



House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee

The Implications of Cuts to the BBC World Service

Sixth Report of Session 2010–11

Volume II

Additional written evidence

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The Foreign Affairs Committee

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List of additional written evidence

(published in Volume II on the Committee's website www.parliament.uk/facom)

	<i>Page</i>	
1	Gilberto Ferraz	Ev w1
2	A. Corinne Podger	Ev w1
3	Rosie Kaynak	Ev w2
4	Keith Perron	Ev w3
5	Jonathan Stoneman	Ev w4
6	Keith Somerville	Ev w5
7	Sir John Tusa	Ev w8
8	John Rowlett	Ev w10
9	Jacqueline Stainburn	Ev w10
10	Richard Hamilton	Ev w11
11	Elzbieta Rembowska	Ev w11
12	Ian Mitchell	Ev w11
13	Marc Starr	Ev w12
14	Andrew Bolton	Ev w12
15	Patrick Xavier	Ev w13
16	Ailsa Auchnie	Ev w13
17	Catherine Westcott	Ev w14
18	Caroline Driscoll	Ev w16
19	Rajesh Joshi, Rajesh Priyadarshi and Marianne Landzettel	Ev w16
20	Clem Osei	Ev w18
21	Sam Miller	Ev w18
22	The Kenya National Kiswahili Association (CHAKITA-Kenya)	Ev w19
23	Mike Fox	Ev w20
24	Kofi A. Annan	Ev w21
25	E. Geraldine Timlin MA	Ev w22
26	Nigel Margerison	Ev w22
27	Dennis Sewell	Ev w23
28	Voice of the Listener & Viewer	Ev w24
29	Kiyo Akasaka	Ev w26
30	Neville Harms	Ev w27
31	Martin Plaut	Ev w28
32	Graham Mytton	Ev w28
33	National Union of Journalists Parliamentary Group	Ev w29
34	Trish Flanagan	Ev w31
35	Ben Hartshorn	Ev w32
36	Naleen Kumar	Ev w32
37	Jorge da Paz Rodrigues	Ev w33
38	Marc Glinert	Ev w33
39	Mr Andrew Tyrie MP	Ev w33
40	Peter Carroll	Ev w34

Written evidence

Written evidence from Gilberto Ferraz
(Retired member of the World Service, in which served for 30 years)

PROPOSED CLOSING DOWN OF THE BBC PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE SERVICE

The announcement of the closure of the Portuguese Language Service to Africa is lamentable and wrong for the following reasons:

1. As fairly new and still developing democracies, aggravated by the fact of the prevailing illiteracy whose peoples very much depend on the easy accessibility of radio, in which the BBC Portuguese Language Service has been a very important source of independent news, to stop it now is a clear disservice to their own development;
2. Apart from that, it has been a long tradition for those peoples to depend on the BBC as their only source of news;
3. Considering the many different dialects, in which governments such as the Angolan one adopted the Portuguese language as a unifying factor, the BBC to stop its transmissions is not only a big mistake but also a sad departure from the traditional and long-standing as well as most appreciated British solidarity;
4. TRUST AND WILL BE GRATEFUL THAT YOU CONSIDER THESE IMPORTANT POINTS AND TAKE THE DUE ACTION AT THE ANNOUNCED COMMITTEE REVIEW OVER THE PROPOSED CLOSURES AT THE BBC WORLD SERVICE.

26 January 2011

Written evidence from Ms A. Corinne Podger

1. I am writing to urge a rethink of the closure of services at the BBC World Service. I am a former BBC World Service journalist and am now a senior journalist at ABC Radio Australia, a direct and deliberate competitor to the World Service in the Asia-Pacific region. While my loyalties are to those of my current employer, I worked at the BBC for many years and believe that it has a role to “export Britain” to this key region of the world.

2. I am opposed to the cuts in general, but would raise some concerns with regard to specific services facing cuts:

2(a) *Chinese service*

While China is widely seen as “the Asian giant” in economic terms, the vast majority of Chinese still live in straitened circumstances, and internet access is:

- (i) not easily accessible to many; and
- (ii) heavily censored.

Chinese people are very well aware of the fact that their country will soon eclipse the US in economic terms, and that their manufacturing sector is fuelling post-GFC economic survival around the world. To deprive the people of China, whose news is already heavily censored, of an external shortwave voice informing them of the benefits of democracy and the achievements of the West is to lose a crucial opportunity to educate a vast mass of people whose government already, to a certain extent, runs the affairs of other countries via trade. It is easy to forget China in Europe; having lived in both Australasia and Europe, I know this personally. However the Chinese are keenly aware of their rise to dominance while Europe struggles with recession and xenophobia.

2(b) *Hindi service*

India is equally en route to become one of the largest economies in the world. It is also a former British colony. India has always been a net exporter of people (most of whom are working class) to the United States, Canada, Australia, the Asia-Pacific (eg Fiji), and Africa. To communicate in Hindi is to reach a fifth of the world’s population within India, and tens of millions of Indian expats all over the world. It is the opportunity to communicate to these people the achievements of the West, and encourages them to maintain a cultural fondness for Britain.

2(c) *Indonesian service*

Indonesia is the world’s most populous Muslim country. I find it incredible that the BBC is building up its Arabic service, and failing to take account of Indonesia. Terrorism, if I may use that word, is already a scourge for Indonesia’s Muslims; witness the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2006. If the West is to communicate meaningfully with the Muslim world, Indonesia—and Bahasa Indonesian—MUST be part of that picture.

3. BBC WORLD SERVICE AND “EXPORTING BRITAIN”

I am from Australia. I lived in Britain from 1995–2006 and worked for the BBC World Service as a journalist for most of that time. I now live in Australia, where I work with the BBC World Service’s direct competitor in the region, ABC Radio Australia. So I am personally and professionally aware that Britain must make tough economic choices in these difficult times. To cut back the BBC World Service is absurd; the money saved is paltry in comparison to the benefits to be gained by maintaining the current service. As I write, the ABC is in the process of expansion—mimicking, I would add, the BBC with a new 24-hour cable television news channel. It also maintains Radio Australia, which is where I now work, and which has services in Mandarin Chinese, Indonesian, Vietnamese, French, Tok Pisin (from PNG) and Khmer. The suggestion that Radio Australia would wind up its Chinese or Indonesian services would be met with astonished laughter, because there is a clear understanding in Australia that China has kept the world from a repeat of the 1930s Depression, and that digging stuff out of the ground and selling it to the Chinese is keeping this country afloat economically. We are, to sum up, keenly aware of the influence of China, and the ABC has every intention, as I understand it, to maintain some form of Australian influence in return.

I would urge this parliamentary inquiry to remember that those who were alive during the independence era of the 1940s–60s are now into retirement. New generations—especially in Asia and the Pacific, where the median age in many countries is under 30—have no cultural memory of Britain. Many of these former colonies have no significant expat community in Britain; no grandmothers, no cousins, no friends. They are unlikely to visit or work there. Consequently they will take no more interest in the UK than, say, Portugal or Belize, unless they have a reason to do so. The BBC World Service IS THAT REASON. It brings British ideas, values, habits and interests to the world. To cut ties to 30 million people in increasingly influential countries (China, India, Indonesia) or indeed countries where democracy is under threat (Swahili and Portuguese-speaking regions of Africa) is a retrograde step of embarrassing proportions. It has taken the BBC decades to build its audience, and arguably the timing of its founding—coinciding as it did with the end of the colonial era—made the BBC World Service a soft-landing alternative to British domination; it replaced antipathy with sympathy—even nostalgia—in the hearts of millions. It is a great shame that a recession of a few years’ duration will cost Britain that influence. You could not put a price tag on restoring it, because once it is lost, it will be lost forever.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4(a) That the decision to suspend any services, especially those in Chinese, Hindi and Indonesian, be reversed as a matter of urgency.

4(b) That an impact study of the loss of any services be carried out in consultation with communities in those countries and with expat communities in key countries (eg the US) prior to the suspension of any services

4(c) That an impact study on the loss of British influence in countries affected by the World Service cuts be carried out in order to ascertain the economic and diplomatic cost to British influence abroad, prior to the implementation of any cuts. You need to be sure that you are getting value for money.

27 January 2011

Written evidence from Mrs Rosie Kaynak

RE: WORLD SERVICE CUTS

I am a journalism lecturer at a State University in Ankara Turkey, a country which houses an incredibly biased press and where a subtle and menacing Islamisation of the press is taking place. We rely on objective and impartial press, which I teach to my students. Two of my students are currently imprisoned without trial. There is very little right to protest here.

I argue that the BBC World Service, through its online and tailored, specific news offers clarity, understanding and accurate news to those whose lives are affected by the direct consequences of bias, corruption and partiality.

I have also worked training international embassy staff here, who value and credit the BBC World Service for its accuracy and impartial reporting. The BBC is a huge global brand, which adds enormous value to the country. Is it really that difficult to spend 0.5% of the annual budget to enhance and develop this brand internationally? Without the BBC World Service, the BBC global brand will diminish, and with it British status overseas. The BBC World Service acts as an invaluable soft diplomacy tool, that surely should continue to be funded by the Foreign Office.

Al Jazeera has recently expanded its operations here in Turkey—albeit a privately funded company, but one that spreads news and influences with its standpoint. It is important that the BBC brand of impartial news should not decrease globally.

I strongly believe to preserve the BBC’s global brand and influence internationally, that World Service newsgathering with a new, online and interactive output should continue to be funded by the Foreign Office.

The move to license fee funding is very shortsighted in both a business and democratic sense.

I welcome the answer to my points.

2 February 2011

Written evidence from Keith Perron

1. Opposition to the BBC World Service Cuts the Chinese Section.

(a) My name is Keith Perron a Canadian who has been based in Asia for the past 11 years. Eight of those years I was based in China. For the past 22 years I have worked in international broadcasting for stations like Radio Canada International, Monitor Radio News, China Radio International, Radio Netherlands Worldwide. I also own PCJ Media/Radio an international content provider. I'm now based in Taiwan.

2. Since 1989 there has been a major decline in international shortwave broadcasting to regions like North America, Europe and Australia. These cuts are understandable as in very developed countries people do have other options. But in the developing world SW is still used widely even for domestic broadcasting.

3. The idea of cutting the BBC World Service Chinese Section on shortwave is very misguided. I was located in China for over eight years, never during that time was I able to log onto the Chinese section of the BBC website. The only way I was able to tune in was on shortwave. Even the English website of the BBC World Service was blocked when very sensitive stories were reported on. A good example would be the case of human rights advocate Liu Xiaobo who was also offered the Nobel Peace Prize and has been under house arrest. During that time I went back to China for a few weeks and all BBC sites were blocked. The Chinese authorities step up jamming against the BBC and other international broadcasters. But the jamming was not very successful and the signal for both the English and Chinese programs was getting through.

4. There are a number of ways to get around the jamming. Many years ago international broadcasters came up with a way to get around jamming. These plans are still used today and are available online at the website for the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). These plans are what I used to listen to the BBC and other stations. The plans have also been translated in Chinese and are passed to listeners through underground channels.

5. Finding a SW receiver in China is easy. Tecsun who makes radios for Grundig and other brands also has their own brand radio. Receivers are cheap and are available in every electronic shop in the country. They range in price from 20USD to 100USD. Tecsun from their own sales figures sold nearly over 1 million sets in China alone. In China unlike other countries even domestic stations like China National Radio, and some of the provincial stations use SW to reach the audience. If you turn on a receiver in China you can get upwards to 40+ domestic stations using shortwave. The reason is simple roughly 30% of the country have access to the internet, and if they do websites like the BBC are blocked. So if they want to be informed about what is going on in the world and in China they tune to the BBC and others.

6. This week I heard Conservative MP Louise Bagshawe on Newshour say that no one listens to shortwave. I would invite her to come with me to Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Henan, Inner Mongolia and other areas to see for herself how many people listen to the BBC on shortwave. In the past I have seen over the years people from various governments come to China on "fact finding" tours on who listens to shortwave radio. And from my experience including once asked by the CBC to show them around, not at any point did they visit the rural areas where the vast majority of the population in China live.

7. Some of those in government talk about the internet as the saviour of international broadcasting. But my question is: If you have phone apps and put more content on the internet. But the internet is blocked by the Great Firewall. Who will listen? There are even many documented cases in areas of China where someone who managed to access the BBC website by using a proxy server was arrested by the Public Security Bureau (PSB Internal Security Police), for accessing the BBC and reading about human rights and other issues the Chinese Communist Party deem off limits to the population.

8. When I would tune to the BBC on shortwave because of having more than one frequency on air and off tuning my shortwave receiver I had no problem tuning in. Most time reception was just as clear as listening to a local AM station. (if you would like more on this please let me know)

9. I would like to include an anecdote. When the 2008 8.0 earthquake struck Sichuan I was asked by Radio Netherlands to go to the area to file a report. I had with me my portable Sangean ATS909 shortwave receiver. For five days I was in Wenchuan County one of the areas most devastated by the quake with a death toll of 65,000. At night while I was there I had a number of people that came to me to ask if I had a shortwave radio so they could listen to the BBC to find out what was happening with the relief efforts. The local media in the area was either off air, or reporting with heavy censorship. One evening I had 12 local villagers with me listening to the BBC to hear the latest news on the quake.

10. To end off. I do understand that the BBC World Service cuts are necessary, and that the BBC must look into the use of new technologies. But at the same time I urge the government to really think carefully at what they are doing. The BBC Chinese service is very important not just for the United Kingdom, but also to those around the world who still do not have access in their own countries to open media. I would suggest the British

Government continue with shortwave with multiple frequencies. The BBC World Service is one of the best assets the government has. New and old technologies must co-exist. It is very arrogant to think that the whole world can listen online.

27 January 2011

Written evidence from Jonathan Stoneman

WORLD SERVICE CUTS—THE EUROPEAN SERVICES

I wish to make some points specifically about the proposed closure of the Albanian, Macedonian and Serbian services. I write as a former editor of the Macedonian and Croatian Services 1998–2002 (Croatian was closed in 2005).

When the World Service closed 10 language services in 2005, to pay for Arabic Television, the principal argument for closing eight European services was that the countries which had joined the European Union had no further need of a BBC presence—Polish, Hungarian, Czech etc were all closed on that basis. Whatever people thought of that decision, it had a certain logic (though subsequent and current events in Hungary suggest that membership of the EU isn't necessarily a guarantee of good behaviour!)

Although Albania, Kosovo (where both Albanian and Serbian are official languages), Macedonia and Serbia are all candidates for membership of the European Union, they are all a long way from that goal. None yet has a fully functioning or free media. In all four places, the BBC retains a strong influence, measured not only in listener numbers, but in influence—the way the region's media pay attention to what the BBC says and how it says it. In the case of Albania the media take obvious sides—there is little middle ground. The announcement of the Albanian Service's closure came in a week of strife and violence on Tirana's streets—the BBC was practically the only radio outlet reporting these events in even-handed terms. The pro-government stations concentrate on the violence perpetrated against the police, while the anti-government stations focus on police brutality. In the other countries, similarly partisan programming means there is a place for professional and impartial reporting provided by the BBC.

In this part of the Balkans, the BBC is really the only respected broadcaster capable of bringing the rest of the world into people's living rooms. On the day of the bombing of Domodedovo Airport in Moscow, the BBC was the only Albanian language radio station willing and able to cover the story as a breaking number one headline.

