



Environment and Climate Change Committee

Oral evidence: COP15: the international biodiversity conference

Tuesday 15 June 2021

9.55 am

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Members present: Baroness Parminter (The Chair); Baroness Boycott; Lord Browne of Ladyton; Lord Cameron of Dillington; Baroness Chalker; Lord Colgrain; Lord Lilley; Lord Lucas; Baroness Northover; The Lord Bishop of Oxford; Lord Puttnam; Lord Whitty; Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Evidence Session No. 1

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 1 - 9

Witnesses

[I](#): Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister for Pacific and the Environment, Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs; Cheryl Case, Joint Head of International Environment Negotiations, Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs; Will Lockhart, Joint Head of International Environment Negotiations, Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Examination of witnesses

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Cheryl Case and Will Lockhart.

Q1 **The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. This is the first evidence session for our inquiry into COP15. Today, our focus is on the Government's priorities for the CBD.

I very much welcome our three witnesses: Lord Goldsmith, Minister for Pacific and the Environment at Defra, and the Joint Heads of International Environment Negotiations at Defra, Dr Cheryl Case and Dr Will Lockhart. All three of you are very welcome.

On a couple of housekeeping points, a transcript will be taken and will be made public. Witnesses will have a chance to review that before it is published. The session is webcast live, and it will subsequently be made available via the parliamentary website. I remind Members that they should declare any relevant interests before they first speak.

Without further ado, I will open with the first question. Why is COP15 so important, and what are the Government's priorities in negotiations? As a supplementary, are we still expecting it to go ahead in October? Minister, you may like to lead off, but I leave it to you and your colleagues to decide who and how to respond.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Thank you so much. I will kick off, and I encourage my colleagues, who are the real experts, and very much on the front line in our negotiations, to step in as and when.

First, it is important because of the situation and because of the facts on the ground, which you are probably all fully aware of. We know that the global extinction rate is between tens and hundreds of times higher than the average rates over the past 10 million years. We know that, every minute, the world is losing around 30 football fields of forest. We know that two-thirds of our coastal wetlands are lost, that a third of marine mammals are threatened with extinction, that a million species, including plants, are facing potential extinction. It goes on and on, and we could spend an hour and a half talking about the gloom. It is bad news and the trends are not slowing; if anything, they are accelerating.

That is the backdrop for it, and it is why we need to get it right. We have an opportunity now, because this year has been described—rightly, I hope—as the super-year for nature. We have the G7, which we hosted; we have the CBD, which is being hosted in Kunming, China, at the end of the year; and, of course, we are hosting the climate COP in November. It is also the first year when the three Rio Conventions are happening in the same year.

On the CBD, there is a link—there must be a link—between the Conventions, and we are doing everything we can to foster and strengthen the links, but the CBD nevertheless is the main international forum for conservation, for setting targets around conservation and for ensuring more sustainable use of biodiversity. This particular one is significant, because—correct me if I am wrong, Cheryl—hopefully 196

COP15 members, or parties to the conference, to use the correct phrase, will be asked to adopt a new, fresh, post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Everything is geared towards that, and we are doing everything we can to ensure the maximum possible ambition. We know that the last set of targets were missed, horribly so, by everyone, including us, so we need not just to get the targets right; we have to create mechanisms to ensure that countries meet those targets. This is really high stakes; it is hard to imagine anything more important.

You asked about whether it is going to happen. I do not know for sure what is going to happen, and Cheryl might have more up-to-date information. My understanding is that it is going to happen, but clearly it is in the hands of China, and it will decide what to do. It may be that China will come up with a halfway house system or a hybrid system, or there could even potentially be a multistage system. If you are happy for me to ask Cheryl to come in on that, she might have more accurate information.

Cheryl Case: It is indeed 196 parties that are committed to the CBD COP, and who are all getting together to agree the way forward for the next 10 years, to have those ambitious targets and objectives, and ambitious delivery of those, so that, unlike Aichi, we actually achieve those outcomes and make a difference.

COP15 is scheduled to take place in Kunming in China in October this year. The exact format is still to be decided, but it is a matter for the incoming presidency, working with the secretariat of the CBD, to do that. There is work going on at the moment, and subsidiary meetings have been happening. It is all lined up for that to happen in October. Everybody always watches this space, given the challenges we have had with Covid and things being delayed, but it is currently still scheduled to take place in October.

The Chair: Because this is our first session, I will now move on to our next question, from Lord Lucas.

Q2 **Lord Lucas:** Minister, how are you working to promote the Government's priorities for COP15? What are the Government doing to ensure that the targets can be operationalised, implemented and reviewed, including as part of the post-2020 responsibility and transparency workstream? Given that Defra has been occupied with the pandemic response and the effects of Brexit, have you had the resources and the attention that you need to focus on COP15?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: First, on our priorities, we are completely committed to playing as big a role as we possibly can, without trespassing on China's territory, in developing the most ambitious possible framework. We are supporting ambitious targets, putting it crudely, to bend the curve of biodiversity loss by 2030. We have co-led a coalition of countries committed to 30by30, which is 30% of the world's land and ocean to be protected by the end of the decade. We are pushing for targets to ensure that species extinction rates are slowed and

population sizes recover, and that ecosystems are restored on a very large scale. We want a framework to accompany those targets that provides the sort of accountability that has been missing until now, which will enable people, civil society and even other Governments, to hold countries to account for the promises that they have made.

To do all that, we are using all the levers that we have at our disposal. As I mentioned, we have been advocating very actively for the 30by30 target, building up a coalition. We lead the Global Ocean Alliance, which is specifically looking at the ocean target. We are co-chairs of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, which was set up by Costa Rica. There are now 80 unique members between those two alliances, which is more than a third of the parties to the CBD. A major part of our energy has gone into that, and Ministers—not just me—have been sent out with briefs that always include that as one of the asks of other countries.

We got involved with the Leaders' Pledge for Nature. We effectively took over most of the drafting of that document and turned it from what I thought was a very bland document full of platitudes into something that is, I think, the most ambitious such document that exists. We did that with Costa Rica and the European Commission. I think 81 countries have now signed up to the Leaders' Pledge for Nature. It is a very powerful document and, if countries do what they have signed up to doing, we will be in a very different place in a year's time. Our job, obviously, is to turn those words into action.

