

September 26, 2011

Mr. Chris Huhne, MP
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)
3 Whitehall Place London, UK
SW1A 2AW

RE: The Stratospheric Particle Injection for Climate Engineering (SPICE) project

Dear Secretary of State Huhne,

We are writing to express our concern about the SPICE research project, which is managed by the University of Bristol in collaboration with the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh, as well as military contractor Marshall Aerospace. The £1.6 million project has been funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), supported by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC). We are calling upon the UK government and the Research Councils involved to suspend the project. In particular, we believe the experiment planned to test equipment for injecting particles into the stratosphere with the aim of counteracting global warming through solar radiation management (SRM) should be cancelled.

This experiment could prove disruptive to international discussions on geoengineering ongoing at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) following the decision of the 10th Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan less than one year ago. (COP 10 Decision X/33 can be found here: <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12299> (paragraph 8w).) It is unacceptable for the UK government to sponsor – even chair – discussions at the CBD while simultaneously funding experiments and developing hardware for the deployment of stratospheric aerosols, one of the most controversial geoengineering technologies under discussion. This apparent conflict of interest will undermine the credibility of the UK, not only at the CBD, but also in other climate-related negotiations, notably at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

While the CBD decision does allow for small-scale experiments that meet certain conditions, it is unlikely the SPICE project meets the criteria as it cannot take place in a “controlled setting” (since the hose reaches one kilometer into the sky and is intended as a model for an apparatus that will be twenty times longer). The test cannot be justified by the need to gather specific scientific data (but is rather designed to test equipment). While the test would use water rather than particulates, its sole purpose is to engineer the hardware that would later allow chemicals to be injected into the stratosphere to reflect sunlight. To respect both the letter and the spirit of the CBD’s decision, and the follow-up consultations currently underway, the UK government and the research councils should confirm that they will not grant permission for, or fund, any other field trials of SRM equipment in the absence of an international consensus.

We believe that such research is a dangerous distraction from the real need: immediate and deep emissions cuts. Some of the global political and ecological dangers of stratospheric aerosol injection have been identified through modeling studies and examination of the impacts of sulphuric dust emitted by volcanoes. Those impacts include the potential for further damage to the ozone layer, disruption of rainfall, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions, and potentially threatening the food supplies of billions of people. Furthermore, emergent SRM technologies will leave high levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, worsen ocean acidification and condemn future generations to continue a high-risk, planetary-scale technological intervention that is also likely to increase the risk of climate-related international conflict. The involvement of organizations and/or corporations associated with the military – as is Marshall Aerospace – increases that risk.

If this experiment is allowed to go ahead, many governments of the global South and many civil society organizations will conclude that the UK is not negotiating in good faith to reduce emissions, but is instead preparing to proceed down an alternative, very high-risk technological path. We hope you will make clear that is not the case.

Sincerely yours,

Signatories viewable [HERE](#) (internet link)