feral cats (the largest island anywhere on which this has been achieved) and the growth of new seabird colonies. The budget allowed for the first year's salary for a full-time conservation officer in the Ascension Island Government (Tara Pelembe, a Saint with a degree in geography). The project became the subject of her MSc and her full-time position—now wholly funded by the elected Ascension Island Council out of local

taxes—has enabled her to work with local volunteers to establish (with funding from OTEP) Ascension's First National Park on Green Mountain. She has also supported work on Green Turtle conservation, attracting several graduate students from the UK.

This textbook example of capacity building has, however, a catch. The seabird project was not a typical small project: it cost £0.5 million, the same as the FCO's current annual contribution to OTEP for ALL the UKOTs. While the RSPB and other Forum members had developed the environmental and business case for this project over many years, this had been repeatedly rejected by HMG on budgetary grounds. Ironically, the money was found from the FCO's programme budget, when a non-environmental large UN-related project fell through and there was a risk of an embarrassing underspend, which would have been clawed back by the Treasury. The fortuitous implementation of this strategic large project has a kick in the tail. The Ascension Conservation Officer has just been recruited to a new post in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee—to work on UKOTs issues. The Forum greatly welcomes this further demonstration of the JNCC's commitment to the territories: and we are delighted to see this example of Ascension helping with capacity building in the UK!

C—Wetland conservation and sustainable development in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Forum has been directly involved for a decade in a planned series of small projects in TCI, working closely with the TCI National Trust and the local community. The aim has been to help the economically challenged communities centred on Middle Caicos both to protect the important Ramsar wetland site and its surroundings and to facilitate local residents to establish small businesses in the area to make sustainable use of this heritage, thereby maintaining their communities. The programme has benefited from support from Defra's Darwin Initiative in the early research phase, as well as FCO's EFOT and the joint FCO/DFID OTEP at later stages applying the research results to develop eco-tourism infrastructure such as trails, centres, interpretation materials and guide training. The success of this programme has leveraged much local support from citizens, government and business, and its strong educational elements are reflected in creating a new awareness in the younger generation of their environmental legacy. The work also led indirectly to TCI Government taking a lead, with Forum facilitation and OTEP support, in developing the first strategy for action to implement its Environment Charter, as a pilot for other UKOTs.

D—UKOTs Environmental Conferences 1999–2007. The *Breath of Fresh Air* Conference at London Zoo in June 1999 was the first environmental conference covering all the territories. It has been followed by conferences in Gibraltar (2001), Bermuda (2003) and Jersey (2006). These have proved of great practical value in taking forward commitments in the Environment Charters. The reinstatement of FCO funding caused by the cancellation of EFOT a year earlier and the belated delivery of funding from DFID that had been promised in the 1999 White Paper, with these coming together as OTEP, grew directly from discussions at the Bermuda conference. These conferences have enabled governments and NGOs from both the UK and the territories to understand each other better. They have included many workshops on both policy and fieldwork subjects: environmental legislation, Environmental Impact Assessments, access to environmental information, management of wetlands, and species recovery programmes (like Bermuda's wonderful success in rescuing the Cahow—the Bermuda Petrel—from the brink of extinction). However, the Forum believes that the FCO and other departments could make even better use of these opportunities to build their own knowledge of the people and special features of all the territories. We would also welcome participation by MPs in future conferences as a way for political parties to join the FCO in championing the UKOTs as proudly British. From one perspective, investing in the biodiversity of the UKOTs can be seen as a natural and patriotic way to offset the metropolitan UK's considerable carbon and biodiversity debts to the planet.

