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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Third periodic reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Addendum
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND* **

[21 February 1996]

* The second periodic reports concerning rights covered by articles 10 to 12 (E/1986/4/Add.27 and E/1986/4/Add.28) and by articles 13 to 15 (E/1990/7/Add.16) as well as additional information (E/1989/5/Add.9) submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were considered by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its eleventh session (E/C.12/1994/SR.33, 34, 36 and 37).

The appendices referred to in the present report are available for consultation in the secretariat.

** The information submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in accordance with the guidelines concerning the initial part of reports of States parties is contained in the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.5/Rev.1).

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Scientific progress and its applications

310. As noted in earlier reports, in the United Kingdom the enjoyment of the benefits of scientific progress and its applications has always been regarded as a basic right for all. No legislation or other government measures have been taken, or are considered necessary, to guarantee that right.

Promotion of scientific research

311. Basic and strategic research is carried out largely under the auspices of the nation's Research Councils and in universities. The 1993 White Paper, "Realizing our Potential: A Strategy for Science Engineering, and Technology" announced changes to the Research Council system which came into effect on 1 April 1994. A central theme of the White Paper was that steps should be taken to harness the United Kingdom's strength in science and engineering to the creation of wealth, by bringing scientists into closer partnership with industrial and commercial users of research. To help bring this about, a new post of Director General of Research Councils (DGRC) has been created within the Office of Science and Technology (since July 1995, a part of the Department of Trade and Industry). Two former Councils - the Agricultural and Food, and the Science and Engineering Research Councils - have been abolished, and three new Councils created. A further Council was established in April 1995 and there are now seven Councils under the general direction of the DGRC. They are: the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; the Economic and Social Research

Council; the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council; the Medical Research Council; the Natural Environmental Research Council; the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council and the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (which provides services for the other six Councils). These Councils support research in universities and in their own institutes through project grants. They are funded by the Government through its Science Budget which it has increased by 23 per cent in real terms since 1985. The Science Budget in financial year 1995/96 totals £1,284 million. The Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering also receive grant-in-aid from the Science Budget.

312. Government funds universities through block grants for teaching and research allocated by the Funding Councils. Its policy for higher education is set out in its White Paper "Higher Education - A New Framework". A total of £80 million of public funds is allocated by the Higher Education Funding Council and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland for scientific research in academic year 1995/96.

Protection of the environment

313. The Government recognizes the need to improve environmental standards. In September 1990, it published the White Paper "This Common Inheritance; Britain's Environmental Strategy". In January 1994, it published documents fulfilling commitments made at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992: "Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy", "Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan", "Climate Change: the UK Programme" and "Sustainable Forestry: the UK Programme". The Sustainable Development Strategy stressed the need to integrate environment concerns into other policy areas, and set up a Government Panel on Sustainable Development, a United Kingdom Round Table on Sustainable Development, and a "Going for Green" initiative to raise public awareness. The Government Panel issued its first report in January 1995 and the Government issued its response in March of that year. The United Kingdom Round Table is expected to produce its first report in March 1996. The Government publishes annual reports in respect of its commitments to the sustainable development strategy in "The Common Inheritance" and successor reports. Since 1995, these have highlighted key quantified targets and priorities for the year ahead.

Public understanding of science

314. Government proposals for improving the public understanding of science, engineering and technology were contained in the 1993 White Paper, "Realising our Potential" (paras. 7.32-38). This resulted in the launch in January 1994 of a Government "Campaign for the Public Understanding of Science" in which many other organizations (research councils, learned and professional societies, research charities, business enterprises and the media) are also participating.

315. The Campaign supports a number of initiatives including a small grants scheme for public understanding activities (now run by the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science) and a range of promotional and educational programmes in schools. The highlight of the Campaign is the National Week of Science, Engineering and Technology, which is now a successful annual event organized by the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Technology transfer

316. If the results of scientific research and technology development are to be widely used and to make the maximum possible contribution towards the wealth creation process, it is important that efficient mechanisms exist to transfer the knowledge or technology to industrial

and commercial users. The Department of Trade and Industry, therefore, supports a number of initiatives designed to foster such transfers. These include:

(a) providing funding for Innovation and Technology Counsellors (ITCs) to be placed in "Business Links" (a national network of "one stop shops" which bring together all key local providers of business support through a single, local access point). The ITCs can assist local companies to find national and international sources of technical help and to identify and implement local best practice in innovation;

(b) The Teaching Company Scheme, which places graduates in firms for up to two years to work on specific technology projects. The scheme thereby aims to encourage universities and industry to work more closely together in the future and to demonstrate to small firms the benefits of employing graduates;

(c) The Focus Technical Programme, which helps research and technology organizations and higher education institutes to undertake fundamental reviews of their products and services in order to make them more appropriate to the particular needs of small firms;

(d) The Engineers to Japan and Overseas Science and Technology Expert Missions schemes which are designed to encourage industry to locate and gain access to technological expertise originating outside the United Kingdom and to learn the best practice overseas;

(e) Offering prizes to reward successful examples of technology transfer between technology providers and potential exploiters and thereby encourage others to build effective links.

Development of international collaboration

317. The United Kingdom encourages scientific cooperation with a large number of countries, particularly through the Royal Society and the British Council. This cooperation is achieved through academic exchanges, support to joint research projects, exchange of information about various research activities, and through encouragement of bilateral seminars, high level policy discussions, and visits and exchange at governmental and scientific levels. Support for such cooperation is a main objective of science and technology counsellors in embassies around the world, and the British Council also maintains a network of science officers in different countries.

318. Specific action to develop bilateral relations has been undertaken with a wide range of countries in recent years, both among partners in the EU, and outside. Round table meetings, for example with Japan and Germany have been held, and further such events are planned. Within Europe, scientific programmes operated under the auspices of the EU represent an increasingly significant proportion of the United Kingdom's collaborative scientific effort. The United Kingdom's contribution to the EU's Fourth Framework Programme for research and development is approximately 16 per cent. The Programme's total budget over 1994/95 is £10.9 billion.

319. The United Kingdom has been involved in EUREKA since its launch in 1985. EUREKA's main aim is to encourage and assist collaborate research and development projects between European companies, research organizations and higher education institutes. With its strong market orientation, it complements the European Commission's programmes of strategic research.

320. There are now 24 member countries, extending from the Russian Federation in the east to Iceland in the west. All the countries of the

EU are members and the European Commission is a member too in its own right. By mid-1994, nearly 200 projects with a value of over 3.2 billion ECU (£2.2 billion) had already been completed. In addition, 820 projects with a value exceeding 14 billion ECU (£10 billion) were under way, involving more than 4,000 partners.

321. There are strong bilateral links between the United Kingdom and the Central and Eastern European countries. The Royal Society, for instance, funds exchange visits to the value of £1 million per annum, representing over 600 visits, both short and long term. The British Council also maintains strong links through a network of offices in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and through a series of strategic visits. There is a wealth of scientific cooperation between research councils and scientific institutions in the United Kingdom and their CEE counterparts.

322. The Second Activity of the Fourth Framework Programme supports S and T collaboration with the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union (NIS) and CEE. About 65 million ECU (£50 million) is made available per annum for this purpose until the end of 1998, split evenly between CEE and NIS. This funding also supports the International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the NIS (INTAS), which was set up in June 1993 at the initiative of the European Commission and the member States. The United Kingdom is also involved with the International Science and Technology Centre in Moscow which receives funding of £8 million per annum through the EU TACIS programme of aid for the NIS.