We have used the G7 presidency to secure some really ambitious commitments around that agenda. With a huge amount of heavy lifting by colleagues, we have got all the G7 members to commit to the 30by30 target, not just globally, but domestically as well. We got them to commit to doing everything they can to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, and they have committed to putting climate and biodiversity at the heart of Covid recovery.

It was the first net-zero G7, with all members committed to early and heavy cuts to emissions in order to have a chance of staying within 1.5 degrees. We got them to commit to phasing out funding for fossil fuel projects internationally, following our decision in December last year. We got them to commit to stopping new finance for coal power by the end of this year, to increase finance for climate action, with particular focus on nature-based solutions, which have been largely left behind on the agenda, but we are trying to rectify that through our presidency of the climate COP. We also got them to commit to work with us to break the link between commodities and deforestation. Commodity production is responsible for the vast majority of deforestation.

That is a pretty hefty bunch of commitments. Of course, it is not the end of the story, but it is a big step in the right direction. With that, and in our presidency of the climate COP, we have put nature at the heart of our response to climate change, both domestically and internationally. We think that nature-based solutions could provide around a third of the

most cost-effective solutions to climate change, as well as helping countries to adapt, tackle biodiversity loss and prevent poverty. Yet, at the moment, despite that, nature-based solutions get around 2% or 3% of international climate finance. We are trying to change that.

We have committed to doubling our own climate finance. We have committed to spending just under a third of it on nature-based solutions, and we are trying to get other countries to step up and do something similar. As we move towards the actual COP that we are hosting in Glasgow, it is early stages, but we are working on a big nature moment. There will be a nature day, and there will be a nature thread running through the whole thing. We want to finish COP with a very clear agreement around, in particular, ecosystems and forests. If we do not protect and restore forests, we are not going to get to net zero.

We are using everything we possibly can. As I say, it is not just me as the International Nature Minister or Biodiversity and Climate Minister; it is all of us. Whenever Ministers are out doing their diplomacy, this is our top international priority, as evidenced in our integrated review.

You asked me a number of questions, and I hope I have answered them. If I have not, please come back, but I was probably too long with that answer already.

Lord Lucas: Thank you, Minister. Might we also hope for some practical measures, things like an open worldwide map of land use, so that we can all see what is happening in detail everywhere in the world and know the truth of what we are being told, for instance, about palm oil plantations in Indonesia? In that regard, will we find practical ways of financing and supporting the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and similar organisations that have the capacity to make a difference on the ground?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Monitoring is absolutely key. Technology has improved massively, enabling us to see in some detail what is happening to land. Whether there is a plan for a global land-use map is not something I am aware of, but I certainly know that, as we do deals with countries around land use, whether through our ODA relationships or other trading relationships, knowing what is happening on the ground is an integral part of it.

The commodity question is one of our top priorities as part of our nature focus at COP. The UK has convened and is now running something called the FACT dialogue. I cannot remember what FACT stands for. It used to be called SLUCT, but we changed the name for obvious reasons. The FACT dialogue is about bringing producer and consumer countries together. We now co-chair it with Indonesia, which I think is hugely significant. The idea is to get countries—the key producer and consumer countries—to work towards breaking the link between commodity production and deforestation.

We are legislating at the moment, as you know, through the Environment Bill, for a due diligence law, which will require the biggest importers of

commodities such as soya and palm oil to prove that they are not bringing in commodities that have been grown on illegally cleared land. We want many other countries to do the same. If we succeed, and through the FACT dialogue we are making huge progress, we have the capacity to flip the market quite profoundly.

There is some criticism that we are looking only at illegally deforested land, but it is worth remembering that, in places such as Brazil, 90% of deforestation is currently illegal. Globally, the figure is at around 50%. Whereas this is not a solution to the whole problem, it is a pretty significant solution. Our intention and our goal, and we are doing a huge amount of heavy lifting to make it happen, is to get countries to make that commitment, work with us, break the link between commodities and deforestation, and at the same time promote trade in sustainable commodities. That has worked with timber, through the FLEGT process with Indonesia. We know it works, and we need to replicate that success with commodities.

You asked whether Defra has been able to work on this agenda alongside its pandemic responsibilities, and the answer is yes. I have been astonished by the work that Defra officials have managed to pull off over the last year. We are, without any doubt, doing more heavy lifting on this agenda than any other country on earth and, amazingly, we are succeeding in pulling other countries into our coalition and getting them to work alongside us in a way that, a year ago, I thought would be ambitious, to put it mildly.

Lord Lucas: Thank you.

Q3 **Baroness Northover:** Following your answers to the earlier questions, Minister, could you tell me what you are doing to secure progress on issues of resource mobilisation and digital sequence information? These issues are of course especially concerning to developing countries.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Can I quickly add this? I said that 81 countries had signed up to the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, but I am told that it is 89—even better. The FACT dialogue is the forest, agriculture and commodity trade dialogue. I just wanted to put that on the record.

Resource mobilisation is key. We know that we will not get a really large number of countries to sign up to ambitious targets if they do not think that there are resources to help them achieve those targets. This is a really big part of what we are calling for.

It is not all about public money, although public money matters, of course. We are trying to get donor countries to honour their commitment to produce \$100 billion a year up to 2025 in order to tackle climate change. We are trying to get countries to commit to spending a much bigger chunk of that on nature-based solutions. That is part of the finance. We are pushing for significant uplift in public finance specifically for nature and biodiversity. That is one part of it.

In addition, we need to ensure, I think even more importantly, that the incentives that Governments deploy are deployed in such a way that we incentivise healthy activity, as opposed to damaging activity. The top 50 food-producing countries alone spend \$700 billion a year subsidising often destructive land use. If we could persuade a critical mass of those countries to change the way they subsidise land use, in a sense as we are doing here through shifting from the common agricultural policy to environmental land management, that, too, would have the capacity to flip the market in a very profound way.

That is a really important part of our campaign. It is much more difficult, because land use subsidies are a very politically sensitive issue, but we are pushing hard and we are having some very promising conversations with countries around the world on that issue. That is the second part: getting the incentives right.