In Kosovo—where I am writing this note, as a consultant to an EU-funded project—there are many unresolved problems that demand impartial reporting. The BBC would leave a void. The view of journalists here is that the BBC forces them to maintain their standards—they know their listeners also listen to the BBC, so they pay careful attention to stories and the most appropriate way of covering them. With the BBC gone, standards will inevitably fall.

One indication of the BBC's importance in Kosovo was the reporting of the announcement of the World Service cuts as headline news (item no.4 in the Kosovo running order all day). A radio director I was meeting on the day pointed to the headline on his station's website and called it a "terrible decision".

Although a secondary consideration, it is important to note that the circulation of bright young journalists through positions with the BBC in London and in the region contributes to capacity-building in the media. They are well trained in BBC standards, and learn a lot about the West, and about best practice in radio-journalism.

Although there is clearly huge financial pressures on the World Service, it is worth pointing out the relatively low costs of these three services. Although figures must have gone up since I was directly involved in the European Region of World Service, Macedonian is just five people with a budget of about £300,000. Serbian would be 12 people and about £800,000, and Albanian is of similar size and cost. In the context of £47 million, and 640 posts, these three services are small beer—but punch well above their weight in a continuously and notoriously unstable part of Europe.

If these three services were spared, someone will ask the inevitable question—where else would savings be made? If I were in Mr Horrocks' position (or Mr Hague's for that matter) I would look at the relatively large number of strategists and marketing experts whose work must be diminishing as the number of language services is reduced.

27 January 2011

Written evidence from Keith Somerville, Lecturer in Journalism, Brunel University

As part of its wider cuts in World Service programming, the BBC has announced that short-wave broadcasts to the Great Lakes (Rwanda and Burundi) and by the Swahili service will cease in March this year and all radio broadcasting in Portuguese to Africa would end.

- This will cut short-wave broadcasts in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi to countries still recovering from decades of violent ethnic conflict.
- They will still have FM broadcasts but these do not reach as many Rwandans as short-wave does.
- FM broadcasts are dependent on re-broadcasting from transmitters in Rwanda and Burundi. Respect for freedom of the media is in decline in Rwanda once more and in 2009 the Kagame government forced the BBC to stop FM transmission. It has banned critical newspapers and journalists and opposition politicians have been harassed and killed.
- Abolishing the Portuguese for Africa radio service takes away a reliable source of news in regions with poor domestic media.
- Cutting Swahili to FM only will reduce the breadth of radio coverage in east and central Africa and disadvantage rural over urban communities. The press is far from free and responsible in many parts of the region, notably Kenya.
- About the author: Keith Somerville is lecturer in Journalism at Brunel University, admissions tutor for its MA in international Journalism and convenor of the BA in Journalism. From 1980 to 2008 he worked for the BBC—eight years at Monitoring (chiefly concerned with monitoring African radio output); 17 years with the BBC World Service as a news programme producer and editor; and three years with the BBC College of Journalism. He is the author of a number of books on African conflicts and politics, in 2003 was requested to and submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on South Africa. He recently wrote a research paper on hate radio in Kenya published by the Montreal Institute for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights (<http://migs.concordia.ca/papers.html>) and is working on a book for Palgrave on Hate Radio (including Kenya and Rwanda).

1. On 26 January, the BBC announced that the World Service is to abolish five language services and cut short-wave broadcasts to other key areas of the world. The breadth and likely effect of these destructive measures was a shock even in these straightened and cuts-dominated times. The BBC is to cut all radio broadcasts in Portuguese for Africa Service (radio and online), and to end completely shortwave broadcasts to the Great Lakes and to the areas covered by the Swahili service.

2. Announcing the cuts, the BBC's Director of Global News, Peter Horrocks, said, "Our aims are to ensure that BBC World Service maintains and strengthens its reputation as the world's leading international news provider. The changes I'm announcing today are driven by two key things—the needs of our audiences and the limited resources that we now have available". However, in ending short-wave broadcasts to particularly vulnerable and unstable parts of east and central Africa, there appears to have been little attempt to retain as a priority the needs of very vulnerable audiences served by partial, easily bribed or intimidated media organizations and by journalists subject to a range of economic and security pressure. These pressures that have resulted not in only far from fair or balanced output and the closure of newspapers at key times (in Rwanda prior to the 2010 elections) but also in the deaths of journalists. There is such a vital link between the development of civil society, accountability, a free and developed media and sustained economic development, that surely funding should be made available from DFID's development budget to enable the BBC to sustain shortwave broadcasts to these particularly vulnerable areas.

3. Horrocks went on to say that, "the platform on which World Service historically has been strongest—short wave radio—is, as you'll all know, under great pressure as FM radio, TV and mobile phones offer compelling alternatives to audiences, even in less developed markets". I would not argue with much of that. But FM is far from a comprehensive service in parts of Africa—it has a shorter reach than shortwave, especially in rural areas which are home to the most information-poor parts of the WS audience in Africa. While, again in urban rather than rural areas, mobile and internet services are improving they are still in Africa lagging far behind the rest of the world and the poor have little or no access and would be disproportionately hit by the removal of short-wave.

4. Horrocks says that "reducing short wave distribution is not a risk free choice and the reductions are speedier than any of us would want. Nonetheless shortwave listening is in long-term decline and we believe this is a responsible and cost effective response to funding pressures". I cannot agree with that when it comes to central Africa, Rwanda in particular will suffer if reliant on FM. While FM signals are clearer and quality is better, it has limited range. It also has to be re-broadcast—there have to be transmitters and rebroadcasting stations near at hand to reach specific audiences, as FM does not travel well. If you reduce the broadcasts to Rwanda and Burundi in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi to FM, what of the masses of listeners in rural areas with poor or even no FM signals? FM and online alone are not enough for Africa where you need to cover large areas, where few (other than the elite) have regular or any online access, where literacy remains an issue?

5. It is just 17 years this April since the genocide. Who can forget the role played by hate radio—Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines—in inciting and assisting genocide? Rwanda has developed since then.

Hate radio has gone. But the media are not totally free in Rwanda. Freedom of speech and freedom to oppose Kagame are limited. His propensity to silence or crush opposition is growing. Rwandans need a clear, undistorted window on their society and the world. The BBC is bricking up one window by removing shortwave.

6. The BBC says that the FM transmission stations ensure BBC radio programmes can be heard across Rwanda, but they are not as comprehensive in coverage as shortwave, even if sound quality is improved. The BBC becomes reliant on three FM stations in Rwanda—in Kigali, Karongi and Butare. These are vulnerable if the Kagame government decides it does not like what is being broadcast. His policy towards journalists is becoming steadily tougher and he will not accept embarrassing or awkward questions at news conferences, often attacking journalists from critical media as like “Radio Mille Collines” or calling them “mercenaries” and “bums”. A number of leading journalists have been forced into exile by harassment and threats.

7. In 2009, and this is key when it comes to reducing broadcasts to FM only, local retransmission of the BBC was banned for a period in 2009 because of a programme about the genocide that was deemed by the Rwandan government to have strayed from the official line. The government constantly harasses two newspapers, Umuseso and Umuvugizi. On the grounds that the government accused them of running inaccurate or partial stories, they were banned for six months for “inciting public disorder” which prevented them from covering the elections in 2010. At the time of the banning of BBC retransmissions, it was reported that BBC had agreed to make rigorous checks in the editorial line of their Kinyarwanda programme commonly known as Gahuzamiryango “to meet the standards of the Rwandan government, before it is restored back on the Rwandan airwaves”, according to the Rwanda New Times. The Rwandan Information Minister said at the time that a BBC team led by the then head of the Africa region, Jerry Timmins, “agreed to make changes in the programme which the government says undermines the unity and reconciliation drive due to its ‘divisive and disparaging nature’”.

The Minister said at the time that the “BBC will put in writing that commitment to more sensitive reporting and then the government will examine it before the programme gets back on air in FM”. The Minister was said by New Times to have downplayed the fact that during the retransmission band, the Great Lakes programmes of the BBC were still available on shortwave—something that cannot happen after the end of shortwave transmissions in March. I have not been able to find a BBC account of this exchange between the government and the BBC.

8. The closure of the critical newspaper, Umuvugizi, was not enough and in June 2010 editor, Jean-Léonard Rugambage, was killed in front of his home in Kigali, the capital, by two gunmen. Soon after, a Rwandan general, Kayumba Nyamwasa, who had fled the country after disagreements with Kagame, was shot and seriously wounded in Johannesburg.

9. My conclusion and recommendation concerning the removal of shortwave broadcasting for the Great Lakes is that it is a bad decision that will leave the BBC vulnerable to pressure, cut the audience (particularly in rural areas) and, overall, will devalue what is a lifeline service to an unstable and vulnerable region poorly served by its own—therefore the decision to cut shortwave broadcasts to the Great Lakes should be reversed. There is a clear danger of putting more resources into Online, the Internet and mobile phones while stopping shortwave—the Mubarak regime in Egypt has just demonstrated how easy it is to censor these methods of communication. China is the prime example of course of blocking “modern” forms of broadcasting, when shortwave was less easily jammed, especially for rural populations. At one stage last year Russia simply cut off BBC in Russian FM transmissions when Medvedev/Putin didn’t like the content of the broadcasts. In addition, the present BBC policy of forcing much of its indigenous staff to return to their target areas eg sending staff back to Russia, Nigeria and Pakistan where inevitably they (and their families) will become increasingly susceptible to local pressures (as happens to journalists currently in Kenya and Rwanda, thus endangering their ability to report to and for the BBC without fear or favour. This danger is linked with the increasing switch to local rebroadcasting and should be resisted.

10. The Portuguese for Africa Service has existed for 71 years and reaches an audience of around 1.5 million listeners. They are chiefly in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome e Principe. To whom do these listeners now turn for balanced news, for a view of the world not coloured by the elites that own or determine the output of the media in their countries. Angola is still struggling to overcome the legacy of over 40 years of liberation and civil wars. The media are developing but the government is no great lover of free media or of what most would see as democracy. It is currently supporting Gbagbo’s attempts to defy the accepted election results in Cote d’Ivoire and cling to power. It is reported that the Dos Santos government is supplying arms to help Gbagbo resist any attempt to remove him. Will the Angolan media be willing or able to report this? If they do not, who will if there is not a balanced and impartial service like the BBC?

11. As a journalist I always want to believe the best of my colleagues in journalism. But Kenyan vernacular radio stations broadcast incitement to violence, ethnic hatred and inflammatory material in 2005, 2007–8 and 2010 during elections and referenda. The International Criminal Court has indicted one leading Kenya radio broadcaster—Joshua arap Sang—for his suspected role in organising and inciting violence in 2007–8. The indictment specifically mentions his radio broadcasts. Whether or not he is guilty—and it is not for me to judge him—the role of the media in Kenya is not always a positive one at times of conflict.

12. The BBC Swahili Service has always been there for people to turn to—a voice of detachment; a source of information so people can make decisions on the basis of the best and most reliable information. No media service is perfect. But the BBC World Service and its language services have always fought to be independent, balanced and fair. EU observers and other international media monitors found that the media were far from fair during the 2007–08 election and post-election violence in Kenya. Newspapers were partial, the state broadcaster was effectively the voice of the government and it is very clear that the media are politically controlled. There are no laws on transparency of media ownership in Kenya so it is impossible to find out definitively who owns which media. However, it is known that the Moi family owns the Standard group, while William Ruto (indicted by the ICC over the 2007–08 violence) owns Kass FM (the main Kalenjin-language radio station—accused in 2007–08 of broadcasting hate speech) while Uhuru Kenyatta (also indicted by the ICC) owns Kameme FM (the main Kikuyu radio station) and K24 TV.

13. Kenya has a growing media sector but it is politically dominated; journalists are subject to harassment, bribery and threats; and output is far from accurate, fair and balanced. The BBC Swahili service fills that gap left by the inadequacies of the local media. But without shortwave its ability to reach all Kenyan audiences (especially in rural areas) will be compromised and again the reliance on in-country rebroadcasting will render it vulnerable to political pressure.

14. Another key point concerning fair journalism is that the Swahili service broadcasts to a whole region where the war on terror is “hot”? It’s extraordinarily important to have proper coverage because there are renditions taking place and reported abuses, particularly against the Muslim population in east Africa. This is generating great anger there; if much of the media are either pro or anti-Muslim, polarisation will increase. The BBC plays a vital role in by-passing polarisation, its balanced reporting is critical both to counter exaggerated and hyperbolic reporting but also ensure that abuses are reported. The other human rights issue in the region relates to gay communities. For them to find fair coverage in the region is extraordinarily difficult but this is a role BBCWS can and does play. Death of gay rights activist David Kato in Uganda and the role of parts of the Ugandan media in inciting homophobic attacks shows the importance of the World Service not only for encouraging tolerance but also for ensuring proper coverage where local media might choose to cover it up or worsen tense situations and encourage abuses of rights.

15. The conclusion is surely that the tiny saving made by ending shortwave transmissions could render the whole service vulnerable to pressure and will again affect an audience which is poorly served by its own media at the times when it most needs unbiased, accurate information.

16. Take away a source of balanced and fair information and you endanger the future of civil society and democracy. It is surely one of Britain’s key foreign policy aims in Africa to support the building and strengthening of civil society and of political systems accountable to the population. The BBC World Service has always been a key instrument in achieving that—by enabling people to make decisions about their futures with the best information possible. Reduce the reach, effectiveness and integrity of the services and you damage a key tool in British foreign policy and disadvantage vulnerable audiences.

Signed:

Keith Somerville (author)

Elizabeth Blunt, MBE. BBC 1968–2009, West Africa correspondent 1986–90 and again in 1998. Retired 2006, returned to the BBC and went to Addis Ababa, then re-retired in 2009. IRIN correspondent in London and election observer in Togo and Sudan.

Ruth Hogarth

AHRC Research Programme Manager, Queen Mary University of London, currently doing research in Globalisation and Development. From 1987–2007 worked for BBC Global News as a producer, presenter, editor and manager.

Akwe Amosu

Director of Africa Advocacy, Open Society Foundations
BBC African Service producer, presenter and editor, 1989–2000
(in personal capacity)

Mike Popham, former Head of BBC World Service Topical Tapes and member of UK committee of the Commonwealth Journalists’ Association

Lara Pawson

Freelance journalist & writer

Worked for BBC World Service Africa for English service, 1997–2005, including two years as correspondent in Angola

Teresa Guerreiro

Journalist, former senior broadcast journalist with BBC WS English.
Lecturer, New York University in London

3 February 2011

Written evidence from Sir John Tusa

BBC WORLD SERVICE SUBMISSION TO COMMONS FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE SIR JOHN TUSA, MANAGING DIRECTOR BBC WORLD SERVICE, 1986–92

- The context
- Impact on the BBCWS of being caught between CSR cuts and BBC’s Licence Fee Settlement
- Culling the language services will deprive the BBCWS of its universal mission
- Effects of the cuts on the quality of journalism
- Impact of cuts on Britain’s standing as an international broadcaster
- Risks of moving away from short wave transmission
- The FCO’s short-term goals versus the long-term vision of BBCWS
- Inherent dangers for WS where both wider BBC and BBC Trust lack understanding of its role
- Recommendations: transfer of small proportion of DfID funds to make up WS deficit—flow of free information equals capacity-building
- Conclusion

1. THE CONTEXT

1.1 The BBC World Service faces an acute crisis because of the conjunction of two distinct but ultimately related factors: the reduction in FCO funding as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review; and the decision, as part of the BBC’s Licence Fee settlement, to transfer entire responsibility for BBCWS funding from the FCO to the BBC.