GOVERNING THE UKOTs—NOT JUST AN FCO RESPONSIBILITY

9. The core problem concerning environmental and governance issues in the UKOTs is this: the UK exercises sovereignty over the territories primarily through the FCO (which appoints Governors and Administrators to work with the locally-elected governments), but in many specific areas that matter to the UK as a whole—and to the UK's international reputation—the FCO lacks essential skills or resources. This would not matter much as far as trade, development and the environment are concerned, if—as should be the case—other parts of HMG accepted their responsibilities and made staffing and budgetary provision for work relating to the UKOTs. A key FCO responsibility should, therefore, be acting as a champion for the UKOTs throughout Whitehall and in the FCO's network of relations with companies, NGOs and institutions whose expertise can benefit the UKOTs. In relation to the Environment Charters, questions the FCO should be asked include:

- How successful has the FCO been in securing policy advice on international environmental issues for the UKOTs from Defra? Has the FCO persuaded Defra ministers to visit sites in the UKOTs that are far more significant for global biodiversity than most of those that they visit in the metropolitan UK?
- Within the FCO, on which trade, development and environmental issues does Overseas Territories Department (OTD) take the lead? Which other parts of the FCO lead on other trade, development and environmental issues?

- Since the Environmental Charters were signed, what progress has there been on participation by the UKOTs in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other MEAs, including the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol for Caribbean UKOTs?
- Has the FCO succeeded in securing new sources of public and private funding in the UK for environmental work in the UKOTs?
- What environmental issues in the UKOTs and the SBAs in Cyprus did the FCO discuss with MOD during 2006? What objectives does the MOD have concerning the environment and its activities in the Falklands, Ascension, Gibraltar, BIOT and the SBAs?
- What discussions has the FCO had in 2006 with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) concerning existing and possible World Heritage sites in the UKOTs?
- Has the FCO secured guidance from DCMS to ensure that all the UKOTs are aware of sources of expert advice in the UK and internationally on standards concerning marine archaeology? (Lessons can be learned from the recent application by a US company for the unethical salvage of the Dutch East Indiaman, the Witte Leeuw, a historic wreck in St Helena waters.)
- Has the FCO requested DCMS to explain to Trustees of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) that UKOTs (and Crown Dependencies) should be treated on the same basis as the UK mainland in the allocation of HLF funds?
- Has the FCO discussed with the National Environment Research Council ways in which UK scientists can help the UKOTs; and ways in which the position, natural history and geology of the UKOTs and their surrounding waters can contribute to better global understanding of environmental processes?
- Was the FCO involved in the decision by St Helena to disapply the UK's Freedom of Information Act to the territory (which has implications for the information available to the public in St Helena and in the UK concerning the planning and financing of the proposed airport in St Helena)? What arrangements have been made throughout the UKOTs to promote awareness of the Aarhus Convention on access to environmental information?
- What reports did the FCO provide to other government departments and to the Governors of UKOTs concerning issues discussed at the conference held in Jersey in October 2006?
- Given the importance the Foreign Secretary attaches to the FCO's engagement in Climate Change issues, should the UK not assist the cooperative global efforts to monitor the atmosphere by establishing stations in South Atlantic territories and the Chagos Archipelago in order to provide data from the South Atlantic (one of the least understood CO₂ sinks) and the Indian Ocean?

THE FCO AND OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND UK INSTITUTIONS

10. The Forum has considerable sympathy for the difficulties the FCO faces in tackling the problem that many Whitehall ministers and senior officials—as well as key funding sources in the UK like the National Lottery—persist in forgetting that the UKOTs are British. Can Treasury officials please listen to the Chancellor's promotion of pride in Britain's global contributions? There is abundant evidence from environmental scientists and NGOs in the metropolitan UK, the Crown Dependencies and the UKOTs that the environmental assets of the UKOTs are undervalued and under-resourced by HMG. But far too many ministers and officials (and other bodies in the UK) treat the territories as foreign. Generally they are viewed as actual or potential source of problems, rather than national assets to be regarded with warmth and pride as distinctive parts of the diverse British family.

