Foreign & Commonwealth Office

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0392-17

Thank you for your email of 19 April 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide you with the following information in relation to the following statements made to the Select Committee on Environmental Audit, on 30th March 2004:

*1. One such effect is that the melting of ice which contains no salt and the effect of melting the ice on the Polar caps (and, **for example, the South Pole is now 40% as thick as it used to be**, so we are losing a lot of that ice.*

a. Does he still believe this is true – if so, please provide the evidence.

b. If not, please advise when he retracted this claim, and when he apologised to the Committee.
*2. Of course, in geological time centuries is quite sudden, so when we talk about temperatures rising to the point where the Greenland ice sheet will melt—the Greenland ice sheet has a large heat capacity which means that the process has a lot of inertia in it, so it will take some time. **The ice on the Antarctic landmass is considerably bigger and would probably take about 1,000 years. The ice on the Greenland ice sheet is a more difficult one; it may take 50 to 200 year**s*
a. Does he still believe this is true – if so, please provide the evidence.
b. If not, please advise when he retracted this claim, and when he apologised to the Committee

3. I will not spend too much time on this, but if we look back in time for the globe we probably have to go back 55 million years before we find carbon dioxide levels as high as we are now at, and, of course, our carbon dioxide levels are still rising. Fifty-five million years ago was a time when there was no ice on the earth; the Antarctic was the most habitable place for mammals, because it was the coolest place, and the rest of the earth was rather inhabitable because it was so hot. It is estimated that it was roughly 1,000 parts per million then, and the

important thing is that if we carry on business as usual we will hit 1,000 parts per million around the end of this century. So it seems to me that it is clear on a global and geological scale that climate change is the most serious problem we are faced with this century.

a. Does he believe that most of the Earth will be uninhabitable by 2100 or soon after, if CO2 reaches 1000 parts per million?
b. If not, does this not indicate that many factors affect the climate, and not just CO2?

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Sir David King retired from his role as Special Representative for Climate Change in March 2017 and we are unable to give his current opinions on the above. We have searched our records over the period that he held the position of Special Representative for Climate Change (September 2013 to March 2017) and have not found any communication with the Select Committee on Environmental Audit covering your questions 1 and 2.

However, I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to question 3 of your request. Under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. Sir David did clarify his position on your question 3 in oral evidence to the Energy and Climate Change Committee on 25 March 2014:

http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/energy-and-climate-change-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/uk-special-representative-for-climate-change/

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Yours sincerely,

Global Economic Issues Department