1.2 Each factor would create acute difficulties for the BBCWS on its own: FCO budget cuts will lead to the loss of language services, reduction of journalistic effort throughout the BBCWS, reduction of transmitter time, narrowing of the broadcasting footprint, and removal of the BBCWS service from some 30 million listeners around the world. Transferring the budget costs of BBCWS to the domestic licence fee is a historic organisational shift whose impact—editorially and in governance terms—has not been addressed or perhaps understood.

2. THE FCO FUNDING SETTLEMENT

2.1 To lose 20% of its funding and to face the loss of 25% of its staff must represent a severe settlement in anyone’s language. If the impact on a key national global institution is to be seriously addressed, such reductions cannot be brushed aside as “inevitable” and as “no worse than anybody else’s”. On this basis, there is no need for further questioning, no reason for an enquiry, no grounds for considering whether the impact of the reduction will damage the BBCWS’s ability to do its job. The “everyone is suffering” statement may be true but it does not constitute an argument; it shies away from serious examination of the impact of these reductions on an important part of the UK’s international voice.

2.2 In any review of BBCWS broadcasting it is too simplistic to identify the half dozen language services with the smallest audiences and see them as ripe for a painless cull. This approach has led to the loss of eleven language services in less than a decade. Some churn in the BBCWS foreign language portfolio is right and inevitable. But it must be accompanied by the awareness that the marginal cost of an additional language service is comparatively small and that international crises can—and do—occur in very small countries especially in a post-Cold War world. Besides, language services cannot be turned on and off like a tap in times of crisis. Audiences must be built up over time; opportunistic responses to crises are seen as politically motivated.

2.3 Constantly cutting foreign language broadcasts risks unbalancing the BBC’s voice to the global audience, tilting towards a position which seems to prioritise English-language communication over that of the “home” languages. Abolishing foreign language broadcasts sets BBCWS on a path where it only broadcasts to countries deemed to be in a present or potential state of crisis. Its long term success has been based on a universal mission to broadcast unbiased news and information to as many people as possible.

2.4 But the FCO’s budget reductions go further. The huge loss of 25% of BBCWS staff will have a significant and damaging effect on the quality and quantity of the journalism that has kept the BBCWS at the forefront of international broadcasting. That position has been won over the last quarter of a century by strengthening and expanding the journalism which originated at and from the BBCWS itself. The language services cannot revert to being slave-ish “translation services” for journalism originated elsewhere; World Service English cannot decline into a repeat network for BBC Radio Four favourites. That is not what the world wants or needs, that is not what they have come to expect, that is what they may end up getting: a significantly inferior product.

2.5 Since the Second World War BBCWS’s reputation as the trusted voice of international broadcasting has been recognised as preminent by audiences, other governments and other broadcasters. Is the government content to see the BBCWS take second place to the openly US Government directed Voice of America?

2.6 It is easy, too, to make assumptions about the most effective means of distributing the BBCWS's broadcasts. It has always used a variety of transmission methods—short wave as the great historic workhorse of international broadcasting; medium wave where it was available and suitable; FM re-broadcasting by local partners started in 1987 but very vulnerable to local restrictions. Digital broadcasting has many attractions but is limited in its availability; excessive reliance on it is as dangerous as assuming that short wave is past its sell-by date.

2.7 Over the years, the shortcomings of being part of the FCO's funding regime have become ever clearer and have looked increasingly out of date. While steering clear of editorial interference—BBCWS has always been “editorially independent”—the FCO found it hard to resist trying to impose its objectives—diplomatic and often short term—on those of BBCWS, which must be journalistic and long term. The FCO frequently urged the BBCWS to broadcast principally to “opinion formers”. BBCWS insisted that its audience was a large, often a mass audience. In the streets of Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen who are the opinion formers?

2.8 Fundamentally, the FCO has failed to appreciate that international broadcasting operates on a “long cycle” of influence rather than the “short cycle” demanded of many foreign policy objectives. The results of truthful international broadcasting may only be discovered a decade or more afterwards; foreign policies often look to a shorter time frame. The intellectual mismatch between FCO and BBCWS has revealed itself in the most dramatic way in the scale of the budget cuts loaded onto the BBCWS.

3. THE BBC TRUST

3.1 Historically, the BBC Governors exercised their responsibility for the BBCWS by including a former senior diplomat among their number. Some such as Sir Curtis Keeble were distinguished in their own right and effective as BBC Governors. The BBC Trust, either in its composition or its inclination, has shown no ability to understand BBCWS, to assess or value its place within the BBC, or to defend its interests in a funding scrap with the government. It has not continued the sub-committee set up by BBC Governors after John Birt removed BBCWS programme-making independence in 1995.

3.2 Once BBCWS becomes a full charge on the licence fee, the BBC Trust must raise its game, increase its competence and strengthen its composition to be able to respond to the significantly different issues that funding the BBCWS adds to its existing portfolio of responsibilities.

3.3 The same is true of the BBC's managerial systems and executive organisation. At present they are not constituted to include serious consideration of the BBCWS's needs, recognition of its specific differences, or ability to give them the weight they need. These shortcomings must be put right if the BBCWS's potential is to be allowed to flourish in its new governance structure within the BBC.

3.4 Unanswered questions about the BBCWS's new place in the BBC world include:

- 3.4.1 What residual influence will the FCO keep over BBCWS's broadcasting priorities?
- 3.4.2 Will BBCWS have a guaranteed ring-fenced budget within the overall licence fee?
- 3.4.3 How will the BBC Trust and BBC Management change their governance and membership to meet the new situation? Will the former special sub-committee to oversee BBCWS programming integrity be re-constituted?
- 3.4.4 How will the Chairman of the BBC Trust and the Director General of the BBC explain to the domestic licence payers that the arrival of BBCWS in the portfolio of services is not a convenient milch cow from which funding can be diverted to domestic programming but a service with its own legitimate claims on the licence fee budget?

4. THE ALTERNATIVE

4.1 There is a strong case to be made for passing a tiny part of the DfID budget to the BBCWS. When it comes to capacity building, gender awareness or the myriad social programmes on a micro scale funded by DfID, there can be no question but that these activities are at least as well if not better performed by BBCWS and on a far larger scale. Cutting the BBCWS and protecting DfID makes no sense and could be achieved without impacting on DfID core activities.

4.2 Transferring funds from DfID does not involve taking money from starving children; it is a question of keeping the flow of free information to millions of people, arguably the biggest contribution to capacity building conceivable.

4.3 The loss of, say, £50 million from the DfID budget will not make a significant even measurable impact on its activities. The restoration of the recent £50 million cut to BBCWS:

- 4.3.1 Keeps 30 million people in touch with free and truthful information;
- 4.3.2 Maintains the supply of independent authoritative and relevant BBCWS journalism to its global audience; and
- 4.3.3 Maintains short wave broadcasts to key audiences for whom it is the principle means of reception.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The budget reductions imposed on the BBCWS risk its reputation, its capacity to represent Britain internationally, its ability to serve a large, diverse and influential international audience.

5.2 Successful international broadcasting—and the BBCWS has been consistently the most successful exemplar of the practice—demands long term goals, a constant broadcasting presence, a sustained and trustworthy partnership. It cannot and should not be shackled by the belief that broadcasting can be micro-managed by concentrating on specific objectives in specific target areas.

5.3 The BBCWS's contribution to the projection of Britain's soft power should be valued and compared with equivalent expenditure by other departments working in similar areas of activity.

5.4 Only then can a balanced judgement be made of the necessary and suitable efficiency savings to be made of the BBCWS.

4 February 2011

Written evidence from John Rowlett

BBC WORLD SERVICE CUTS

I am writing to you to register my opposition to the planned cuts to one of our greatest institutions, namely the BBC World Service.

The World Service is an organisation that brings much prestige to the United Kingdom, and once lost will be difficult to recover. Its expertise and unbiased journalism are held in high esteem both abroad and at home.

In many parts of the world, the World Service on short wave transmission is the main, if not only method of populations gaining a true picture of both national and international events. The stated aim of only continuing with the internet is flawed in as much that many of the poorest people do not have access to the internet, and even if they did, many of these poor are also illiterate. This in its self would also be a moot point as many governments are attempting to establish methods of internet restriction.

The cuts will also affect the BBC Monitoring desk, a vital tool for gathering information and its analysis from around the world. This is a vital instrument in uncovering, amongst other things human rights abuse, disasters and corruption. This would not be possible without the specialised journalists in place.

Impartial observers around the world are baffled by this decision, and do not understand why we should wish to destroy the World Service.

I call on you to reconsider the proposed cuts by diverting a small fraction of the aid budget to the World Service.

7 February 2011

Written evidence from Jacqueline Stainburn

BBC WORLD SERVICE CUTS

I am writing to you to inform you why I am opposed to the proposed cuts for the BBC World Service.

I worked at the BBC World Service for 12 years and have a very strong memory of working on the Newsdesk when Nelson Mandela was released from prison, he personally thanked the BBC World Service. I was, and still am immensely proud of that moment and many others spent at my time there.

The World Service radio **continues** to provide a lifeline to people in times of crisis. Recent examples include the disasters in Pakistan and Haiti. By cutting services, the BBC will lose the ability to control broadcasting in times of emergencies. The host government will have the ability to shut down the World Service at times when it is most needed—whether by switching off the power, shutting down the internet, putting journalists in jail or just locking the doors.

The recent events in Egypt and the shutting down of the internet there are the latest example and show the need for **continued shortwave presence**. Many listeners in the Great Lakes region (including the Democratic Republic of Congo), Nepal, and rural India do not have internet access.

The BBC World Service has become the most popular and most trusted news service in the globe. The cuts will also affect the BBC World Service newsroom where the stories are written and translated. The changes will mean that a much more limited range and expertise of stories will be covered. The world is a volatile place. **The cuts simply must not go ahead.**

7 February 2011

Written evidence from Richard Hamilton

I am outraged, shocked and appalled by the proposed government cuts that are to be imposed on the BBC World Service. I have worked for the organisation since 1998 and have always been very proud of what it does in informing people across the globe by delivering truthful, accurate, impartial and vital news often to places where there is no independent media.

My grandfather worked for the German Language Service during the Second World War. I have reported as a correspondent from three different African countries and have been amazed and humbled by the esteem and affection in which the service is held. I can remember interviewing a poor market trader in a slum of Madagascar who thanked me and the BBC because in his words it gave people like him a voice. At the other end of the spectrum the Moroccan minister of religious affairs said as a child he'd been inspired by broadcasts from the Arabic service in the 1950s.

I'm sure you are aware of the function that the BBC World Service performs in allowing Britain to punch above its diplomatic weight. As Kofi Annan said in 1999, it is perhaps Britain's greatest gift to the world this century.

But now we are to lose 650 jobs and 30 million listeners in one fell swoop. My colleagues and I are nervously waiting to hear whether we will be made redundant or not. I hope that MPs will think again about the impact of these cuts which in my opinion are incredibly short sighted.

7 February 2011

Written evidence from Elzbieta Rembowska

I am writing to urge you to rethink the cuts you are intending to make to the World Service Funding. I worked for the BBC World Service for nearly 20 years in the Soviet Union, in the sub-continent, and on various occasions at events around the world. I know first-hand the importance of the service to the audience. Before that I learned from relations back in Poland how much the World Service was valued throughout the Eastern bloc. The cold war may be over but the need for straight honest broadcasting is not.

If you mention the BBC doors are opened—and this is because of what it stands for—the integrity of its news service—the social programming—the advocacy of human rights &c. It raises the standing of Britain throughout the world—to get rid of it—and there has to be a minimum size it can be reduced to before it self implodes—does great harm to an institution which is valued around the world. Furthermore I would draw your attention to the monies pouring into Chinese international radio—this is not when we should be taking out a service which is serving people's needs and promoting a vision of the world which values democracy, challenges corruption and promotes human rights.

Please stop the cuts—you can save a Service which does this country the world of good for a very small sum of money.

7 February 2011

Written evidence from Ian Mitchell

SUMMARY

- The BBC should not abandon medium and short wave transmissions in the way proposed.
- The BBC should retain a skeleton broadcast news service in the languages it proposes to drop.

MY BACKGROUND

I was a journalist employed by BBC Radio News—the domestic national newsroom—from 1967 until 1991 and was a BBC foreign correspondent in the 1970s. After retirement I was a consultant at the World Service newsroom. More recently I have worked for the Central Office of Information / Government News Network.

SUBMISSION

1. News provided by the BBC World Service comes into its own at times of crisis—the recent events in the Arab world are an excellent example. It is at these times that the BBC's reputation for accuracy and impartiality is most valued by listeners and viewers.

2. It is also at these times that governments in crisis areas cut links to the internet, block mobile phones and suspend relays of BBC programmes on local FM radio stations.

3. This leaves only direct broadcasting on short wave, medium wave or satellite as the means of reaching the audience.

4. In times of turmoil or when people are on the move, satellite reception can become impracticable. All that is then left is direct terrestrial transmission on short or medium wave.

5. In the poorer areas of the world, the only affordable means of receiving the BBC for many people is in any case a portable radio. (Even in the Australian state of Queensland during the recent weather emergency television viewers were advised to be ready to tune to short wave radio as the only reliable means of keeping in touch with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's news service).

6. I urge the Committee to ask the BBC not to abandon medium and short wave transmission in the way that is proposed but to maintain a skeleton service on these wavelengths.

7. Abandoning foreign language services is a short-sighted policy. It loses that part of the audience whose command of English is limited and these listeners and viewers then turn to rival, less reliable sources. It also disperses a team with background knowledge of the target area of great value to the rest of the BBC. More importantly, if the service needs to be reinstated as a result of sudden political changes in the target area it will be most difficult to re-constitute within a reasonable time frame.

8. I urge the committee to ask the BBC to retain a skeleton broadcast news service in the languages it proposes to drop so that audiences are not lost permanently. This would retain the capability of expanding the service in an emergency.

6 February 2011

Written evidence from Marc Starr

I am writing to protest and voice my utter dismay at the prospect of cutbacks to the BBC World Service.

It is one of the most commonly known facts about the WS that it delivers unbiased and balanced coverage in countries whose media are not quite as clear and free to say what they want or report things as they are. Even though I am not one of the beneficiaries of this, I feel that it is one of the greatest contributions to the world made by the United Kingdom and I urge you to see the bigger picture.

The BBC World Service is a beacon in the world and I'm absolutely horrified that entire language services are being taken off air—it may well be the case that a large proportion of the language-specific services are being retained, but tell someone who is losing their service that and I doubt you would observe them finding much solace or consolation in that.

In addition to this, on a personal level, the World Service has been something to be proud of on my travels. I am an interpreter and translator and one of the key experiences in my formation as a linguist was a year spent in Brazil in the 1994–95 academic year. The BBC World Service during that year was a link to home and although I took to life in northeast Brazil well, in the days before mobile phones I could afford and ready access to the Internet, in a place like the state of Paraíba, news from home was hard to come across and the World Service was a welcome distraction from absorption in the local culture. It kept my morale up and I really cannot underestimate the importance of this.