The third part is about the do no harm principle. One of the campaigns that we made progress with at the G7 was to get the G7 members to agree with us to use our leverage as major donors to the multilateral aid system to encourage—more than encourage: to require—the big multilateral development banks to commit that their entire portfolios are aligned with nature, not just with Paris, a commitment that we have already had from many of them, making sure that, as they spend money, they are not doing so in a way that may be alleviating poverty in the short term on the one hand but grubbing out environments on which poor communities depend most with the other hand. We want to align mainstream nature, effectively, through those international institutions. Ultimately, we need to do that through our entire economic system. I hope that addresses the first point. Again, colleagues—Cheryl and Will—jump in if you want to add to that.

On the digital sequence information, we clearly understand the concerns about the need to share benefits arising from its application and to share them fairly, while recognising the hugely important role of access to digital sequencing information for the scientific community, in particular the health sector. It is a sensitive issue, as you know. We commissioned an evidence review—an analysis—of the potential options on the table, which was warmly welcomed globally. I will ask Cheryl to come in on this in a second, as it was something she was directly involved in. We are also working across the whole of Whitehall. We set up the DSI interest group, which involves the Foreign Office—the FCDO—the Department of Health and Social Care and Defra, to ensure that our positions are aligned on this tricky but hugely important issue.

Cheryl or Will, could I ask one of you to fill in the gaps, if you do not mind, on DSI?

Will Lockhart: I think you have covered most of that very effectively, Minister. We recognise that DSI is an area that attracts interest from a wide range of different parties. On the one hand, we recognise the critical importance of digital sequence information and access to it for the scientific community, who will use it freely and openly to pursue all sorts

of scientific research, not least, and not limited to, vaccine development, which has of course been so critical over the past few months.

On the other hand, we believe in the core tenet of the Nagoya Protocol and the Convention as a whole, which is that there should be fair and equitable benefit sharing from the use of all genetic resources. That is a core tenet of the overall Convention. DSI is an area that requires some clever thinking, some hard work and some smart negotiation. The UK is leading the charge in developing a robust evidence base, and our contribution to that discussion has been really welcomed. The next formal round of negotiations on digital sequence information will take place at open-ended working group 3, which will start at the end of August.

Baroness Northover: You are working with institutes such as the Wellcome Trust on this, I trust, as well as working across government.

Will Lockhart: We will get back to you on precisely whether or not we are working with the Wellcome Trust. We are actively involved with a really wide range of stakeholders from the scientific community. I cannot at the moment tell you whether or not it involves the Wellcome Trust, but it is a really broad list of stakeholders.

The Chair: Thank you, Will. If you could follow up with that after the inquiry session, that would be great.

Q4 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I declare an interest as chair of the Woodland Trust and vice-president of a shedload of environmental charities.

The Government have just published their Dasgupta report response, which ruined my previous evening since I had to read it. It was good to see that elements of that report were promoted at the G7 Finance Ministers' meeting, and at the main G7. Could the Minister tell us what the decisions of the Finance Ministers were to embed climate change and biodiversity loss into the economic and financial decision-making structure globally? How does he intend that the UK promotes that through COP15 and COP26, and are there any other elements of the Dasgupta response to which he wants to draw our attention?

Could the Minister also tell us how we could be made to seem more credible globally when, for example, the Government in the UK are forging free trade agreements with the likes of Australia that do not accord with the principles on free trade agreements that are in the government response? When are we going to see a change in that arrangement?

Thirdly, is the Chancellor on board? He did not sign the Government's Dasgupta response—a junior Minister signed it—and he has not been very forthcoming volubly. Perhaps the Minister could speculate for us on whether the Chancellor is on board with Dasgupta and its implementation.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The response is published. It heralds a real shift and gives us a massive opportunity. The bottom line

in the Dasgupta Review, and recognition of that runs through our response, is that genuine, true, natural capital needs to be factored into the decisions we make, whether by the Chancellor or by the private sector. We need to align our lives, our economies, our businesses and our activities with the natural world. That is ultimately what we need to do; that is the challenge we face—the biggest challenge of all.

The response is not exhaustive, but it points to things that we are doing as a Government in order to match that agenda. One of the most exciting parts of it is our commitment to align, as a first step, our ODA with nature, to ensure that we have at least a do no harm approach through our ODA, which is what I was talking about in relation to the multilateral development banks earlier.

There is a lot of resistance from the MDBs to that—not all of them, to be fair, but we know that the World Bank, for instance, is not keen on this agenda. We think that, by demonstrating how it can be done, what kind of metrics will be used and how you ensure that every decision that is taken will not be further damaging to our biodiversity or natural capital base, we will provide a model for all others to follow. At the moment, no one seems to be doing that. It is an innovative step on our part.

In answer to your question about free trade, we have been very clear. Members of the WTO put forward their priorities, I think on a biannual basis. The UK has been very clear, in our latest submission, that the environment is one of our top three priorities in future trade agreements and in the trade agenda generally. We think free trade agreements can be a force for good and could be an opportunity for us to promote values in a way that, until now, free trade agreements have not been used to do. I believe that we are the first country to strike free trade agreements where animal welfare, for instance, is a factor or criterion within them. It is not something that I am aware of happening before.

You ask about Australia. We do not know the details. The negotiations are happening, and I am not in those negotiations. Even if I was, it would be wrong of me to try to prejudge, but the commitment the Government have made to not allowing free trade agreements to undercut our own high animal welfare standards, which is the concern that I think you are hinting at, and has been raised by many stakeholders, is one that holds true until it does not. At the moment, it holds true, and I very much hope that will remain the case. I am optimistic. I think that we can do deals with countries such as Australia, but in such a way that we are able both to promote high animal welfare standards and environmental standards, and to protect those that we are proud of here in this country.

You asked me another question, but I am afraid I cannot remember what it was—I am so sorry—unless I answered it.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Is the Chancellor with us?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Yes, the Chancellor is with us. I have had many conversations with the Chancellor, and it strikes me that he fully understands.

It is a self-evident truth: everything we have is based on nature; everything we have is based on the natural world. If we destroy the natural world, ultimately we will be destroying ourselves. You would have to be quite challenged not to understand that very simple reality.