11. The lesson of the 1999 White Paper on the UKOTs—*Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*—is that truly joined-up policy is a slow process. There is evidence of that in the August 2006 report by the EAC on the role of DFID in Trade, Development and Environment. The second of the four clauses defining DFID's statutory responsibilities (International Development Act, 2002) is:

(2) British Overseas Territories

The Secretary of State may also provide any person or body with development assistance in a case where the requirement of section 1(1) is not met, if the assistance is provided in relation to one or more of the territories for the time being mentioned in Schedule 6 to the British Nationality Act 1981 (c. 61) (British overseas territories). **(Note 4)**

12. Despite this, the report makes no mention of the UKOTs. This may be because the view was taken (as it so often is by MPs, the media and the public) that the UKOTs are “an FCO problem”. They are not. They are sovereign British territories with people who deserve support, as family members who do not live in Great Britain but have given loyal service to the Crown for many generations. The UK government and civil society will never achieve policy coherence on the UKOTs concerning trade, development and environment if this is treated as primarily a matter for the FCO. But the FCO needs to do much more to make sure that all government departments take pride in maintaining the sparkle of these “Fragments of Paradise”. **(Note 5)**

Notes:

- (1) Except Gibraltar and British Antarctic Territory: Gibraltar did not feel the charter was appropriate for its relationship with HMG (although it has since produced unilaterally an Environment Charter with many similarities to the others); and environmental commitments by HMG concerning BAT are addressed within the Antarctic Treaty system. The Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus (SBAs) are a joint responsibility of the FCO and the Ministry of Defence. They do not have an environment charter but the Forum assumes that FCO and MOD apply the same principles to them as to the UKOTs.
- (2) Now the Overseas Territories Environment Programme—OTEP—jointly funded and managed by FCO and DFID, with each department currently providing £0.5 million per year. This is an average of £71 thousand per year for each territory—though the funding is not meant to be allocated equally between territories; and a number of projects (eg on climate change and Caribbean UKOTs) support work in several territories.
- (3) For the importance of the marine environment of the UKOTs, see the speech by John Battle, MP (then FCO Minister of State with responsibility for global environmental issues) on 21 March 2001. That started with the words: “I am delighted to be able to speak to this group [the All-Party Group for Wildlife Protection] for the first time. While you all have a close interest in marine conservation, many of you may not know why the subject matters to the FCO—and how that is expressed in policies and in action.” Sadly, all one could currently expect from an FCO minister is an explanation of why marine conservation no longer informs FCO environmental policy and programme priorities.
- (4) This clause has the effect of removing poverty as a criterion for providing assistance to the UKOTs (as does the third defining clause, which enables DFID to provide disaster relief without regard to a country’s poverty). DFID thus has the right to provide support for the welfare of the UKOTs and to promote their sustainable development, defined as “any development that is, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, prudent having regard to the likelihood of its generating lasting benefits for the population of the country or countries in relation to which it is provided.” This also means that DFID rather than FCO has the budget to support these policy objectives.
- (5) That was the title of the book by Sara Oldfield published in 1987 as a result of a review of the conservation situation in the UKOTs. One of its recommendations was the establishment of the unifying organisation that became UKOTCF.

January 2007

APPENDIX 7

Letter submitted by WWF

I’ve spoken to our international co-ordinator on the Heart of Borneo and he has confirmed that the FCO did provide assistance.

The FCO recently gave WWF a £25,000 grant for the preparation of the Heart of Borneo Government plan. We believe that this grant was instigated by the UK ambassador to Brunei via the regional office in Jakarta.

In addition, the FCO in Jakarta and Brunei worked behind the scenes to secure the EU statement of support following the Declaration (earlier this year) on the Heart of Borneo.

The UK Embassy in Brunei has been the prime source of support from the FCO, and the ambassador has had frequent communication with the Brunei Government and hosted dinners on behalf of the Heart of Borneo. He has also co-ordinated with his counterparts in Malaysia and Indonesia.