Even though now, if I were in the same position, I would have a range of newer technologies available to me, but radio is the one that is truly portable anywhere. It is something I could pick up in the middle of the most remote part of the Amazon, were I to go there, away from even the best mobile phone signals and internet connections. Radio is the only medium that suffers from none of the limitations that bind those other technologies.

I feel that the world would be a colder place without the embrace of this all-encompassing reassurance, for both British citizens and our counterparts in other countries, offered by a radio service such as the BBC World Service.

As a young teenager in the 80s, I remember a quote at the time from former PM Harold MacMillan, when he remarked that the Government was "Selling the family silver" in response to share issues. What is being proposed with the BBC World Service feels like we are about to pawn the family stereo system as well.

Please do not go ahead with this.

7 February 2011

Written evidence from Andrew Bolton, Senior Broadcast Journalist, Bush House

I am writing to you regarding the recently-announced cuts to the funding of the BBC World Service.

I hope you will be able to use your influence to oppose the cuts.

I'm sure you are already aware of much of the detail, so I need not repeat it here. Suffice to say that the World Service plays a vital role in representing Britain overseas, and—in my view—it is one of the few major British institutions we can still be proud of.

The cuts mean, among other things, that the World Service is throwing away an audience of about 30 million—quite ludicrous, I'm sure you agree.

As it happens, I have been a journalist at the World Service for more than 20 years, so you might think I am only writing to you because I have a vested interest.

In fact I'm writing because I sincerely hope you will be able to help prevent this wonderful British organisation from being flushed down the pan, and its place taken by—among others—the Americans and Chinese.

7 February 2011

Written evidence from Patrick Xavier

I attended the meeting in the House's Grand Committee Room last night, hosted by Views of the Listener and Viewer (VLV) with guest speaker Jeremy Hunt MP, Minister for Culture, Media and Sport.

My concern is threefold:

- (1) The Burmese Service. (My late parents grew up there and stayed until the Japanese invasion in 1942 forced them to walk out over the Himalayas.) That country is going through a series of trials which could be more bearable with accurate information/news from overseas.
- (2) I find it galling that three Balkan languages are to be deleted from the Service! That part of Europe, though quieter than heretofore, still is not at peace with itself.
- (3) Most importantly, I think that the Shortwave Service to the USA should be restarted, having ceased—with, I feel, spectacularly bad timing—in 2001. Granted that some big cities have BBC FM, and that ownership of a computer and internet access will allow access to BBCi etc, but that ownership isn't always affordable and can (perish the thought!) be cut off either locally or by a satellite problem. I can't think that it would be jammed, except by another power not wishing its own citizens access. Voice of America for Europe is by the way transmitted from, I believe, Lithuania. The Rt Hon William Hague, Foreign Secretary, might be glad of a further media outlet in the USA in view of his timely stand on the Israel/Palestine issue consequent upon the Egyptian political drama unfolding on our TV screens.

9 February 2011

Written evidence from Ailsa Auchnie, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC World Service Newsroom

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee regarding the swingeing cuts to the BBC World Service following the reductions in funding by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I have worked for the World Service for 24 years, but I am not writing because I might be one of the 650 people who will lose their jobs. I want to highlight the impact these cuts will have on the people we serve around the world. Not only will five language services go altogether—some of them in what's still a very volatile part of Europe—but seven more will be allowed to wither by existing only on news websites—including Russian and Mandarin Chinese. We will lose an estimated 30 million listeners in one fell swoop.

This will deprive millions of an essential source of unbiased, accurate information. The World Service has proved vital in crises. The Economist recalled recently that Mikhail Gorbachev used the BBC as his most reliable source of news when resisting the August 1991 coup. Aung San Suu Kyi says she listened to the BBC World Service every day during her detention by the Burmese military, and continues to listen to it daily since her release.

The World Service has been a lifeline for people in times of trouble. The loss of shortwave will deprive the poor in Africa and India of information that they cannot get anywhere else, since they have no access to the internet. The end to BBC Hindi radio means the loss of a regular weekly audience of more than 10 million, with a saving of less than half a million pounds. At a time when Britain is seeking closer engagement with India, the decision to cut off so many listeners is surely a mistake.

The Egyptian government's shutdown of the internet and mobile phone networks during the present uprising shows the strategic error of the BBC World Service's planned retreat from shortwave radio.

The World Service, while always adhering to strict standards of impartiality, is one of Britain's best ambassadors. It brings our nation an enormous amount of goodwill for a very small financial outlay. This is appreciated by the British public. In a Chatham House survey, the BBC was ranked equal to the British Armed forces as "serving Britain's interests around the world". This "soft power", which has been carefully nurtured over so many years, is now seriously under threat.

I understand that the Foreign Affairs Committee is holding an inquiry into the World Service cuts. I urge you to use your influence to help put a stop to them. It is not too late; the damage has not yet been done. Please take my observations into account in your inquiry.

The money needed for the World Service is not a huge sum. It can surely be found within the Foreign Office or other budgets that have not been cut disproportionately. Please help us stop the government doing irreversible

harm to the World Service, to people's right to impartial news, and to Britain's standing and influence in the world.

9 February 2011

Written evidence from Catherine Westcott, Senior Frequency Manager, BBC World Service

SUMMARY

- In my opinion, as someone who has worked at the World Service for many years, with a technical background and involvement with outside agencies and listeners, the proposed changes will radically change what the World Service is and does and who can access it.
- An internal BBC email (5) details my opinion on dangers of shortwave reduction.
- A flyer demonstrates why shortwave broadcasting is important.
- My recommendations: more funding must be found to reverse short wave cuts and serious consideration should be made about returning to direct Government funding for World Service.

ABOUT ME

1. I have worked for BBC World Service for over 20 years, beginning as a BBC trainee engineer and working on the maintenance of broadcast equipment and operational programme distribution in the Control Room. My role now involves overseeing the shortwave and medium wave scheduling, frequency management and distribution and also ensuring the needs of World Service and Global News operations (for whatever platform) are represented in national and international technical regulatory fora.

2. During my time at BBC World Service I have worked with many organisations external to the BBC and also been fortunate to communicate with and sometimes meet our listeners in places as diverse as Cuba, Pakistan, China, Nigeria and Uzbekistan. My work has been very varied: I have attended conferences at the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) both as BBC and also as part of the UK delegation, given presentations to NATO, trained Afghan journalists to monitor our shortwave broadcasts and chatted to refugees about the BBC cricket coverage.

MY SUBMISSION

3. I am shocked at the level and detail of the changes which have been proposed and believe that the World Service will not survive them. The changes, specifically the massive reductions to radio distribution will radically change what we do and who can access us. Our most important audiences, those who are not so easily represented in audience data and who do not have a voice than can be heard via social media, will be further dispossessed. I also think that it is disingenuous to suggest that our listeners will be more comfortable knowing that World Service is being paid for by the UK public via the licence fee. BBC World Service is consistently voted the most trusted of all the international broadcasters. Our international listeners do not appear to be uncomfortable with us being funded directly by the Government.

4. I submit 2 documents which may contain useful information. The first is a copy of an email I sent to our senior management in November outlining my concerns about any reductions to our short wave broadcasting (copied below). The second is a flyer I wrote in 2007 to help our representations at the ITU for extra short wave spectrum.¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More funding is required to reverse the reductions to short wave and retain the WS audience and reputation.
- Consider the long-term benefit to UK Government of returning the WS to direct Government funding.

5. EMAIL SENT TO WORLD SERVICE SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN NOVEMBER 2010

From: Cath Westcott
Sent: 08 November 2010 16:37
To: Peter Horrocks & Assistant; Jim Egan; Liliane Landor; Craig Oliver
Cc: Richard Porter & PA
Subject: Reduction of short wave broadcasting

Dear Peter, Jim, Liliane and Craig,

¹ Not printed.

I realise this is a time of tough choices about where savings can be made, but feel I would not be doing my job if I did not make you all aware of some of my concerns around the extent of the reduction to short wave broadcasting which may be being considered.

I recently wrote a paper for the World Service Management Board “Options for the future distribution and consumption of World Service radio” having spent six months working with Strategy looking at developments in radio globally and the distribution of broadcasting content generally. The conclusions I reached about digital terrestrial radio were based on an assessment that alternative delivery methods (satellite, internet via fixed or mobile) will not for the foreseeable future deliver a platform that equals that provided by broadcast (universal global access, reliability, limited influence of gatekeepers ie cost and control): “Although analogue will persist in some form in many areas, the evolution of digital radio around the world is likely to be the key to broadcast radio retaining any significant audience.” This assessment was based on the different audiences that can be reached by FM, medium wave and short wave broadcasting.

I can see that reductions in our shortwave delivery are necessary in the context of savings spread across all areas and to recognise the change in listening habits for some audiences. However, I want to caution against too drastic a cut across the board too soon, based what may be a short-term view of technical and political landscapes and current audience behaviour.

Latest audience figures still show the radio audience to be 90% of the any-platform WS audience and the shortwave audience to be 53% of the radio audience (47% of the any-platform audience). That still equates to a total of 85 million listeners on shortwave. As far as I am aware, it is not possible to find evidence of a global trend in short wave decline. There is measured decline in specific countries but these trends do not apply everywhere. Even taking any “best guess” overall rate of decline into consideration, short wave is likely to retain a significant audience for some years—unless most of our shortwave is closed down. In that case, how likely is it that other platforms can step in and deliver similar audience sizes and constituencies? Latest figures from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) show significant disparity in the growth of internet users between different global regions and this is even more pronounced with mobile broadband subscriptions. The World Summit on Information Technology (WSIS) conference has set targets to “bridge the digital divide” which recognise the role of more rational platforms (*“to ensure that all of the world’s population have access to television and radio services”* a target which *“specifically addresses the need to take advantage of broadcasting technologies to help countries move towards the information society”*).

Efforts to retain radio audiences have remained focussed on the development of FM broadcasting but opportunities here may have now plateau-ed. In this context, the potential offered by DRM on shortwave may offer us the only way to retain a significant audience. Crucially it also offers what analogue short wave does: access to audiences we cannot otherwise serve, freedom from political interference and licensing costs. In South Asia, recent losses in short wave audiences have followed increased availability of more attractive media alternatives. However, in India, the Government has given political and financial support to the digitalisation of radio broadcasting (seen as necessity), adopted DRM and tasked All India Radio to work on its growth and development. In this context, we could be only a few years away from a significant audience for digital radio (on short wave) in India.

Our current shortwave transmissions have a value over and above the use for the current analogue delivery because the facilities used are broadly the same for analogue or digital. It is possible to use the same frequencies; and the same sites, transmitters and arrays can be used once they have been enabled to carry digital rather than analogue transmissions. Short wave is regulated by co-ordination of frequency use and “ownership” is afforded by presence on air rather than any licensing. In common with other spectrum, valuable frequencies (low band in Europe, peak time in Africa, ME, S Asia, SE Asia) are keenly contested and usually snapped up when they become available. The removal of analogue transmissions where there may be a digital audience in future, could jeopardise any future opportunity for us.

A very significant reduction of our shortwave schedule very soon runs the risk of large audience losses which will be challenging to build back via other platforms and also of taking away a clear advantage which we currently hold in terms a future platform. Even given the situation we find ourselves in financially, I would suggest a cautious approach with short wave, where we ensure retention of both audiences and strategic analogue footholds for at least another one or two years until we can see a clearer picture of the development of DRM and ability of alternative platforms to replicate our current analogue radio audience. The BBC World Service has always been a leader in the delivery and content of international broadcasting and with this approach I think we could remain so.

8 February 2011

Written evidence from Caroline Driscoll

1. I feel passionately about the World Service, not just because my job could be at risk (I am a studio manager), but because having been out to work in Lagos and seeing people who live under corrugated iron and canvas by the side of the road, listening on little transistor radios to Focus on Africa (one of our programmes) I realise how vital it is. When things kicked off in Darfur, we regularly broadcast a programme called “Darfur Lifeline”—which it was. “New Media” is of absolutely no use to people like that, some have no access to electricity for power. Peter Horrocks (WS Head) admits that he is taking a risk with the foray into mobiles and online, but to people like that it is a waste of time. We are going to lose millions of listeners, not because they no longer want to listen, but because they will no longer be given that option.

2. In Delhi, Shortwave has 12 million listeners. News on FM is not allowed. This is the same for many regions. The Azeri service broadcasts in shortwave and only about 15% of their audience have access to the internet. Their FM frequencies were cut. These are just two examples of which there are many others, of the need to have free and fair broadcasting available to the masses in these and many other countries.

3. Talking with colleagues from Iran, Burma, etc and currently Egypt, I have got a good idea of how much these services are needed. When working in Syria, one is only too aware of how restricted the broadcasting is. It has been shown in Egypt that people are being deprived of honest news, by the fact that the Al Jazeera offices were torched, the WS Arabic service reporter was beaten up by the security service personnel and even the state broadcaster, mobile networks and the internet were shut down at one stage.

4. According to colleagues from some of the Eastern European regions, although allegedly they now have free media, they are apparently run by mafia-type organisations and by their very nature are not as free or transparent as they are supposed to be. People still rely on the World Service for news they can trust.

To summarise:

- In some regions, the World Service is vital for people to be able to access unbiased news and not state propaganda. It gives them access to free and fair broadcasting.
- To lose millions of listeners, not because they do not want to listen, but because they will be deprived of the service, is a fallacy, especially when to many, the World Service is the only trustworthy news source available to them via radio. If the state controls the mobile networks and the internet, they are not going to be able to access the “future media” so lauded by Peter Horrocks.
- The World Service is a respected piece of UK diplomacy across the world and a bastion of quality information distribution.

8 February 2011

Written evidence from Rajesh Joshi, Rajesh Priyadarshi and Marianne Landzettel

IMPACT OF THE PLANS TO END BBC WORLD SERVICE HINDI TRANSMISSIONS

ABOUT US

This submission was written by Rajesh Joshi, Special Correspondent/Presenter, BBC Hindi Service, Delhi. Rajesh Priyadarshi, Desk Editor, Hindi Service, London. Marianne Landzettel, South Asia Desk Editor, BBC World Service, London

SUMMARY

1. Under the current proposals the BBC Hindi Service will cease to broadcast on short-wave from 1 April. The BBC programmes in Hindi have at least 10 million dedicated listeners, most of them in rural and often very poor areas, who will lose an essential, if not their only source of unbiased, accurate information, especially in critical situations.

2. The BBC Hindi Service is cost effective. It produces two-and-a-half hours of programmes a day. Hindi short-wave transmission costs £130,000 p.a. that is just over half the annual salary of a BBC director of global news.

3. The BBC World Service in Hindi is a way for Britain to talk to more than 10 million Indians in their own language. Closing this effective channel of communication will come at a time when the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, states that the trade and commercial relations between Britain and India are of paramount importance.

4. Short-wave radio cannot be censored by Indian regulatory authorities. At its best the World Service can challenge corruption, expose human rights abuses and promote democratic values. In India only the BBC Hindi Service on short wave cannot be taken off air by the government—even at times of crisis.

5. FM broadcasts cannot replace BBC Hindi on short-wave because the Indian government does not permit news and current affairs programmes by international broadcasters on FM frequencies.

