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Re Sir Patrick & Dame Nancy,

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2018 on the subject 'A global endeavour: the future of UK international research and innovation collaboration'. Following the Prime Minister's letter to you on 23 November, I am pleased to set out my response to your recommendations, and to explain the plans of my Department in more detail. I apologise for the delay in replying.

The UK must continue to be one of the best places in the world for research and innovation. That is why in our Industrial Strategy this Government committed to develop a new strategic approach to international research and innovation. Your letter and recommendations have been most helpful in informing the development of our International Research and Innovation Strategy. Turning to your recommendations in turn.

Recommendation 1: All relevant government departments should be involved in developing and implementing the UK's international research and innovation strategy to ensure it supports Government priorities.

Our Industrial Strategy set a vision for the UK to be the most innovative economy in the world by 2030. We must work closely together across government if we are to achieve this ambition.

As announced in the Spring Statement, in the coming months we will publish the International Research and Innovation Strategy. The strategy has been developed in consultation with other government departments, our delivery partners (including UK Research and Innovation and the National Academies), the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser network, the Devolved Administrations and the UK's Science and Innovation Network in our overseas missions.

To succeed in realising our vision and to deliver the strategy, we will need greater coherence in our engagement to make the most of all the levers that we have – from the excellence of our institutions and their people, our leadership on standards and intellectual property, our enabling funding and procurement routes, and our support for high-growth innovative businesses. We will need to work cooperatively with internal and external stakeholders, from our universities,

research organisations and innovative businesses and investors to help develop and implement a delivery plan to take forward the strategy's commitments.

We have set a number of priorities over the coming decades – aligned with our industrial, trade, diplomatic, security and aid strategies – from our Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges and their missions, our commitment to reach 2.4% of GDP on R&D across the whole economy by 2027 and to 3% in the longer term, to the Sustainable Development Goals and international agreements on climate action. The international reach of our research and innovation will make an important contribution to delivering the UK's ambitions and commitments in these areas.

Recommendation 2: Communicate a clear offer to international partners.

The developing International Research and Innovation Strategy is structured as a clear offer to international partners – from other governments, research organisations and universities, to innovative businesses and investors, through to individual researchers and entrepreneurs. The strategy will provide an excellent opportunity to market the strengths of the UK's research and innovation 'ecosystem', drawing on teams in our diplomatic missions – the Science and Innovation Network, Her Majesty's Trade Commissioners, our Energy, Economic and IP attachés networks, and the overseas offices of the Devolved Administrations and UK Research and Innovation. Through the marketing and delivery of the strategy we want to build on our world-leading reputation on regulation, standards and intellectual property, working closely with the British Standards Institution, the National Physical Laboratory and the Intellectual Property Office.

Recommendation 3: Develop a suite of mechanisms to support collaboration.

We need fit for purpose mechanisms that support global collaboration, that back up our bilateral science and innovation agreements, and support our cross-Government goals. We are clear that in seeking out opportunities for future international collaboration we should use excellence and impact as our guiding principles.

We are seeking a far-reaching relationship with the EU, and with individual member states, on science, research and innovation. We want to explore association to EU research and innovation programmes, including Horizon Europe and Euratom Research and Training, networks and infrastructure.

To complement the existing Official Development Assistance programmes, and to support collaboration with developed countries, UK Research and Innovation have made the first awards through the £110m Fund for International Collaboration. The awards made in January span new partnerships on crop breeding and soil health with the United States to work with South Korea on the diagnosis of dementia.

And through our ODA programmes, we are introducing new collaborative mechanisms. In January we announced £200m for 12 new interdisciplinary research hubs that will build new collaborations with researchers from around the world and ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of efforts to tackle global development challenges such preserving our oceans, averting flooding risk, ensuring gender equality, and protecting future cities.

We are supporting the flow of the best talent from across the world and encourage the international engagement of our researchers and innovators. We fully recognise that the strength of our universities, research organisations and businesses will increasingly rely on these globally-active and networked communities. For example, last year we announced £900 million for the new UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme to support early career researchers and innovators from across the UK and the world.

To support business collaborations, we are working through the UK's chair of EUREKA to facilitate greater opportunities for international business to business collaboration. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is also establishing a global network of 'Tech Hubs' to share expertise and best practice in digital technologies.

As part of the Chancellor's Spring Statement and to support the implementation of the International Research and Innovation Strategy, we announced that we would commission independent advice on our international collaboration frameworks. This work will be undertaken by Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Turing Institute. It will consider our funding mechanisms as set against our strategic goals, including the aims of the Industrial Strategy and in meeting our target of 2.4 per cent of GDP invested in R&D by 2027, and 3 per cent in the longer term.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that messages to highlight that the UK will always welcome global research and innovation talent are backed up by an immigration policy that supports this.

The UK will always welcome global research and innovation talent – the diversity of ideas and perspectives helps us achieve more in scientific and technological endeavours than we could alone.

The UK is a great place for science and innovation: with just 0.9 per cent of the global population, the UK accounts for 4.1 per cent of researchers and 15.2 per cent of the world's most highly-cited research articles.

The Government has been consistently clear that the UK is, and will continue to be, a place that welcomes talented scientists and researchers from across the globe to work and study here, including after the UK leaves the EU. We set out our plans for the UK's future immigration system in a White Paper published on 19 December. The future immigration system will come into effect in 2021 and we propose a number of measures to support international collaboration, including: removing the cap on skilled workers; removing the Resident Labour Market Test; and looking to expand the number of places under Tier 1 once EU nationals fall within its remit.

The Government is continuing to work closely with the research sector to ensure that our visa arrangements for international researchers are closely aligned to the sector's needs. The recent introduction of the UKRI-led Tier 5 Government Authorised Exchange Scheme is a result of that joint working – this will make it easier for Research Councils and similar organisations to bring researchers to the UK for up to two years. Additionally, last year we removed the requirement under Tier 2 for employers to undertake a Resident Labour Market Test where they are recruiting supernumerary researchers or members of established research teams.

Other recent changes to the non-EEA immigration system also demonstrate this commitment. For example, we are doubling of the number of Tier 1 Exceptional Talent visas, including for top global scientists, to 2,000 a year. This will enable internationally recognised scientists and researchers to apply for settlement after three years, instead of the usual five, and waiving our 180-day absences per year rule for settlement applications for those called to assist in a humanitarian or environmental crisis.

This spring, we are introducing two new immigration routes – Start-up and Innovator – which are designed to support people coming to the UK to establish innovative businesses. Applicants will be supported by endorsing bodies, streamlining the visa application process and reducing bureaucracy. Several organisations in the STEM sector have expressed an interest in

becoming endorsing bodies and we are confident these new routes will further enhance the support the immigration system provides to science and innovation.

These changes will help to underpin the UK's position as a hub for international collaboration and research excellence. People will continue to be able to come and live and work in the UK during the implementation period after the UK leaves the EU.

I would like to thank you again for your recommendations. I will send a copy of the International Research and Innovation Strategy as soon it has been published. The early impact of the Strategy will be in its wide dissemination both internationally and in the UK and I would welcome the support of Council members to help achieve that.

Yours es,
Chris

CHRIS SKIDMORE MP