March 2007

APPENDIX 8

Memorandum submitted by Third Generation Environmentalism (E3G) in response to questions posed

1. *Do you feel that the recent restructuring at the FCO, in which the Environmental Policy Department was incorporated into the Sustainable Development and Business Group and Climate Change and Energy Group, has resulted in a loss of focus and expertise on environmental issues?*

The restructuring strengthened the FCO’s role on climate change to an extent, though the hoped for synthesis of climate and energy security has yet to really emerge in the group. The focus on other environmental issues has been severely damaged by the restructuring. As these issues require significant literacy and longevity of expertise to have an effective diplomatic impact, the lack of a clear focal point or

career anchor in the FCO has diminished its ability to integrate environmental issues successfully into its mainstream work (eg on environmental factors and conflict, corruption and governance/democracy), or provide an adequate diplomatic support function for DEFRA.

2. *You called for a new international body to provide international leadership and a watchdog role on environmental issues (a World Environment Organisation). The issue of a new environmental body was also visited in our inquiry on the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). Can you comment on this?*

I don't think the main rationale for a WEO is managing the trade and environment interface, though this has attracted political support for the idea from some in the trade community concerned with the WTO's mission creep into these areas. The main reason to construct a WEO is to produce more effective and powerful environmental leadership and governance, and this should be the priority in moving the idea forward. Such a WEO would—as you suggest—have a core focus on areas such as ecosystem services—taking forward the work of the MA—but also provide a more coherent approach to issues of environmental governance, environment rights and democracy, corruption and illegal trade, compliance and capacity building—all of which are very fragmented in the current system. A by-product of this would be a more focused dialogue with the WTO, but it is no panacea to the ability of the WTO to override environmental rules for trade purposes—these issues do have to be addressed in the WTO itself as well.

3. *You talked of the need to increase specialist environmental/sustainable development expertise across Government. This was something that we raised with the Minister. He said that they had an extensive SD training programme for all staff, and that they had a number of secondees from DEFRA. Would you say that this degree of expertise is adequate to the task in the FCO?*

No. The issues the FCO deals with are different to those in DEFRA and changing rapidly. Many of the areas where FCO could add most value are still developing and are intellectually and institutionally immature, for example: Climate change diplomacy and the links to energy security; environmental technology cooperation; climate security and environmental stress; resource management, conflict and corporate behaviour; international environmental governance; environmental democracy and rights. There is no off the shelf training available to teach generalists how to approach these issues. DEFRA does not effectively cover these areas either. Effective diplomacy requires people to have cutting edge skills and be in touch with networks of key thinkers and actors. This requires both serious in-depth training and a career path where experience and networks can be built. This is the approach taken for FCO staff on major countries and institutions—China, India, EU—where on top of six to 12 months of dedicated language training staff can expect several tours of duty on a related region/country/institution—thus giving them incentives to maintain and build their knowledge and understanding over time. It is strange that a similar investment is not made on environmental issues, which by their very nature are international and require successful diplomacy to deliver UK interests. This type of internal capacity should be supplemented by external secondees from academia, NGOs and business—as has been successfully pioneered in the human rights and science and technology areas in FCO, and was a key part of EPD from 1999–2003.

4. *You called for the creation of a new UK international environmental strategy. I anticipate that the Government would simply argue that its Sustainable Development Strategy provides this. I assume that you feel that this existing strategy is not detailed enough?*

The current SDS does not give a clear set of UK priorities beyond climate change, or a detailed set of focal areas for deploying UK assets. It has no clear views on the key institutional and governance issues the UK wishes to see addressed, or the core upcoming environmental challenges. Finally, any useful strategy would also need a frank and confidential assessment of the political landscape and where the UK needs to engage with key allies and opponents to achieve its goals. This type of conversation exists for climate change but only in a very ad hoc manner for other issues. The absence of a strategy is skewing the UK towards a focus on climate change mitigation policy, while ignoring that successful and peaceful adaptation to the inevitable changes in the climate will require far more effective and resilient governance of natural resources and ecosystems in the short to medium term—especially given the proximate stresses of population growth and economic development.

March 2007