6. Computer use cannot replace BBC Hindi on short-wave: Most of the 10 million listeners in India live in rural and often remote areas and have no regular access to a computer. Computers in rural areas—to the extent they do exist—usually are very old and the internet can only be accessed through extremely slow dial up connections, far too slow to access websites with pictures and completely unsuitable for audio or video content.

Who listens to BBC Hindi short-wave radio?

7. Millions in India listen to (sometimes) crackly short-wave broadcasts for one good reason: It's the only non-commercial, balanced, global and unregulated broadcast available in India. Politicians and other opinion leaders value this quality. India's main opposition party's spokesman, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, called the closure "unfortunate" because the service has "major impact on India's politics". (Asian Age, 27 January 2011) <http://www.asianage.com/india/after-60-yrs-bbc-shut-its-hindi-service-294>

8. People living in remote areas or in troubled regions see BBC Hindi radio as nothing less than a lifeline service and since the announcement of the cut of the service was made they have told us so:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/hindi/multimedia/2011/02/110204_indiabol_audio.shtml

Eg Anil from Faridabad: *"There may be various television channels who telecast live pictures but the BBC Hindi coverage is different. I will give you an example: when an Indian airplane was hijacked in 1999 and taken to Kandahar, all channels covered it but I still remember it that we got the true picture from the BBC Hindi. I wonder what will happen to us from 1 April!"*

9. In Kashmir or in Maoist controlled jungles of Indian states like Chattisgarh army officers and rebels listen to the BBC Hindi service (not All India Radio) as the only trustworthy source of information. (*"After dinner, I unzip my sleeping bag. It's a strange intrusive sound, the big zip. Someone puts on the radio. BBC Hindi service. The Church of England has withdrawn its funds from Vedanta's Niyamgiri project, citing environmental degradation and rights violations of the Dongria Kondh tribe. I can hear cowbells, snuffling, shuffling, and cattle-farting. All's well with the world. My eyes close."* Quote from Arundhati Roy's piece in Outlook magazine: 29 March 2010. <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?264738>)

Many Indians remember that the Hindi service more than once has been a life line—for example during communal riots in 1991–92 during the Ayodhya dispute: "We were living in the Walled City, the whole town was under curfew, and had been handed over to the army. BBC was our only link with the world outside" (A listener quoted in Outlook magazine: 14 Feb 2011 <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?270321>)

10. Millions of Indians connect to Britain and its values through the BBC Hindi Service. The influence that the BBC enjoys across India is deeply rooted and long-standing. In news and current affairs the BBC is the biggest and most respected name in India. The BBC Hindi Service continues to play a crucial role in reinforcing the value of the BBC as a brand as it has for generations of Indians. Their trust in the Hindi service and loyalty to it lets them naturally switch to BBC English (on all its platforms) once they are ready to do so. Or as a popular saying has it: Even those who do not know the A B C know the B B C. <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2011/01/30/india-britain-losing-its-voice/>

THE IMPACT OF THE SHORT-WAVE CLOSURE IN INDIA

11. The closure of short-wave transmission means that 10 million people lose access to an essential source of unbiased, accurate information, especially in critical situations for a saving of just £600,000.

12. Closure means "no news" for the millions who depended on the short-wave radio service.

- People in remote areas or conflict zones where there is no electricity.
- People in rural areas where power cuts can last for hours and even days: A listener says he travels 16 km to the nearest town to get his mobile phone recharged as there is no electricity in his village in Rajasthan (BBC India Bol (interactive phone-in programme on 01.02.2011); short-wave receivers work with readily available batteries.
- Poor people, who come together in groups to listen to the BBC Hindi programmes via a short-wave radio that is someone's prized possession. (Outlook link see above—and <http://www.eurasiareview.com/analysis/closure-of-bbc-radio-service-information-era-tragedy-05022011/>).
- Illiterate people to whom websites are of little use.
- Young people in rural India, going to school or college, listen to BBC Hindi in order to prepare for competitive exams. They are the future leaders of India.

BBC services that are only accessible via the internet are not an option for any of the above groups.

13. The closure betrays dedicated listeners, runs counter to geopolitical trends, and is destroying trust in the BBC as a British brand in an important country like India. BBC's Delhi office has been flooded with letters and inundated with phone calls of listeners expressing their deep disappointment and often desperation.

14. The Hindi service has a wide network of reporters across India. Their output is vital to **all** BBC output and across platforms:

- They file news stories.
- They verify wire copy—so nothing goes on air in the World Service that has not been properly sourced.
- They provide actuality, pictures and videos.
- Most of them are bi-lingual and file in English as well.
- They facilitate interviews.
- And if there is “breaking news” from India, chances are that a journalist in the Hindi service has filed the first piece of copy ahead of the wire services.

It will be felt across the BBC output when this precious source of information is lost or greatly diminished. In particular at a time when news agencies are reducing their network of stringers and are only operating offices in cities like Delhi and Mumbai.

If the BBC in future has little news about and from India it's not because it's not happening!

15. The decision to close down Hindi short-wave broadcasts is perceived by decision makers in India as waning of British influence—in India and around the world. The MP Chandan Mitra is one of those who voiced this opinion in a newspaper article (<http://www.dailypioneer.com/314004/Along-with-an-era-an-illusion-too-ends.html>). After Prime Minister David Cameron travelled to India to directly appeal to Indian businesses, the cuts mean that a vital line of communication is severed and the BBC as a valued and trusted British brand is irreversibly damaged.

16. With the closure of BBC Hindi radio on short-wave, Britain stands to lose goodwill among millions of people in India, earned over more than six decades through impartiality and fairness.

...AND THE WAY FORWARD

17. We urge the government to think again about the damaging proposals inflicted on the BBC World Service and the disproportionate effect this has on BBC Hindi: the loss of 10 million listeners for savings of a mere £600,000.

Foreign Secretary William Hague announced he is allocating £58.5 million of Foreign Office spending in the coming year “for the support of democratic values, human rights and British diplomatic influence overseas”. Perhaps some of this money could be used to keep the BBC Hindi Service on air.

8 February 2011

Written evidence from Clem Osei

I am a 65yr old physician, born and raised in West Africa and practising in the US. I have listened to the BBC since age 5/6 and so you can surmise that it has helped shape my world view. This goes for a lot of people in remote places in the world. A decision to decimate the service in the extent outlined is very short sighted since, the BBC World Service, in my view, represents a great investment of Britain's foreign policy money! You don't necessarily have to cut off your nose to spite your face!

9 February 2011

Written evidence from Sam Miller

INTRODUCTION

- My name is Sam Miller. I am a former manager at the BBC World Service who now works as a journalist and writer in India.
- I have specialist knowledge of the Indian media market, and have travelled very widely throughout India over the last five years.
- I deplore the decision to cut the funding of World Service at a time when “soft power” is increasingly recognised as a hugely effective means of diplomacy and with few of the risks associated with more heavy-handed foreign policy interventions.
- More specifically I deplore the decision to cut BBC Hindi service radio with its current audience of 10 million, saving just £750,000 p.a., at a time when British foreign policy is emphasising a wider and deeper engagement at all levels with India.

ARGUMENT

1. I have spent much of the last five years travelling around India, training Indian journalists and working on an all-India guidebook. During this period I met many listeners to the BBC Hindi service radio.

2. In the early 1990s I was a BBC correspondent in Delhi and from 1997 to 2004 I was managing editor, South Asia at BBC World Service. I am the author of *Delhi: Adventures in a Megacity* which was published in 2009 in India, the UK and the USA.

3. Despite the explosive growth of TV in urban India over the last decade, large sections of the Indian population remain poorly served by the media. The more than 10 million regular listeners to Hindi broadcasts of the BBC are largely drawn from these sections.

4. Among the key sections of the population with a much higher than average audience to Hindi radio programming are those who do not have easy access to TV sets, TV signals or a regular electricity supply.

5. These include Indian armed forces and paramilitaries working in sensitive locations, student hostels, people preparing for Indian administrative service entrance exams—and the Hindi broadcasts have a special importance for a wide range of people who are travelling, including journalists, bureaucrats and politicians.

6. The BBC Hindi programmes also reach large numbers of listeners in areas affected by Maoist-inspired violence in central India. This violence was described by the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as the most serious threat facing his country. Former BBC listeners are likely to switch to other foreign radio stations broadcasting in Hindi—of which the most important are Radio China International and, among Muslim listeners, Voice of Iran.

7. The only domestic radio competition to the BBC outside the cities is the state-controlled All India Radio which has a very low reputation for its news and current affairs, and is seen as a government mouthpiece. BBC Hindi radio's reputation is almost entirely based on its unbiased coverage of news and current affairs.

8. Elsewhere, BBC audiences have been encouraged to migrate to newer media technologies. The nature of these cuts for Hindi radio means they will not have an opportunity to do so. The listeners affected, who listen on shortwave, do not have reliable Internet or TV services, and therefore will not be able to access the BBC any longer—at all.

9. The BBC's name and reputation in Hindi has been built up over more than 50 years. The decision to cut the service to provide savings of £750K p.a. will entail throwing away, overnight, the benefits of these 50 years of investments.

10. The existence of BBC Hindi broadcasts also gives the BBC's English-language broadcasts a depth and access that they would otherwise not have. Politicians—particularly from the Hindi-speaking north—know and interact most with the BBC through the Hindi service. Hindi service radio had a wide range of local part-time correspondents and information suppliers who also provide critical inputs to the rest of the BBC.

11. The closure of Hindi service radio would be a major blow to the WS service as whole, reducing its audience, instantaneously, by more than 10 million.

12. Overall, it is appropriate that the BBC World Service be held accountable for the decisions it makes and priorities it sets forth. And these will, on occasion, involve a reprioritisation which involves the closing of less-effective services. However, effective services with large audiences in places which are focus areas for British foreign policy should not be candidates for closure.

13. Furthermore, there is case to be made for actually increasing the World Service grant in a period of austerity, since it provides more cost-effective “soft power” engagements, than often risky resource-heavy larger-scale diplomatic interventions.

9 February 2011

Written evidence from The Kenya National Kiswahili Association (CHAKITA-Kenya)

PETITION TO UK PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: WORLD SERVICE CUTS

The National Kiswahili Association (CHAKITA) is disturbed by the impending action to cut funding to BBC and in the process deny citizens of Eastern and Central Africa access to critical political, cultural, social and technological information. In certain parts of the region, BBC is the only source of reliable and critical information. We urge the British Parliament to consider increased funding to BBC, not its reduction. Farmers and workers, who speak Kiswahili and other African languages now being targeted for marginalization rely on the BBC for information on environment, health and agriculture. Cutting support will deny them of their right to know.

- (1) The 2008 post-election violence in Kenya challenged in fundamental ways the country's national identity. As a geographical space, the nation-state was put in jeopardy and risked fragmentation. Young people, angry and disappointed at the declaration of contested presidential results by the Electoral Commission of Kenya, suddenly rose against their neighbors who had exercised their constitutional right to vote for a candidate of their choice. The fundamental right to life was temporarily suspended in certain parts of the country. The BBC Swahili Service was a critical source of information on Kenya.

- (2) Africa is endowed with abundant national resources. However, the continent's future economic growth will depend mainly on its labour skills and its ability to accelerate a demographic transition. Also, the continent will require to invest in people in order to promote their individual development. In order to achieve these, we need education, health, flexibility and a certain amount of economic security. But in the context of HIV and AIDS, war and conflict, drought, urbanization, unemployment, and massive poverty, the situation does look grim. Yet by focusing on protection against vulnerability, Africa can solve its crisis, and language with the right and balanced content can play a major role towards this end. In view of the dismal levels of literacy, it is becoming quite important to use African languages, such as Kiswahili, as engines of development can help solve the problem. African languages might open possibilities for the bulk of the people to be engaged in productive labour, and participate in politics and economic activities. Regional languages could be used to bolster cross-border trade, widen access to services especially for the rural people and increase community involvement in construction, maintenance and management of the infrastructure. The BBC should continue being part of this process of transformation. It is indeed the responsibility of Parliamentarians to show their sensitivity to Africa by voting against the cuts on BBC broadcasts.
- (3) The link between language and development cannot be ignored. This is because language is more than a means for the transmission of information. It is also a tool for creativity, innovation, affinity and solidarity. By using a language such as Kiswahili in radio broadcasts, we increase public participation, facilitate affirmative action, broaden decision making processes, build on cultural systems and ensure many Africans are enlisted for African development. Thus within the context of seeking a path to greater development by enlarging avenues for working directly with communities, African languages should be emphasized and modernized as engines of development. The BBC can be key in that process through targeted broadcasts. It is not enough to talk to the elite; reaching rural areas is of paramount importance.
- (4) There is no doubt that Africa is undergoing tremendous changes at the political level. A range of opportunities are now available for popular participation in politics, accountability of leaders, openness and transparency in the conduct of national affairs, and the pursuit of justice and fairness for all. In pursuing national integration across ethnic lines and between socio-economic classes, responsible journalism is required. BBC has played that role effectively over the years and needs to continue doing so. The station commands respect among audiences and is viewed as reliable.
- (5) Finally, the growth of communication technology—internet, mobile phones, and satellite networks—have truly compressed time and space and opened opportunities for multiple voices to be heard. We are witnessing the emergence of online communities brought together on the internet by convergences of politics, ethnicity, gender, professional duty and shared social concerns. Communities are getting closer to the sources of information and are more informed than a decade ago. The entertainment and media industry are influencing culture and creativity in fundamental ways but we are also experiencing multilingual internet sites and radio programming in local languages. Quite often we hear the voices of rural farmers on BBC commenting on local and global events. We would like to continue hearing these voices.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE UK PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

1. Do not cut Kiswahili Broadcasts because of their importance to Africa.
2. Increase funding for World Service.
3. Support the right of all people to access information, especially in Africa where literacy levels are still low.

We urge that no cuts be made with regard to broadcasts in African languages, especially Kiswahili.

Prof. Kimani Njogu, Ph.D. (Yale)
Chairman
Kenya National Kiswahili Association
NAIROBI

10 February 2011

Written evidence from Mike Fox, BBC World Service English newsroom

- The World Service is valued for promoting the UK to the world.
- This role is threatened by these proposals.
- Especially the withdrawal from Balkan languages.
- And the loss of radio broadcasts in many other languages.
- Wrong to think should withdraw from information-rich developing countries.

- Reduce cuts as part of strategic reassessment of World Service's importance.

Biography: I am a senior broadcast journalist working in the BBC World Service English newsroom. I've been a member of staff since 1995, and have been an output editor on Newshour and The World Today, as well as working as a correspondent in North America reporting on attacks there in 2001. I have also twice worked in our audience research department.

STATEMENT

The value of the BBC World Service in promoting Britain abroad is widely accepted. MPs from all parties and indeed the current Foreign Secretary have often praised the organisation—many have described it as the cheapest and most effective ambassadorial service, one that is unique to this country. The walls of Bush House used to be decorated with pictures of politicians, eminent business leaders and celebrities describing how the service provides them with vital news, and a lifeline where information is often hard to come by.

It seems those behind these proposals have forgotten that heritage and the role which the World Service plays for the UK. Ever since I've worked here the World Service has been making efficiency savings year on year, not infrequently at 2% or 3% each year. In the recent past these have led to significant losses, not least the Thai service, just months before the country's military coup. There is no surplus left to cut, which is why these savings will have such a huge impact on what we do.