The value of the Dasgupta Review is that it puts that in language that anyone can understand. It removes it from the language of the campaigner and puts it in the language of the economist. I think the case is incredibly powerful. The government policy, which a Chancellor is clearly involved in signing off—our government position—is that we will do everything we can to incorporate that basic truth in the way we operate government across the board.

It is not just a Defra issue; it means, for example, that as we develop planning reforms later in the year, or perhaps next year, Defra will have a seat at the table to ensure that all the commitments we are making in the Environment Bill are incorporated and reflected in whatever decisions are made in relation to planning. We have a new body, an international nature board, which involves officials from right across government. I take part as well. That is a body to ensure that, when the Government speak about nature internationally, whether that is on trading-related issues, ODA-related issues or negotiations through the CBD, COP or other fora, we speak with one voice.

I think our international nature strategy, even though it was largely designed in Defra, is nevertheless the Government's position. We have complete buy-in. I leave those meetings feeling a sense of real elation that the whole of government has finally got its head around something that for years it did not.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, for your enthusiasm and your remarks. Now we move to Lord Cameron.

Q5 **Lord Cameron of Dillington:** Good morning, Minister. I declare an interest as a farmer and landowner, and as chair of UKCEH research.

To some extent, you have answered my first question, which is all about buy-in from other departments. You might want to add something about how you got buy-in on promoting the biodiversity agenda generally, as opposed to buy-in on the COP15 agenda.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We at Defra are clearly the organisation or department that has the most institutional knowledge on issues such as biodiversity, but we work very closely with other departments. I think I gave the example of MHCLG in relation to planning. We cannot deliver biodiversity net gain, local nature recovery strategies, species conservation or protected site strategies without ensuring that the planning system is geared up to deliver those things. We are working very closely with MHCLG.

When it comes to building regulations and the shake-up that is happening at the moment, MHCLG is very keen to dip into the expertise in Defra to ensure that, if there are opportunities in the design of buildings, not just for carbon savings and energy efficiency but for biodiversity promotion, we should not miss those opportunities. In Defra, that piece of work is happening at the moment, and it involves tapping up some of the best NGOs and conservation organisations in this country for ideas. There is a lot of stuff happening.

I will give you another example. Baroness Young declared her interest in trees. If we are to meet our ambitious tree targets, we will probably not be able to do that just by working with private landowners. There is an enormous amount of public land that is not particularly well used. The MoD is a prime example. It is the second-biggest landowner in the country—it might even be the biggest landowner in the country—so we are working very closely with it. I am working very closely with counterparts in the MoD to encourage them to be more ambitious about giving over some of their land to enable us to increase our woodland cover with English native mixed woodlands.

The old divide is between land that lends itself to planting and deep peatlands, which do not lend themselves to planting. There is a grey area, and that is land that could lend itself more to natural regeneration, for example, where you really have a win-win. That is a whole new chapter of work that is happening between Defra and the MoD. I do not know where it will end up. Ultimately, the land experts in both departments will have to figure out what we can do and where, but the conversations have been hugely positive.

I do not have long experience in government, and I have little to compare this to, but those cross-departmental discussions are happening. That does not mean that we always agree. There will never be a time when Defra is not arguing with the Treasury on issues of this sort, but it feels to me that we are in a much better place than we have ever been to take a more holistic view.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: The second part of my question is to do with overseas aid, specifically the ODA cuts. As an example, at UKCEH, we were leading a project called the south Asian nitrogen hub, which is looking at nitrogen and its effect on greenhouse gases and on the pollution of rivers. We were suddenly told that, under the ODA cuts, we had to cut our input by 66%. It was really embarrassing diplomatically: we had to go back to all our partners and say, "Sorry, guys, we can't do this any more", blah, blah, blah. It not only undermines us; it undermines UK research capacity generally in its international reputation. Have you heard about similar effects affecting the COP15 talks? Have the ODA cuts come into your discussions at all?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Chair, when I answer this question, would you be happy for me to re-invite Will or Cheryl to come in? There is more that could have been said by me in my answer to the previous question about cross-government working, particularly in

relation to how that thread was woven through the G7 tracks, and in relation to major infrastructure projects, where the Government have made recent announcements. I will leave that to Will and Cheryl while I address the other point.

There is no doubt that the cut clearly has an impact, and many people and organisations around the world are affected. It is not something that anyone would welcome, or very few people would. We have talked a lot in numerous debates about why this has happened, so I will put that to one side. In the context of climate and biodiversity, we are committed, as we were before the cut—the decision to reduce from 0.7% to 0.5%—to doubling international climate finance to £11.6 billion, and we are committed to spending at least £3 billion of that on nature-based solutions. The trajectory of our investment in climate is shooting up, and the trajectory in relation to biodiversity much more so. We are starting from a tiny base on biodiversity, perhaps more than other donor countries, but still tiny. We are seeing a major increase.

At the moment, at Defra, BEIS and FCDO, we are working on developing a really exciting pipeline of programmes and projects. We are approaching spending that £3 billion as if we were starting from scratch. In the dream world, what would our programmes look like? Where are we going to have the biggest impact? Which environments are most at threat? Where can we invest in environmental protection and restoration while also delivering sustainable livelihoods? Where do we get the biggest bang for our buck? It is a complex but hugely exciting programme, and I hope that, as we approach COP, we will be able to talk more publicly about some of our thinking on this and the kinds of projects and interventions that we will be looking at.

On climate and biodiversity, the UK is very much seen as a leader in terms of finance. Even in the context of our cut to 0.5%, it is still worth saying that we are the third most generous aid donor in the world. I believe that is still the case. It is unsavoury; it is a decision that is regrettable; it is understandable, I think, but regrettable. I hope we can get back to 0.7% as soon as possible, but I have not noticed, in my work talking about climate change and biodiversity, that it has dented our credibility on those issues. On the contrary, whenever I take part in international fora, the UK is almost always complimented for the leadership that it is showing on these issues, in finance and in cajoling and campaigning on some of the other issues that we have talked about today.

Chair, would you be happy for me to ask Cheryl or Will to come in, to improve on my answer to the first question? Is that okay?

The Chair: If it is merely to supplement, Minister, and they could do that briefly, that is fine.

