

Q121 Mr Boswell: My next question is something I asked our earlier witnesses about reputation more generally, but specifically about international subscriptions. If we are pulling out of international subscriptions is this going to be damaging to our reputation internationally in a way which will make us difficult to be partners in the future?

Professor Mason: It is part of our strategy to protect the major international subscriptions and we do that because we have a long term commitment to them and they are extremely valuable to the country, not only in terms of science but also in other ways and we are protecting them. **We are withdrawing from a couple of relatively minor commitments - minor in monetary terms - but what I look for in international partners for is me is people who tell it as it is.** We are being straight with our international partners. **We have notified them of our intention to try to negotiate a withdrawal from the Gemini programme.** We have told them that we do not believe that the current strategy for the ILC is the correct one and we cannot participate in that. **We are being very upfront and very direct. What would be unfortunate in terms of international reputation is if we try and pull the wool over people's eyes and not tell it as it is. Quite the contrary, we are telling it exactly as it is.**

Q122 Mr Boswell: Is it your judgment that any of these projects will fail on account of our withdrawal?

Professor Mason: In terms of the International Linear Collider you will be aware that the US has also withdrawn funding for the next year and I think this is a signal that we actually need to re-think the future of particle physics and find a more sustainable way to go onto the next stage. That is my own personal opinion. What happens to the ILC project is perhaps debatable, but I am pretty sure at some stage there will be a next generation Linear Collider. **In terms of Gemini all the indications are that there are other users who would wish to take up the slack that we leave and I emphasise again our decision to withdraw from Gemini is not that there is anything wrong with Gemini but we are involved in the European Southern Observatory as well. There are four eight metre telescopes in the southern hemisphere - Gemini provides a fifth - and in terms of our overall strategy I think it is clear to the Council that we have to give priority to ESO. I think we have made our rationale clear and I hope people respect us for being open and honest about it.**