In effect we are continuing to withdraw from providing a broad-based language service—it seems especially misguided to be pulling out of the Balkans altogether, just when other news organisations such as al-Jazeera are opening language services there.

The withdrawal from radio broadcasts in many other languages is also a strategic error—we may have small audiences in some and suffer jamming in others, but when there's a crisis and information is much scarcer, then our radio broadcasts would provide a vital service at a vital time—as seen in countries like Burma and Afghanistan where information is scarce, and indeed during the current Egypt crisis where broadcasting remains vital as the internet service is cut by the government there. And in India we still have a large rural audience which closely follows world and regional developments, where the loss of the Hindi service will be keenly felt.

Pound for pound, the World Service is one of the most effective arms of government spending. The total budget is tiny compared to many other departments. It and the BBC are facing swingeing cuts which seem to have been drawn up all too hastily.

I call on the committee and the government to reduce these cuts as part of a proper re-evaluation of the importance of the World Service.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Kofi A. Annan

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FOR BBC WORLD SERVICE

To WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The BBC World Service is a subject close to my heart. I noted once before that, for millions of people across the world, it has been a way of cutting through the veil of tyranny to provide uncensored news. In the late 1990's, I described it as “perhaps Britain's greatest gift to the world this century”.

The BBC, like many government-funded organisations around the world, is making sweeping cuts at a time of international austerity. I fear this could have a devastating impact. In particular, the cutting—at short notice—of short wave broadcasts in Hindi, in Swahili, and to the Great Lakes of Africa will mean that millions of people will no longer have access to balanced, fair, independent news and information. For many communities around the world, BBC short wave broadcasts in their own language are a lifeline, a window to the outside world, an opportunity to learn and develop.

The unparalleled reputation of the World Service rests on three main pillars; accuracy, impartiality and accessibility. To remove any one of these is to undermine the whole structure—and its crucial service to more than 180 million people around the globe.

As a strong supporter of the BBC World Service, particularly in remote regions, I hope you will do everything possible to maintain this service and continue this public good.

Kofi A. Annan
United Nations Secretary-General (1997–2006)

10 February 2011

Written evidence from E. Geraldine Timlin MA

I am a teacher of English and literacy in an inner London college of further education, with students from war zones and countries where political oppression robs people of their basic human rights—especially freedom of speech. The economic and humanitarian case for World Service Drama’s continued existence is overwhelming. The BBC World Service Drama provides a voice for those who need to believe there is hope of change and that there are others who share their situation. Much is made of the term “globalization” but rather than emphasizing the global community, it is linked with marketplace economics, filtered through multinational channels with profit as its aim.

I submit that:

- axing BBC World Service Drama will destroy the opportunity to share in the international literary landscape;
- the loss will create a major gap between those literary works deemed suitable for Radio 3 or Radio 4’s target audience and those deemed for an international audience only (e.g. productions labelled “world-centric”);
- cultural diversity is poorly represented in mainstream radio drama;
- drama provides the possibility to express ideas that are politically subversive, that may be socially taboo, and enable communication between different life experiences and realities;
- the BBC World Service Drama is an iconic world heritage;
- there is no viable substitute for the BBC World Service Drama if it is axed;
- as a displaced person myself, and a traveller to many countries, the BBC World Service Drama has always been my link to a sense of a global family; and
- I implore all concerned not to axe this service and passionately concur that the “BBC World Service Drama has such an international strategic role in the advancement of the literary work from more culturally diversified experiences that its existence should be ensured and ring fenced by the British Government”.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Nigel Margerison, Assistant Editor, Bush Newsroom, BBC World Service

This is an open letter to the head of the BBC, Mark Thompson which we have sent to him today (Friday 11 February) and we have also sent to Ariel, the staff magazine and to you, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee to indicate how angry we are at the cuts to such an important British institution.

We are the six Assistant Editors in the Bush newsroom with line management responsibilities for many of the journalists who work there and are in charge of the bulletins which have a listenership of tens of millions of people every week. We decide the headlines, which stories should be written and the way they should be told, liaising constantly with newsgathering and through them the correspondents in the field. Between us we have over a century of news experience, most of it served in Bush House.

We would like to express our dismay at the savage cuts to the World Service and the closure or part closure of important language services which appear to have been sacrificed for political expediency and find it particularly ironic that you should call the process of cuts in the BBC, “Delivering Quality First”. Cuts to the World Service correspondents’ unit, to popular news programmes such as Europe Today, to newsgathering and a reduction by a quarter in the number of staff in World Service News and Current Affairs is hardly delivering quality.

As we have seen in the press there is much fondness and respect for World Service and the incalculable benefits our voice gives to democracy and Britain’s international standing in the world. That support should have been mobilised and the cuts fought.

We intend to keep trying to put quality first and fight for an institution which we have been proud to work for and which has been so shabbily treated.

Nigel Margerison

Chris Moore

Stephen Jones

Andrew Maywood

Peter Miles

Andreas Gebauer

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Dennis Sewell

SUMMARY

The Committee should look closely at the detail of changes announced by the BBC in the WS's English language output.

The cancellation of programmes such as *Politics UK* will result in a significant degradation of BBC World Service in English's representation of Britain to the world.

The changes announced may make it harder to retain public support for WS in the longer run.

The savings made by cutting such programmes are tiny, but the effects are significant.

DENNIS SEWELL

Dennis Sewell is a freelance broadcaster and journalist. He currently presents the *Politics UK* programme on BBC World Service in English. Between 1986–2008 he was on the staff of BBC News working as a reporter, producer, editor and presenter of politics and current affairs programmes. Dennis Sewell declares a financial interest in the matters discussed in this submission.

1. In implementing its cuts to the English language output of the World Service, the BBC has made changes that will substantially alter the character of the service. Although it has stopped short of turning BBC World Service in English into a rolling-news network, it has moved some considerable distance in that direction. Arts programmes have been reduced to 20 minute segments and a suite of “built programmes” including *Politics UK* have been scrapped.

2. *Politics UK* is a weekly, 30 minute programme explaining British politics, political culture and political institutions to the wider world. It enables listeners to come to understand concepts such as parliamentary democracy, the common law, and press freedom as well as reporting on topical political affairs. It combines clips from debates in the Commons and the Lords with interviews, discussions and features. Guests include MPs, MEPs, Peers, representatives of think-tanks, academics, and newspaper columnists and political editors.

3. The BBC World Service has traditionally maintained a balance between reporting stories from all around the world and representing Britain to the world. Programmes like *Politics UK* enable listeners in countries that are unfamiliar with our Western way of life to discover how a free society works and to come to understand our values. This is arguably just as important today as it was during the Cold War.

4. BBC management says that coverage of UK domestic politics will henceforth be the responsibility of news programmes. However, owing to the constraints of the daily news agenda, there is bound to be a loss of nuance and depth to the coverage of UK politics and most of the consideration of values, political culture and institutions will be lost altogether. News can never be an adequate substitute for specialist current affairs programming.

5. The taxpayers (and subsequently the licence-fee payers) who fund the World Service may well be willing to pay for a service that has a useful, soft-power, strategic role in explaining Britain and its values abroad. But if the BBC World Service tilts away from this mission, becoming little more than a free news service for expats and foreigners, then people will surely begin to resent paying for it. Taken altogether, the new schedule, with its expansion of *World Have Your Say* and *From Our Own Correspondent* and cancellation of *Politics UK*, appears to mark a decisive shift in the traditional balance—a shift away from representing Britain to the world, and towards reporting foreign events.

6. The English language service of the BBC World Services reaches an estimated global audience of 40 million.

7. The annual nominal budget for *Politics UK* is in the region of £160,000—£200,000. Much of this is ascribed to overheads (share of rent at 4 Millbank etc.) and those sums will not actually be saved even if the programme is de-commissioned. The marginal cost of producing the programme is probably closer to £100,000. Only one full-time post (Editor) is associated with the programme. The presenters are freelance and work only two days per week. Little money will be saved by axing *Politics UK*. The impact on the quality and extent of coverage of British politics, however, will be significant.

I have focussed on *Politics UK* in this submission because I have personal experience of working on the programme. It may be that the points I have raised have a wider application.

10 February 2011

Written evidence from Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, non-profit-making association, free from political, commercial and sectarian affiliations, working for quality and diversity in broadcasting. VLV represents the interests of listeners and viewers as citizens and consumers across the full range of broadcasting issues. VLV is concerned with the structures, regulation, funding and institutions that underpin the British Broadcasting system. The World Service is central to the BBC's mission and ethos and has therefore been a key interest and concern of VLV.

1. Introduction

VLV is ALARMED at the scale of the cuts government proposes to make in the BBC World Service. VLV members have always regarded the World Service as a core part of the BBC, standing for the best of BBC, and British, values—almost universally applauded at home as well as abroad even when other aspects of BBC activity have come under severe and widespread criticism. The loss of nearly a quarter of the workforce will inflict inevitable damage on the English World Service and leave the BBC with a portfolio of language services barely half that of the Voice of America—and that leaves out of account the 37 services in the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty/Radio Free Asia ‘stable’ also at the disposal of the USA.

2. SUMMARY

VLV makes the following points to the Committee, substantiating our opposition to the proposed cuts.

It is illogical and inconsistent in terms of stated government priorities in the area of foreign policy, international development and the UK's global ‘soft power’ influence—diplomatically, culturally and in the provision of credible information and analysis.

The 25% cut in jobs will damage the output and quality of the service well beyond the specific areas to be reduced or removed. VLV accepts, of course, the need for cost reductions, efficiency savings and internal re-prioritization. We question strongly, however, spending cuts on a scale which seem to represent a de-prioritization of the UK's international broadcasting effort generally and which send out to the world a ‘downgrade’ signal—contrary to our real and long-term national interest.

Language services, which do a distinct and different job from the English World Service, have been cut or weakened to several target countries where we consider they are still needed.

It is difficult to make secure medium/long term judgments about different countries' and societies' information and communications shortages and needs. Services once abandoned are difficult to restart quickly. New communications technology can be more quickly and comprehensively blocked than more traditional transmission methods.

The long term implications of the new funding agreement between the government and the BBC raise some problematic issues as to precisely how and by whom output and funding decisions will be taken for the World Service, in a dispensation when World Service costs will be met by BBC's licence-payers themselves.

3. IT IS ILLOGICAL IN POLICY TERMS

The Coalition Government gave an early and welcome signal of its commitment to global citizenship obligations when it ring-fenced the budget of the Department for International Development. Maintaining this stance on that Department whilst cutting the World Service budget by at least 16%, involving a 25% staff cut, is hard to understand when the World Service itself has proved over many decades to be perhaps the most respected and cost-effective method of fulfilling the UK's international obligations. In many people's opinion it has been more penetrating, credit-accurring and economical than many of the aid programmes assembled by government, IGOs and NGOs to help countries in the developing world. Testimonies from the great and good, and from ordinary listeners, tell how the World Service exemplifies universal principles and cultural values flowing out from Britain.

VLV asks the Committee to review the present proposals against the government's stated policy priorities and BBC World Service's record over many years.

4. THE OUTPUT REDUCTIONS AND JOB LOSSES

VLV accepts, as the Foreign Secretary and others have said—the BBC World Service cannot be immune from the general financial environment. Immunity or ring-fencing is one thing, disproportionate cuts are another. Rarely has a vital area of expenditure been as *un*-ring-fenced or *un*-immune as this; rarely has there been so glaring a contradiction inside a single area of policy. VLV does not have detailed statistical knowledge of Bush House operations. We have, though, been given to understand that language service closures and reductions account for only a small proportion (around one hundred) of the six hundred and fifty staff cuts, from the current workforce of two thousand four hundred. We wonder therefore what is the rationale behind the several hundred other job losses and what the implications will be for the quality and range of programming in the English schedules as well as in those retained foreign languages where investment is being reduced. The

cuts also raise major issues around programme transmission and reception quality—not only its clarity and reach, but also its reliability, security and its immunity to government interference in target countries.

We hope that the Committee's enquiries will provide answers to these questions; and that the Committee's recommendations will reflect those answers and seek to mitigate or modify what is now proposed. We would like the Committee to examine the BBC's prediction of a thirty million, out of one hundred and eighty million, audience loss; and whether this might be an underestimate of the damage. We think the Committee needs to take account, where relevant, of the role played by BBC World Service Television. We think the Committee should probe what the BBC World Service Director has in mind when he says: "BBC World Service English schedules will become simpler and some programmes will be decommissioned".

5. CRITICAL MASS IS CRUCIAL IF THE SERVICE IS TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

The Foreign Secretary has stated that the BBC World Service will still be able to make a major contribution. Maybe it will, but VLV questions what looks like a blithely optimistic assumption that BBC professionalism and the BBC brand will 'see us through' in a global media environment which grows ever more competitive on all platforms (radio, television, internet and mobile).

The current position which, in VLV's view, needs to be maintained and sustained is not one where the UK merely does well. It is one where the BBC is at the top—achieving through a combination of quality and scale a position of global influence through soft power which (unlike the USA) it could never attain in military hardware.

The critical mass underpinning the World Service's pre-eminence in international broadcasting rests on its integration into the BBC as national broadcaster (an asset almost unique among the major international broadcasters). It rests also on the World Service programming schedules in English in combination with a substantial portfolio of language services reflecting a concern for, and commitment to, a diverse range of countries and cultures. The English-literate middle-class professionals and cosmopolitans who can tune into the English World Service are crucial—along with expatriate communities and business travellers. But the language services which go out to meet people in their own tongues are equally important because they can reach where English programming cannot and they send a different, distinct and complementary message out from Britain to the world. So language service disinvestment—whether in the form of total closures, output reductions or transmission limitations—inevitably reduces raw audience numbers and, additionally, sends a downbeat mood message to the world at large. The portfolio of 23 language services, planned for retention, is more than most international broadcasters but it must be set against the 45 deployed by the Voice of America and the 30 at the disposal of Deutsche Welle.

VLV hopes the Committee will take a view on whether this is a satisfactory state of affairs from the standpoint of international broadcasting and British influence internationally.

6. Which Language Services?—Why it Matters to the BBC and to Britain

VLV acknowledges the need for prioritization: and that, if cuts must be made, they should fall on services to countries which are becoming more democratic: benefiting from diversity and independence in the fields of information and culture: assisted by membership actual, or aspired to, in institutions like the European Union and the Council of Europe. There has been a reasonable compatibility—if not identity—of view between UK government priorities around governance, security and development and the BBC's own judgements of broadcasting need and effectiveness. During the Cold War, in a bi-polar world, wise heads—and not only inside the BBC—warned against the damage to the BBC's reputation for impartiality and independence if we were perceived as broadcasting only or mainly to the country's enemies. In the new world enemies are less easily definable; but there are identifiable problem areas and problem issues, predominantly focused in the Muslim world. The planned government cuts will hit Russia and China where high cost-per-listener broadcasting was sustained at government insistence; they will hit large portions of the Indian Sub-Continent (but not Pakistan) and of Africa whose mass audiences have traditionally provided the bulk of the BBC's global total. The Muslim world will meanwhile, from the East Mediterranean, though the Gulf, Iraq and Iran to Afghanistan and Pakistan will be the recipient of substantially more resources (although the costs of BBC Arabic Television are to be reduced). The overall message signals a broadcasting presence that seeks to be worldwide in English but which focuses its language investment on countries and regions rated as politically and culturally problematic for Britain and the West. The retention of life-line broadcasting in Burmese and Somali (and this latter is on the edge of the Islamic zone) does not really address the issues of over-concentration and narrow focus.