Cheryl Case: I will be very brief. I want to mention a bit more about nature across government. We believe that, as with climate change, where all sectors, all bodies and all departments need to take action, the

same is true for nature and biodiversity. We have demonstrated that through the G7 presidency, where we were not just negotiating and having discussions in the climate and environment ministerial; you will have seen the very robust nature compact from the leaders.

Discussions on nature have been happening across all the different tracks. Within the trade track, they have been discussing sustainable supply chains, protecting forests and agricultural commodities, and making sure that we do not deforest when we do that. We have been discussing and working closely with Health, making sure that we take a truly one-health approach, joining up human health, animal health and environmental health, so that all those considerations are taken on board. You will see the outcomes of that as well.

We have been working with the Treasury. We have been talking about financial disclosures for nature, not just climate change. This all takes an awful lot of work and, if different government departments are not committed to it, they do not do it. You can see, through the G7, that there are commitments on nature across all the different tracks, even down to the Home Office, which has yet to have its ministerial. It is working on illegal wildlife trade, and leaders have asked it to come back on how to increase enforcement in that area.

Nature truly is mainstreamed through the UK Government, and our presidency of the G7 has really demonstrated that. We will continue to do that not just through the COP15 work but in delivering on it.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: Thank you. There is just one final bit. Can there be a very quick answer to this? I realise I am taking up too much time. In January, you promised to nature-proof all ODA. I was just wondering whether we are going to see any details about how you intend to achieve that.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The truth is, we are still working on it. It is a commitment that was made. We know we have to do it; that is why we made the commitment, but we did not make it with a plan on a shelf that we could dust off. We have to figure out exactly what that means and what metrics we will use. The work is happening at pace, but we do not have anything yet to produce publicly on it. I am afraid I cannot give you more, but it is a very serious commitment, and it is one that I am personally pursuing.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: Okay. Thank you all.

The Chair: Perhaps we could now move to Lord Colgrain.

Q6 **Lord Colgrain:** I declare my interests, as set out in the register.

Minister, you have already answered my question in part. Cheryl Case has definitely answered it in part, but I will ask it anyway, if I may. What do you see as the key G7 achievements in building momentum for COP15, and are there areas where you were hoping that the G7 would achieve more?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The main things that I think we set out to do, and got, were around 30by30. For example, asking Japan and the US, which were not part of that coalition, to join it required a fair bit of work, but we got there, and I am thrilled that we got there. That is an important achievement: 30by30 by the end of this decade. It is not the end of the story but, if we can do that by 2030, we will have done something important.

There was a commitment to really get behind and champion an ambitious, effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework, to be adopted, agreed and signed off at the CBD. It is important to have the G7 flexing their collective muscles to get there. As I think I said earlier, it was the first net-zero G7, with not just vague commitments to cut emissions by 2050 but a commitment to impose the biggest cuts in emissions over the next decade, with a view to keeping 1.5 degrees within reach. That was important. There was a commitment to bend the curve of biodiversity loss by 2030. There were lots of associated commitments that go with those. I believe that there were over 100 commitments, perhaps even 120, in the G7 climate and environment communiqué across 14 different sectors, but they all feed into the overarching goal that I have just described. I think it was an important piece of work.

Could we have gone further? I am not sure we could have gone further. Would I have liked to go further? Yes, of course. I always want us to press for the maximum possible ambition, but I think what was achieved by our teams at the G7 is genuinely impressive and exceeds what many people thought we would be able to achieve. Looking back at our discussions three or four months ago, we really pushed to have asks included on the menu, in some cases against advice that we would not get them, yet here we are with what must be the most radical and ambitious set of G7 commitments on the environment, climate and biodiversity of all time. I am happy with where we are, and I think the team has done an extraordinary job.

Lord Colgrain: Thank you.

The Chair: I now move to the next question, from the Bishop of Oxford. I know, Steven, that you were keen to ask a supplementary question afterwards, and there is definitely time for you to do that.

Q7 **The Lord Bishop of Oxford:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for very clear and engaging answers. You have touched on this already, but it would be helpful to have an expansion. You explored the links between biodiversity and climate change. Can you explore a bit more what the Government are doing to promote co-ordination between COP15 and COP26, especially those exciting announcements you trailed about nature-based solutions? How will they achieve both climate change and biodiversity roles? Could you touch on how the Government are working with China, with the two presidents of the two COPs working together?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: On the first point, we are convinced, and I think the science is crystal clear, that biodiversity loss and climate change are inextricably linked. That relates both to land and to sea. We do not think we can get to net zero without massively increased efforts to protect and restore nature: forest, mangroves, seagrass and so on.

Despite our best efforts, and even if we see the world's best efforts, we are still going to see change regardless. Climate change is happening, and some of the most vulnerable and poorest communities in the world are already feeling the effects. We think nature-based solutions are incredibly valuable not only in mitigating climate change but in helping communities to be more resilient to the effects of climate change. Mangroves, for example, have a massive impact in dampening the effects of storm surge; likewise, corals, seagrasses and so on, in addition to their value in providing nursery for fish stocks, on which more than half of the world's population depends one way or another.

There are so many reasons why nature-based solutions have to be part of our attempts to tackle climate change. If we get our approach to climate change right, that will necessarily have a big positive impact on our CBD challenge of stopping nature loss and reversing biodiversity loss. If you are creating and protecting habitats of all sorts on an unprecedented scale, it will have huge implications for biodiversity. The two have to be seen together, and we are doing everything we can to create as common a framework as we possibly can.

There is a third part, which is poverty. We talk about biodiversity and climate change, but the first people to suffer when you destroy the free service that nature provides—the systems that provide those free services at least—are the poorest communities. A billion people depend on forests for their survival. Around a billion people depend on fish as their main source of protein. Around 250 million people depend on fish for their livelihoods; it goes on and on. When you match that fact against what we are doing to the world's fish stocks and the 30 football fields of forest being destroyed every minute, you can see that, far from using up the environment to deliver progress and development, the opposite is true: we are actually impoverishing some of the most vulnerable people on earth.

All of those issues come together, and nature is the thread that runs through them all. That is reflected in our public statements and in our position in relation to COP. As we deliver our COP, both in the run-up to it and at the event itself, nature will feature very heavily, not just through a nature day, although the nature day will be enormously important and a good opportunity to showcase some of the most exciting initiatives around the world, but as a thread that runs through the entire programme.