VLV considers it would be instructive for the Committee to ascertain what percentage of BBC World Service total resources is being devoted to an area holding less than five percent of global population, and to make a judgment about whether this represents a balanced investment of resources, judged against broadcasting need and the national interest.

7. RISK AND REVERSIBILITY

A key element of the traditional World Service mission is the assurance to audiences that it will be there when needed: BBC content prevailing over all attempts at obstruction. This

Imperative has always been thought central to the choice of transmission and distribution methods. Whilst short-wave broadcasting has been vulnerable to jamming (but at great cost to the jammer, and with less than total success), recent experience shows that new media platforms can be quickly and easily blocked. What could be done by the authorities in Cairo could, in some respects at least, be replicated in Moscow, Beijing, or another local power centre, if certain circumstances arose.

The military takeover in Thailand, quite soon after the closure of the Thai Service, illustrated the difficulty of predicting events and reversing resource decisions.

Against this background we are concerned at the long list of services, covering huge swathes of highly populated territory, where direct radio broadcasting will cease completely or be diminished, and distribution confined to online. The list includes Russian and Mandarin, Hindi, Indonesian, Swahili and Spanish for Latin America.

VLV considers that the Committee should probe the potential implications and consequences of such disinvestment decisions.

8. BBC WORLD SERVICE AND THE NEW FUNDING DISPENSATION

VLV were surprised—in view of the centrality of World Service to the BBC's mission and ethos—by the apparent meekness of BBC senior management when such severe cuts were under discussion. We heard reports (not denied by the BBC) that the BBC itself was contemplating variant proposals whose impact in some respects (including on the language services) would have been even harsher; but that the BBC did not in the end submit them, having been told that they would not be acceptable to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

On a more positive note the BBC Director-General has since said he wishes to see increased investment in the World Service. VLV feels, however, that it is difficult to be confident about this knowing that World Service will in three years or so be integrated into the BBC's comprehensive budgeting framework which will be subject to the cumulative impact of the cuts imposed by the Government in October 2010.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Kiyo Akasaka, New York

I grew up listening to the BBC World Service, which used to broadcast on short wave in the Japanese language. I still remember how sad I felt when the broadcasts came to an end, because of budget cuts, despite the fact that there were thousands of listeners. The BBC, and other international broadcasters including VOA, RFI, and All India Radio were some of the first media organizations to look beyond national borders and lay the trail for our interconnected world.

I have listened to the BBC throughout my life, and in my postings in different countries on four continents. The BBC informs my work, and provides me with information and stories from around the world. There are millions of BBC listeners around the world, many in war-torn places and in vulnerable situations—just as Japan was, when I grew up in the aftermath of World War II. They depend on the World Service as a lifeline to the greater world. And today, more than ever, one of the most beautiful things about radio is that it is inexpensive, available, and works—even when electricity lines are down, or when the Internet is blocked.

Every media organisation is adapting its working practices in the digital age; priorities shift and technology moves on. That is an inevitable fact of life. But curtailing the services of any well-loved and respected international media institution is worrying, especially at a time when peoples everywhere need more, not less, accurate, balanced and timely reporting on the events that affect their lives. What a great pity to see the gift of the BBC diminished or lost.

I submit this statement in my personal capacity.

10 February 2011

Written evidence from Neville Harms

SUMMARY:

- BBC broadcasts in Swahili and Kinyarwanda/Kirundi to East and Central Africa are among the jewels in the crown of World Service output
- The size of the audience in Swahili—at least 16 million—is an indication of the degree to which it is valued in the wide and often volatile target area
- Despite the growth of FM reception via BBC relays and partner stations, a good proportion of that audience still receive the broadcasts on shortwave and will be lost if SW transmission is ended.
- BBC FM relays and partner stations serving urban areas can be subject to interference or closure by government diktat or commercial failure, so SW back-up is crucial.
- The Great Lakes service in Kinyarwanda/Kirundi is vital not only in Rwanda and Burundi but also for exile listeners across eastern DRC who are beyond the range of FM stations, so a loss of SW could be another disaster in a disaster-plagued region; equally so, of course, for Swahili speakers in that area.
- If the tiny savings achieved by ending SW transmission to East and Central Africa really cannot be found elsewhere, it could surely be possible for DfID to take up the burden, as they did for the Great Lakes service in the mid-1990s.

1. After a spell working in Zambia and fifteen years making English language programmes for Africa, I was Head of the BBC Swahili Service from 1988 until my retirement in 1996. In that period, a time of considerable political turmoil and of huge growth in the use of Swahili as a lingua franca in East and Central Africa, our audience increased enormously. In Kenya and Tanzania it rose from four or five per cent of adults to well over thirty per cent, and substantial audiences were registered in northern Mozambique, the north of Malawi and Zambia, and in Uganda. Less formally, we knew we had many listeners in Rwanda and Burundi and Eastern Zaire as it then was, now Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In response to the disastrous events in Rwanda in 1994 I launched the Great Lakes service in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, using funds I raised from a number of British NGOs and staffing it with Rwandan and Burundian nationals already working in the Swahili and French language services. Since then the operation has grown and, after a period of funding by DfID, it is now an established element of World Service output.

2. The huge audiences that were built up in the 1990s through shortwave transmissions—principally from the Seychelles Relay Station—have been reinforced and supplemented in recent years by FM stations operated either by the BBC itself, as in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, for example, or by commercial broadcasters who have contracted to incorporate BBC output into their own schedules. While FM can give much better reception, it has inherent difficulties and risks:

- (a) It is short-range and can therefore only serve urban areas and their immediate surroundings with a satisfactory signal; the loss of shortwave, therefore, will deny many rural listeners any reception. Vast areas of northern Kenya would have no signal, and in Tanzania BBC audience researchers reckon most of the south in particular would be cut off, even though the BBC's main partner claims to have universal coverage through its network of FM relays. Listening to BBC Swahili would also be impossible in Mozambique, Malawi. Zambia and, most importantly, in a great deal of DRC. It is estimated that in total some six million listeners would be lost.
- (b) Rebroadcasting by privately-owned partner stations can be vulnerable to interference or closure by governments taking offence at the content of BBC programmes or can lead to unwarranted self-censorship by programme makers anxious not to be denied their platform. Privately-owned stations can also, of course, go silent—temporarily or permanently—for reasons of inefficiency or commercial failure.
- (c) In countries where the BBC is allowed to have its own FM relays—Tanzania is not one of them—some of the above problems are obviated, but even here there is serious risk from official displeasure. The Rwandan government demonstrated not too long ago that it can close a BBC station down if it doesn't like what is being said. It would not be surprising if the same thing were to happen in Kenya, Uganda or DRC.

3. While I was still in charge of the Swahili service I resisted for these very reasons calls for any headlong rush to reliance on rebroadcasting. I believe that, to a large degree, those considerations still apply today and that it will be a serious mistake to give up transmission by shortwave. If a service is worth providing, it surely must be provided reliably. And while there is undoubtedly some growth in accessing the output through the new digital technology—computers, iphones etc—it will be many years before these become a viable alternative for the mass of people in the region.

4. The Great Lakes service in Kinyarwanda/Kirundi continues to be a vital source of reliable news and useful information in a region that has been plagued for years by distortion and misinformation from the local media, government-run or private. Operating in a language universally understood in Rwanda and Burundi, it can cover local events in much more detail than is possible in BBC output in English, French or Swahili. But the service is not only important inside Rwanda and Burundi, where—provided government does not, as last year, become hostile—it is heard on good quality FM; it is also desperately needed across the border in eastern

DRC, where there are large numbers of Kinyarwanda and Kirundi speakers, both long term residents and people who, for good reasons or bad, have become exiles from their own country in more recent years. There are a number of FM relays in DRC but, because of the continuing unrest, many of these people are constantly on the move and frequently go out of range of the FM stations; they need a shortwave alternative to fall back on. In any case, there are listeners well to the north of Goma, close to the border with Uganda and inside Uganda itself, who have never had access to the Great Lakes service in FM and who would be lost entirely by the closure of its transmission on shortwave.

5. I have not been able to get a precise figure but I am told that the savings achieved by closing down the shortwave transmission of the Swahili and Great Lakes services represent a tiny proportion of the total that the World Service has been required to cut. It would be surprising if the one or two hundred thousand pounds required could not be found elsewhere. But if that is really not possible, there is an alternative. In the latter part of the 1990s DfID was happy to take over the funding of the Great Lakes service when the NGOs who enabled it to be launched withdrew. They continued to provide the resources until the operation was incorporated into regular grant-in-aid funded World Service output. Surely it would be possible for DfID to take on a similar role in maintaining the shortwave distribution of these vital services to countries that are already significant recipients of British aid. It could fit perfectly well into DfID's remit and could be regarded as an extremely good use of a very small bit of the department's ring-fenced resources.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Martin Plaut, BBC World Service News Africa Editor

I write to your Committee in a personal capacity and I trust you will treat this information accordingly.

I have today returned from a trip to South Sudan for the BBC World Service and thought the Committee might like to have a brief impression of the impact of the programming both in English (via the World Service programmes like the World Today and Newshour) as well as Focus on Africa and the Arabic Service.

I was in the town of Aweil in Northern Bahr el Ghazal. It is the state capital, with a population of around 54,000, with perhaps 20,000 returnees in camps around the town. It is predominantly Christian although the market is run by mainly Northern Muslim traders. Almost all suffered terribly during the decades of conflict.

I can honestly say that almost everyone we spoke to knew of and respected the BBC. And almost all listened on shortwave radio. Whether they were returnees who had come back after spending years in the North or the governor, who had spent years fighting the government in Khartoum as a member of the SPLA high command, every section of the community relied on the BBC output in one form or another.

It was a really humbling experience.

I attach a photograph of one of two restaurants which title themselves "BBC" in the town.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Graham Mytton

I was for many years in charge of all audience research, including measurement of audiences worldwide at the BBC World Service. I did that job from 1982 to 1998. Since then I have continued in this field as an independent consultant doing research for the BBC, other broadcasters and carrying out research projects in Africa, Asia and Europe.

I have a lot of information on WS audiences and also on the continued vital importance and strength of shortwave delivery. The cuts in shortwave are very unwise and will damage the BBC in achieving what it has done so well for many years.

The problem is that I will be away in Bangladesh on business from March 1st to 8th and then on holiday in India from 8th to 20th. The announcement on the website does not say when exactly you will be meeting. I will write a short piece as suggested on the website but you may want to cross question me about what I say. Will this be possible?

I do not want to blow my own trumpet. My only interest in this matter is that Members of Parliament should know the facts. The BBC has them but one thing that has happened, and I don't like, it is that the BBC does not always let outsiders know everything that they should. My policy was always to try to make as much evidence about audiences very widely available to scholars, MPs, journalists and others—both the good news and the not so good or actually bad news. In the press and in other media there has been a lot of misinformation about WS and its audiences and also, and perhaps especially about shortwave. One fact that is often forgotten is that shortwave is very difficult to block. It is actually the only truly reliable way to get through to anyone anywhere without governments being able to stop it. They can jam, but it is never entirely effective and in our experience it may actually often increase listening. The Internet can be blocked and so also can mobile phones. This has happened over the past few days in Egypt and of course it happens all the time in China.

But, and here is the blowing trumpet bit, I am widely recognised as someone who knows a lot more than most about global audiences for the BBC and all other international broadcasters. Google my name and you will find adequate confirmation of this. It is my life and work and has been for the past 30 years or so. I would like you to consider the facts and I worry that you won't get these from the BBC. It remains a great British institution but over the past ten or fifteen years it has become increasingly secretive and it spins information far too much. I think that Peter Horrocks is the best leader the World Service has had since John Tusa. But he has far less idea of the facts than many of his predecessors. He came from a domestic TV background and has little experience yet of the global situation. He knows little or nothing about the conditions under which shortwave is a vital link, often in the very places where reliable information is otherwise impossible to get. He is right to point to the importance of other platforms like the Internet and even more so mobile phones, not to mention local FM relays and rebroadcasters. When I was still at the BBC I pushed hard for these to be taken more seriously. But they are not an alternative to shortwave in many markets. And besides, they can always be cut at any time by government edict. This has happened many times -, in both Congos, in Ivory Coast, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and too many others to list. In my attached article, written for the Guardian Media section but still not published, I show that shortwave is not "in decline" as many commentators have said too often. It declines in some places but only when the local media become freer. The decline in shortwave has little or nothing to do with the technology as such but about people the world over using whatever they have to hand to get what they want to know. Shortwave could be dead in a country but then suddenly become a vital link when things go badly wrong. This has happened more times over the past 30 years than I can easily count.

I have data on shortwave access and use in more than 100 countries and I can make these available to you.

In summary these are the main points about the cuts, not all of which are in the Guardian piece. I can elaborate on any of them if required:

- The cuts are the most damaging ever in BBC WS history.
- The estimate of 30 million audience loss is an under-estimate because so many of the audiences affected have not been measured:
 - especially Portuguese to Africa . NB the BBC audience is only partially measured. No rural areas of Angola have been measured. The measurement in Mozambique is only partial. The three other lusophone African countries have never been measured; and
 - Arabic Service audiences in remoter rural areas are not wholly measured in the BBC's database (but I have them for example in Darfur where the shortwave audience is huge) Remember! Arabic shortwave coverage is being drastically cut back.
- Shortwave is not "in decline" It still accounts for 53% of the global radio audience. This is despite the massive cuts in shortwave to help fund new platforms.
- Shortwave is a vital emergency backup service that comes into its own when other platforms are blocked, as often happens.
- Macedonian and Albanian still have large audiences, as also does Portuguese for Africa. The former may be closed soon as political circumstances in both countries improve but now is not the time to close them.
- The cuts to Hindi on shortwave (entirely gone in the proposals) are very unwise at this moment. There remains a large audience for Hindi programmes although there has been some decline in recent years.

With all good wishes for the enquiry. This is a vitally important issue for the UK and the world! Get it right and generations will thank you.

14 February 2011

Written evidence from the National Union of Journalists Parliamentary Group

WORLD SERVICE CUTS

1. This is the submission from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Parliamentary Group to the Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry into the BBC World Service.

2. The NUJ Parliamentary Group was established on a cross party basis, and consists of over 30 MPs and Peers. We meet regularly, along with the union, to discuss areas of interest within the media industry and have held regular Ministerial meetings with the previous Government, as well as meeting with key external organisations such as the BBC, ITV, Ofcom and the Press Complaints Commission. As you may well be aware the NUJ represents 38,000 members working in all sectors of the media and has in its membership staff and freelancers—writers, reporters, editors, sub-editors, illustrators and photographers.

3. The Group is of the opinion that the BBC World Service is popular with audiences internationally and has an audience which numbers some millions across radio, television and online platforms. We believe that the BBC World Service can play a vital role in challenging corruption, exposing human rights abuses and the

promotion of democratic values. The Group believes that cuts to these services will serve to reduce British influence internationally and will damage objective quality international news.