We want to work very closely with China. Discussions are happening. Last year, President Xi and our own Prime Minister agreed that we should work together as much as possible to create that common framework.

The COP president-designate had discussions with his counterpart—not quite his counterpart, I suppose, but the Minister of Ecology and Environment—and they talked about working together to reduce deforestation while strengthening food security. We have spoken to China’s Climate Change Minister, Xie Zhenhua—apologies if I said that wrong. The Foreign Secretary has had conversations with his counterpart and raised the importance of collaboration between our two Conventions. Those discussions continue.

I am not going to pretend that the discussions are easy, and I am not going to pretend that other issues do not influence those discussions or sometimes get in their way, but it is in all of our interests that China delivers a very effective CBD, and, as I have made very clear to my counterparts, we will do everything we can, and any amount of heavy lifting, to ensure that happens.

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: My supplementary question is about the public engagement opportunity that the two COPs together offer. What is the Government’s strategy for maximising the impact of public engagement across the two COPs, given that the public need to travel on this journey in our own practices, habits and expectations for the future?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: COP gives us an opportunity, and we are committed. Every Government talk about wanting an inclusive this and an inclusive that, but we really are committed to an inclusive COP. There are lots of different initiatives that are run either by the COP president-designate or by the Cabinet Office to harvest, harness and amplify the voices of importance in this context, including those of the climate-vulnerable nations, now chaired by former President Nasheed of the Maldives on behalf of Bangladesh. Mr Nasheed unfortunately suffered terrible injuries a month ago as a consequence of a terrorist attack, but he is up and running again, thank God, and doing fantastic work.

We want to amplify the voice and the message of the climate-vulnerable nations. We want to work with, and we have made pledges to, the smaller developing states, for example those in the Pacific and the Caribbean, who often feel neglected even though they are very much on the front line of the effects of climate change, and even though they contribute very little to climate change. In many cases, they are leading the way on the solution. We want to provide the biggest possible platform for them, not just so that they can have their say but so that they can influence the agenda and the outcome.

We have a very deep focus on gender equality. We want to ensure that negotiations are not always done by the same old people—men in suits—that young girls and women are brought closer and closer to the system, so that the message is balanced and that the messengers are balanced. We have a number of initiatives to provide platforms for young people, not just in the UK but internationally. I will ask Will or Cheryl if they can provide some names for some of those initiatives. I saw a list that included some that I was not aware of. There is some really impressive outreach. Between us, we have spoken to Ministers from more than 100

countries about different aspects of the CBD and COP agenda. When we have those conversations, we try to talk about both, not just COP and not just CBD, but both. We try to bring them together as much as we possibly can.

Would you mind if I asked Will or Cheryl if they have anything to add on engagement?

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: Great. Thanks.

Cheryl Case: I will mention a couple of things. There is a lot under way, and we have a team of people looking at it. The people of the UK very much care about both climate change and biodiversity. You just need to watch the television programmes to see the impact that they have. Sir David Attenborough has been named the people's advocate for COP26, so he can bring the voice of the people forward into those discussions and debates. In fact, he was at the G7 leaders, having those discussions and making it very clear what the UK public think in these areas.

We are doing a lot in this area. We are engaging with views, and we are making sure that we hear those voices by having a number of different stakeholder engagements with people representing groups and sectors so that we build that in. I will not give away all the exciting details as we go forward to the two COPs, but there is a lot of work under way to make sure that the thoughts, feelings and sentiments of the people come with us, and that we can identify what individuals can do themselves. It is great to see countries making commitments, but every individual can make a difference, in their own purchasing power, in the actions they take, in the holidays that they take and so on, when it comes to both biodiversity and climate change. We are looking to make sure that that is part of the story and part of the picture, so that we all take action where we possibly can.

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: Thank you.

Q8 **Lord Puttnam:** Good morning, Minister. I declare an interest as international ambassador for the World Wildlife Fund. That will become relevant in a moment.

If I look back, over the dozen years that I was working in government, most of my disappointments relate not to policy or expectations, but to implementation and delivery. That is the context for what I want to ask. If the outcome of COP15 is suboptimal, in your view, by what other means do you seek to address international biodiversity issues? To follow up on what the Bishop just said, how would you go about generating greater public support and understanding?

By way of example, WWF scientists have made it very clear, and I think you have touched on this, that there is a direct linkage between destruction of forests and the creation of pathogens, or certainly the enhancement of pathogens. I do not think that message has got home at all to the public. I agree with Cheryl that there are good things on the nature side, but the linkage to a kind of drumbeat issue such as

pandemics has not been made. If we do not get everything we would like out of COP15, will you start to push that button?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: I totally agree with you. Implementation is always the key. You only have to consider that the New York declaration committed to stopping deforestation by 2020, and we all know that has not happened. I do not doubt that it was signed in good faith, but it did not happen, partly because the mechanisms were not there to hold countries to account. I mentioned the failure to meet the Aichi targets.

It is one of the reasons why Cheryl and her team are pushing so hard. Obviously, we are pushing for the highest possible ambition with the targets themselves, but it is one of the reasons why they are focusing more than any other country on mechanisms for holding Governments to account. That means transparency. It means reporting mechanisms and review mechanisms. It means that, when countries develop their plans, showing how they are going to meet their part of the target, those plans are consistent. At the moment, they are all different; they are like chalk and cheese, and it is very hard to compare them.

There is a lot of work happening, which Cheryl is leading, and she is doing a really important job. I cannot tell you that she is going to succeed, but based on her record, she will. It is massively important that she does, and that we get as much buy-in as possible. I totally agree with that.

I also agree on pandemics. Most pandemics are zoonotic. You can rattle them off: Zika, Ebola, and it goes on and on. They are the result of jumping from animal to human, often as a consequence of grubbing out habitats and dislodging pathogens, and often as a result of factory farming, which relies on absurd amounts of antibiotics, which cause resistance. Potentially, they arise as a result of the illegal wildlife trade or even legal wildlife markets.

Absolutely. If this is not the wake-up call, it is hard to imagine what is, not just on the narrow issue of pandemics—I say narrow; it is huge—but in our broken relationship with the natural world. Covid is a consequence of our broken relationship with the natural world. It is just one of the consequences, and it will be dwarfed by the other consequences if we do not act now.

I could not agree more with the premise of your question: what do we do if things do not go the way we want with CBD? Will we continue? The answer is absolutely. Our finance commitments are there; we have made them. They are not one-year commitments. There is our £3 billion commitment for nature-based solutions. We are absolutely committed to using whatever levers we have. It happens to be that we are president of COP. We have just had the G7. We are going to be doing some heavy lifting for the CBD.

Those are just mechanisms, however. There are other mechanisms. I met up with the UN Secretary-General two days ago to talk about how we might use the UN General Assembly as a major stepping stone towards these ambitions, and there will be other stepping stones. Yes, we will continue.

We developed the Leaders' Pledge for Nature. If you have not seen it, I recommend having a look at it, as it has pretty much all the ingredients that you would want in a declaration. It is almost like a new covenant with nature. We will use that pledge, and the 89 countries that have signed it, to try to build and grow a coalition of ambitious countries, and we will continue to grow that ambition, way beyond the CBD. We will continue to push for the highest possible ambition and the most meaningful action that countries can take.

Yes, this is the beginning, not the end. Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced the launch of our new £500 million Blue Planet Fund, which I think is a world first. That will be helping countries to fulfil their obligations towards the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, achieving 30by30, creating marine protected areas, fighting plastic pollution and fighting illegal fishing. It is just one part of our new nature programme. It is an exciting bit, but there are many more to come, and we will continue to push and push.

I am obviously very passionate about this, but what is exciting is that there are a lot of people in government who share my passion, right the way up to the top. The Prime Minister cares passionately about what is happening to the natural world and is a champion. The good things that have been happening over the past year have emanated from No. 10. I really think that the UK has provided world leadership. That has happened as a consequence of interventions by No. 10. Yes, we will continue to push and push.

Lord Puttnam: Thank you.

Q9 The Chair: We probably have time for at least one supplementary. If I can use the Chair's prerogative, I certainly have a question for the Minister and his team. Lord Lucas has his hand up. Perhaps I could go first and then turn to him.

Minister, with regard to the governance framework for ensuring the protection of our world's oceans, would you agree with those who have argued that so far the CBD has neglected the ambition for marine?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: I hope that what we get from the CBD is a commitment to top-level protection, but in order to deliver 30by30 for the ocean we need the successful conclusion of the BBNJ negotiations under UNCLOS, the biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction negotiations. In our ministerial discussions in the G7, another area where we were pushing for a clearer agreement or commitment was for those countries to work together to break through the impasse that exists. We had some commitments, but countries did not speak with one voice, so

we have quite a lot of work to do on that. I do not know, Cheryl or Will, whether you are involved in BBNJ. If you are, please jump in.

This is a prerequisite; if we do not get through the BBNJ negotiations, which will allow us to create mechanisms for the protection of the two-thirds of the world's oceans that lie beyond national jurisdiction, we will not be able to get 30by30. It really has to happen.

We are also committed to pushing for a global treaty on plastic pollution. What I am looking for at the moment, although it is early stages—I had a brilliant round table on it just a couple of weeks ago—is the most effective lever we can deploy to tackle the problem of illegal fishing, which is accompanied by so much ugliness, not just the destruction of fish stocks but criminality, slavery, et cetera. The frustration is that there is no obvious campaign. We are looking for that and trying to figure it out. By the way, any ideas would be welcome. There is nothing obvious that is worth spending a huge amount of energy on, and it might happen at the expense of something else we are doing. We are on the lookout for a mechanism to tackle illegal fishing.

I mentioned plastic. Cheryl or Will, are either of you involved in BBNJ?

Cheryl Case: The BBNJ negotiations are led by the Foreign Office, but of course as it is a marine issue we work jointly with them. The discussions and negotiations are ongoing; it has been a long road to the outcome. We are hoping that they can be concluded very soon this year. As with most international negotiations, they have been challenged quite significantly by Covid and its implications. You can imagine that international negotiations are challenging at any time when you have 190-plus countries all around a table, but trying to do it virtually is a real challenge. For the bigger negotiations, it has slowed us down, but they are ongoing. We are looking to see if they can be concluded this year. As to whether that is going to happen, the discussions are literally ongoing.

When it comes to looking at areas beyond national jurisdiction, countries are on a journey to the same place but are often at different stages on that journey. That is the challenge when it comes to getting international agreements. Some are well ahead, have thought this through and have their policies aligned when it comes to fishing, exploration of the sea, sea mining, et cetera; others are much further behind or further ahead.

The discussions are very challenging. We are talking about the whole world in a negotiation, and when you are negotiating online it is even more challenging because we are all doing it on different timelines. My team is up very early in the morning, working through the night and late at night. Often, we are very lucky because we are in the middle of the day, given where the chairing is happening, but we hope that they can close as soon as possible because, as the Minister said, they are the basis for getting 30by30 protection for the oceans.

The G7 has made a commitment to do its utmost to drive forward those negotiations in a very positive manner and get a strong outcome. We are

slightly at the hands of having to negotiate in a virtual space at the moment. Although we are coming through Covid, a number of other countries are in a different space.

Lord Lucas: Minister, does your optimism embrace the idea that we might become a world leader in incorporating environment and nature in our education system?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: I would very much like that to be the case. Clearly, it is not directly in my portfolio. I cannot declare policy, but I have had discussions with the Department for Education. My colleague in Defra Rebecca Pow cares passionately about this and has been talking to her counterparts in the Department for Education to see what more we can do.

In areas where I have a say, I hope that we will be able to use our tree programme to encourage projects in a very large number of schools. There is the kernel of what could be a really ambitious project to get growing, whether it is trees, hedgerows or orchards, in a significant number of schools across the country. I am hoping we will be able to use the Nature for Climate Fund to do that, but we are at the early stages.

When I was MP for Richmond Park, I saw that when schools get involved in the land, producing and growing things and looking after animals, it has a remarkable impact on young people and an enormous impact on the success of the school. As Sir David Attenborough said, we will not protect the world if we do not love it, and getting involved and getting our hands dirty is one way to love it. I very much hope so, but I am afraid I am not in a position to make promises.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: The Woodland Trust has a huge programme with schools, and I hope that the Minister will latch on to that.

Can I raise a comment you made very early in your evidence about nature-based solutions having been neglected? Is that really the case and, if so, what will we do to get them unneglected in COP15 and COP 27?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: They have been neglected. The overwhelming majority of energy and money that goes into what we think of as the environment has gone into fairly conventional carbon production programmes. Less than 3% has gone into nature-based solutions.

Having said that, there are plenty of examples around the world where nature-based solutions have been implemented and the effects have been extraordinary. They are not always nature-based solutions to climate change; they might be nature-based solutions to other problems. The best example I know is in Vietnam, where the hydro companies, having invested in small hydro plants up and down the country's rivers, now pay those who live in and own the forests to protect the forests

because they know that, if they are cut down, there will be siltation and erosion, and that will eventually destroy the investment they have made in their hydro plants. It is a wonderful symbiotic relationship. That is a nature-based solution.

There are lots of examples of cities planting trees to protect the water tables that provide them with the water they need. In this country, as you know, water companies are paying land managers, farmers or whoever, to manage land in such a way that it slows the flow of water, which negates the need to build concrete and other expensive defences downstream. There are lots of examples of nature-based solutions working. The problem is that they are a hotchpotch, a bit here and a bit there. We do not have a concerted programme.

What we need to do, which I am pushing very hard within the FCDO, is that when we attempt to address a problem through our ODA we ask ourselves early on if there is a nature-based solution. Is there something we can do that would solve the problem while also solving a whole bunch of other problems at the same time? If so, that is what we should be spending our money on. If not, you do whatever you need to do. It is a no-brainer. In this day and age when there is not enough public money to go round, we need to make every investment work. We need value-for-money, and nature-based solutions almost always come out on top. The case is there.

A valuable piece of work was done, which the UK supported, in the form of the first coming together of the IPCC and IPBES—biodiversity on the one hand and climate change on the other—to deliver a joint proposal on where we need to go and what solutions we need to apply. That would not have been possible three or four years ago. I think we are moving in the right direction on this, but we have a very long way to go. That is one of the things the UK is desperately trying to do. As presidents of the COP, we have already moved the agenda quite considerably on the issue in international discussions, but we have a long, long way to go.

Lord Lilley: Minister, a few minutes ago you mentioned a commitment of about £3 billion a year, and earlier, in the context of our overseas development budget, you mentioned an £11 billion commitment, possibly over a different period, and possibly including some climate change. I do not know. As a former Treasury Minister, may I ask if we could have a little note saying how much this will cost the British taxpayer over the next few years?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: This is ODA, so there is no additional cost. It comes out of the 0.5%/0.7% commitment, so it is ODA money. This is a proportion of our ODA that will be spent on climate change. The £11.6 billion was international climate finance and most of the £3 billion commitment will come from international climate finance. It is not an additional sum; it is a proportion of the international climate finance, which in turn is a proportion of our ODA.

Outside ODA, there is some money—not a huge amount—for biodiversity work—for example, Darwin Plus and the investments we make to protect biodiversity in our overseas territories, not all of which are eligible for ODA. That money comes from a separate source, but that has always been the case. Those are relatively small sums, tiny compared with what other countries spend on their overseas territories. I hope that is something we can address. I am very happy to provide you with a note on the £11.6 billion commitment and the £3 billion, but I emphasise that it is not new money.

The Chair: Thank you for that, and for the offer of a note.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Minister, thank you very much for your engaged leadership in this area of policy in our House and in government. I want to go back to your interesting and positive conversation with Baroness Northover about sharing the benefits of genetic resources and digital sequencing information. This is a very politicised topic internationally and it is difficult to make progress on. My limited experience of those sorts of topics in government proved to me that the best place to address them was at summits and ministerial meetings. Was the issue raised at the G7 to take advantage of those leaders to try to resolve this and make some progress on it? The reason I ask is that I cannot find any reference to it in the communiqué. Was it a missed opportunity or a failure?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: I am afraid I do not know whether or not it was mentioned. One thing I will say before seeing whether Cheryl or Will can come in on it is that the issue, to generalise, is broadly a division between developed and developing countries, large and small, where the smaller and less advantaged countries feel that they can be taken advantage of. That is a big part of the problem. You talked about its being politicised, and that is really where the politics is.

The G7 is a collection of very powerful countries. Of the various issues that are of global importance, a number did not feature directly at the G7. There were issues around forests and deforestation where we felt that having that discussion among seven very powerful countries but without many of the smaller but important forested nations having a seat at the table would have sent the wrong message and would have been optically difficult. It is not that we do not consider those issues important. I think deforestation is one of the most important issues of all, but the fact of the membership of the G7 has a bearing on the issues that are discussed and those that are not discussed. Having said that, I do not know how DSI was discussed at G7. I will ask Cheryl or Will whether they can fill that gap.

Cheryl Case: Certainly on the G7 I can. We did not discuss DSI in the G7. We had a very full agenda, as you will have seen if you read the communiqué from the Climate and Environment Ministers and the nature compact. We intentionally did not talk about DSI because there are ongoing discussions and negotiations happening at the moment as part of the CBD. That is where the discussions are happening, because it is part

of the Nagoya protocol which sits under the CBD. We did not feel that we yet needed to escalate this to leader level. DSI discussions are very detailed and technical and are very much ongoing. We are having many conversations on it. There is a huge range of options as we go through this year where we can bring it to ministerial attention.

I have to admit that there are some things we probably would have talked about in the margins of the G7 meeting if we had been able to hold it in person, but we were not able to do that at the ministerial level. We had a virtual meeting, so we did not hold the many mini-laterals and bilaterals we normally have in the margins of those meetings. We did not put it on the agenda for the communiqué document itself or for leaders because we did not feel it was at that stage yet, as I said. We had many other issues, including 30by30, internationally and nationally, and mainstreaming biodiversity throughout economic and financial decision-making and across all policy, which we focused on instead. We did not pick it up there, but I assure you that discussions on it are ongoing.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, Cheryl Case and Will Lockhart. We appreciate your time. Minister, may I echo the comments of Lord Browne? We support your enthusiastic championing of this very important agenda. I now close the meeting. We will take a short break before moving on to our second session.