4. We understand that the proposed cuts amount to 16 per cent of the BBC World Service's £267 million government grant over the next five years. We also understand that over the same period the international aid budget will increase by 37 per cent to over £11 billion. The Group is of the belief that the BBC World Service has a unique role to play in international relations and the proposed cuts can be avoided by reallocating a fraction of the aid budget.

5. The Group understands that five language services are proposed for total closure (Albanian, Macedonian, Serbian, English for Caribbean and Portuguese for Africa). Furthermore, seven language radio programme ends are to be ended (Azeri, Mandarin for Chinese, Russian, Spanish for Cuba, Turkish, Vietnamese and Ukrainian). We are led to believe that the weekly reach of the BBC World Service for the Albanian service is 510,000, for the Macedonian service 160,000, for the Caribbean service 660,000 and the Portuguese service 1,498,000. The total weekly reach of the five language services proposed for closure therefore is 2,828,000. We also understand that the audience figures for the radio services in Azeri are 150,000, for Mandarin in Chinese 595,000, for Russian 1,241,000, for Spanish for Cuba 9,000, for Turkish 450,000, for Vietnamese 100,000 and for Ukrainian radio 910,000. This amounts to a total of 3,455,000 audience reach for the radio programmes scheduled for closure.

6. We also understand that the proposal is to end shortwave radio transmissions from March 2011 in Hindi, Indonesian, Kyrgyz, Nepali, Swahili and the Great Lakes Service for Rwanda and Burundi. We are informed that many listeners in the Great Lakes region, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal and rural areas of India do not have access to the internet. By way of example according to figures provided by the National Union of Journalists the Hindi shortwave service costs £130,000 a year. We also are led to understand if the Mandarin radio service is to be cut then there will be no facility for impartial daily news to reach China.

7. The NUJ Parliamentary Group believes that the BBC needs a skilled team of journalists working around the world and with specialisations in different countries and regions in order to maintain quality international broadcasting. We believe that recent international events in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen illustrate this point vividly. The Group believes that the BBC World Service has played an important and objective role in disseminating news throughout these regions in recent weeks.

8. The BBC World Service has played a vital role in emergency situations in our opinion. Recent examples of this include the natural disasters in Pakistan and Haiti. By cutting services, the Group is of the opinion that the host government will be able to exert their authority often to the detriment of objective newsgathering and impartiality.

9. We believe that research commissioned in May 2010 indicates that the BBC's news output is more important to Britain's image overseas than any other institution. We understand that the Director General of the BBC, Mark Thompson told the Royal Institute of International Affairs: *"They were then [those surveyed] shown a list of different British organisations and initiatives and asked whether they made them think more or less positively about the country: the British Armed forces, the British Council, the UK government, UK government foreign aid, and so on, and the BBC. No fewer than 80 per cent of people asked said that the BBC made them think more positively about the UK, by the far the highest of all British institutions mentioned"*.

10. The Group is particularly concerned about the affect these proposed cuts will have on the journalists who work for the BBC World Service. We understand that 650 jobs are anticipated if these cuts are implemented. We are also concerned at the speed of these announcements which have left little time for any alternative strategies to be advocated. We also believe that many BBC World Service staff came to the UK on work visas and would be forced to leave the UK if their jobs are lost. The Group understands that many of these journalists have broadcast impartial news regarding the often dictatorial regimes in their home countries. Therefore, it is our opinion that forcibly removing any such journalists under these circumstances will lead to them facing threats and persecution simply for carrying out their jobs.

11. In conclusion the Group believes that these proposed cuts will serve to undermine the UK's national interest and will drastically impact the depth and quality of objective newsgathering across the globe. We are of the opinion that the Government should revisit these proposals and reallocate a portion of the international aid budget to preserve the BBC World Service and its current position as an internationally respected broadcaster.

12. The Group also believes that the time for oral evidence at the Foreign Affairs inquiry into the BBC World Service should be brought forward from Wednesday 9 March. We also do not believe that a half day evidence session is adequate to hear from all those who wish to express a view to the Committee including this Group.

Written evidence from Trish Flanagan, Broadcast Journalist and Solicitor, BBC World Service

IN BRIEF:

I request that the closure of the Caribbean service be reversed as it will have a damaging impact on freedom of the press in the region.

It is the only pan-Caribbean news service and is relied upon by thousands of English speakers to provide impartial news about the region.

It may be perceived that there is a developed media in the Caribbean but from my experience of living and working in Turks and Caicos this is not the case. I lived under the Misick administration which completely quashed freedom of the press. The one media people could rely on were the twice daily broadcasts from the Caribbean service.

Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee will be well aware of the Misick administration and the difficulties in getting people to speak—one compared it to China. I was at the session when Misick was questioned by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee about allegations of corruption and sent the story to the local newspaper—The Turks and Caicos Weekly News. I wasn't sure if the editor would run it and I have to admire his bravery for doing so. I had left the islands so I was in no danger but he was putting himself at risk by reporting a story which the then TCI government wished to conceal.

I know that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office wishes to promote good governance in its overseas territories and there are four in the Caribbean region. BBC Caribbean is an essential part of good governance—promoting an independent fourth estate.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a presenter and broadcast journalist with BBC World Service News and Current Affairs.

I am also a qualified solicitor admitted to practise in the Republic of Ireland, England and Wales and I worked as an attorney in the Turks and Caicos Islands for four years from 2002–06.

I was an avid fan of the World Service—English and Caribbean services—during my time in the TCI. This, coupled with my observation of the importance of independent journalism in a country like TCI was what brought me to journalism.

After doing a diploma in journalism I returned to the islands for three months in 2007 and during that time I worked as an attorney and also as a journalist for a local newspaper, the Turks and Caicos Weekly News.

I joined the BBC World Service in 2008 and trained as a journalist in the Bush House newsroom.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Last year was an exceptional year for the Caribbean service.

- They provided lifeline broadcasting in Creole after the Haiti earthquake and won an Association of International Broadcasting Award for this project.
- They gave in depth coverage of the arrest of Dudas Coke in Jamaica and broke the story of the death of the famous musician Arrow in Montserrat—huge stories in the region.
- They are a very streamlined and efficient team run under the excellent stewardship of Debbie Ransome. I understand that it costs around £500,000 a year to run the service—savings that could be made in executive pay in Global News and the wider BBC.
- The service covers the whole region including countries like Cuba and Venezuela which do not enjoy freedom of the press in the same way as the UK does. Many countries are too small to prevent intimidation of the media—like Turks and Caicos. Those in power always seek to suppress what they don't want the public to know or put their own spin on information. Without the Caribbean Service there is no one to challenge them.

I am happy to be called as a witness before the Committee to make the case for the Caribbean service.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Ben Hartshorn

DON'T CUT THE WORLD SERVICE

SUMMARY

- BBC World Service promotes the UK to the world and these proposals threaten that position.
- Will open up overseas 'markets' to other media sources, likely to be less positive about the UK.

BIOGRAPHY

Trained as a teacher, spent 20 years working in global education in the UK, in the voluntary sector, for a major international charity and for DFID. Several visits to poor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

STATEMENT

The BBC World Service is an effective (and cheap) ambassador for the UK and one that is unique to this country. The World Service has been making efficiency savings year on year, leading to significant losses. There is no fat left to cut—further cuts will have a disproportionately large impact on what the service does.

Pound for pound, BBC World Service is one of the most effective arms of government spending. The BBC is facing drastic cuts that have been drawn up all too hastily and I ask that they be reconsidered.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Naleen Kumar

My submission is particularly about the Hindi Service of the BBC World Service.

1. MY SUBMISSION:

- The Hindi Service has more than ten million shortwave listeners. It costs just £130,000. The World Service is targeting a total saving of approximately £600,000 (which includes savings through post closures) by stopping the Hindi shortwave radio. That means a saving of just about 5 pence per listener. Losing a loyal listener with a very high regard for the British sense of objectivity, to save just 5 pence is not a good deal.
- The World Service has decided to stop the Hindi news audio service for web too. It is a very strange decision, as the Hindi Service's website www.bbchindi.com is one of the fastest growing websites in the Bush House. Thousands of people from around the world regularly listen to the Hindi radio via web (on computer and mobile phones).
- Besides the above mentioned ways there is no other medium to provide the Hindi Service news and current affairs radio programmes to listeners in India as the FM radio is not open to non-state broadcasters for news. That means the World Service is pulling out completely from the news and current affairs radio in Hindi. But while announcing the cuts this fact was concealed cleverly. The World Service announced that it was discontinuing the shortwave radio for Hindi. The reality is, they are closing every bit of news and current affairs radio in Hindi.
- The World Service is ensuring that its India FM operation does not get affected by the cuts. It is strange. Because in India news and current affairs programmes are strictly forbidden to private players (foreign or local) on the FM radios. So it is clear that while the World Service is abandoning more than TEN million Hindi Service shortwave and online listeners, it has decided to continue spending on its non-news radio in India. The World Service's programmes on partner FM radios in India are mainly Bollywood gossip. So where is the recently launched and much publicised "Quality First" initiative of the BBC?
- In addition to more than TEN million ordinary listeners most of the Hindi speaking parliament members (number in hundreds) too listen to the Hindi Service broadcasts. In fact many of them have written in national media about the need of continuation of the Hindi Service radio. I would like to mention two of them- Mr Mohan Singh and Mr Chandan Mitra, both from the Upper House.
- The China Radio International and the Radio Russia have recently announced expanding their Hindi language radio operations. It is strange to shut down the World Service's Hindi broadcast in this scenario.
- The present British government has publicly announced its intention of forging a special relationship with India. So why are we abandoning more than TEN million Hindi Service listeners, who by all accounts are the goodwill ambassadors for the UK.
- Many listeners have written and called to us to say that they would be glad to pay any subscription fee to get the BBC Hindi Service radio. One has threatened to kill himself if the Hindi Service stops its news and current affairs radio. It only illustrates the hunger for the objective global news coverage which is in very short supply in India.

2. My Recommendation:

The BBC World Service management should not abandon more than ten million listeners of its Hindi shortwave radio. It would be still using all the broadcasting infrastructure (transmitters, studios etc) to broadcast in the subcontinent English, Urdu, Bangla, Sinhala and Tamil. So why not continue serving the Hindi Service listeners, one of the biggest groups for the whole World Service.

3. ABOUT MYSELF:

I, Naleen Kumar, work for the Hindi Service of the BBC World Service in its Bush House HQ. Before joining the World Service in 2001, I have been an active listener (writing comments and feedbacks) of its Hindi Service for more than two decades.

11 February 2011

Written evidence from Jorge da Paz Rodrigues

PROPOSED CLOSING DOWN OF THE BBC PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE SERVICE

The announcement of the closure of the Portuguese Language Service to Africa is lamentable and wrong for the following reasons:

1. As fairly new and still developing democracies, aggravated by the fact of the prevailing illiteracy whose peoples very much depend on the easy accessibility of radio, in which the BBC Portuguese Language Service has been a very important source of independent news, to stop it now is a clear dis-service to their own development;

2. There are about 245 millions of people speaking portuguese around the world besides Portugal and Brasil: Angola, Cape Verde islands, Guiné-Bissau, S.Tomé e Príncipe islands, Mozambique, Timor, Macau, etc;

3. Apart from that, it has been a long tradition for a lot of those peoples to depend on the BBC as their only source of news;

4. Considering the many different dialects, in which governments such as the Angolan one adopted the Portuguese language as a unifying factor, the BBC to stop its transmissions is not only a big mistake but also a sad departure from the traditional and long standing as well as most appreciated British solidarity.

5. Trust and Will be grateful that you consider these important points and take the due action at the announced committee review over the proposed closures at the BBC World Service.

14 February 2011

Written evidence from Marc Glinert

As a dedicated listener to BBC World Service radio living in France I would urge the corporation to rethink its misguided decision to cease medium wave transmission for the WS.

Nothing can compete with the simplicity, practicality and low cost of radio reception from a radio signal, whether FM, LW or MW.

As for the argument given in the BBC's press release "Closure of the 648 kHz service continues the process of withdrawing from direct broadcasts to Europe in response to a declining number of direct listeners."

... perhaps the BBC could explain how ceasing transmission is likely to revive the number of listeners!

14 February 2011

Written evidence from Mr Andrew Tyrie MP

BBC WORLD SERVICE: A WAY FORWARD

You reminded me that your Committee is running an inquiry into the implications of the BBC World Service cuts and suggested that I submit my letter to the FAC as evidence. I attach this.

In the letter, I suggest a way in which the Government can spare the World Service from the draconian cuts it announced on 26 January 2011. The full value of the cuts in cash terms can and should be found from within the DfID budget. This can be achieved without prejudicing the coalition's commitment to increase aid to 0.7 per cent of GNI from 2013.

I would be happy to discuss this further with you.

2 March 2011

Letter from Mr Andrew Tyrie MP to the Foreign Secretary

Rt Hon William Hague MP
Foreign Secretary
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

21 February 2011

I very much hope that you will reconsider your decision to cut the BBC World Service budget by sixteen per cent by 2013/14 in real terms².

These cuts are not required as a contribution to deficit reduction. The full value of the cuts in cash terms, of £28 million, can and should be found from the DfID budget. Furthermore, this can be achieved without prejudicing the coalition's commitment to increase aid to 0.7 per cent of GNI from 2013. This is because, under OECD definitions, much of the value of World Service activity can be legitimately scored as aid. The relevant OECD definition of Official Development Assistance is: "Flows of official financing administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as a main objective."

The total value of DfID's budget is planned to be £11.3 billion by 2013–14. The planned increase is £3.5 billion in cash terms. Therefore, the needs—in nominal terms—of the World Service can be fully met with just 0.8 percent of the increase in funding that is currently going to DfID.

Given the above, I find the case for the cuts in the World Service budget difficult to justify.

I'm copying this letter to a number of colleagues who have expressed support in the past for the BBC World Services work and I am putting it in the public domain.

Andrew Tyrie MP

Written evidence from Peter Carroll

I understand that your committee is in the process of considering the changes being planned to various BBC overseas services including the possible termination of the BBC Nepali Service that reaches far into the remote areas of the Nepal hills and mountains. I was extensively involved in what became known as The Gurkha Justice Campaign including persuading Joanna Lumley to help lead it. As a result, I gave had strong links with the retired British Army Gurkha community both here in the UK and in Nepal. I have also had the honour of visiting the country in 2009.

I understand that all areas of public life are currently the subject of intensive scrutiny with a view to ensuring value for money and cost reduction.

I am sure that you will be aware of the enormously strong links between Nepal and Britain resulting from the heroic service of Gurkhas in the British Army over a period that stretches back nearly 200 years. Very many of the retired British Army Gurkhas live in the remotest areas of Nepal and rely totally on the BBC Nepali service for news and current affairs information. The loss of the service would be a serious blow to their quality of life. Additionally, so many people in and from Nepal have told me that as their country grapples with some enormous political and economic problems, the inclusion in their civic life of the BBC service is of vital importance from a cultural point of view.

I know little of the financial background to the considerations. However, I have seen figures quoted that suggest the actual cost of the service is small in the context of general broadcasting budgets.

On behalf of the many British Army Gurkha veterans that have contacted me on this matter, may I request that these points be brought to the attention of your Committee.

I very much hope that it might be possible to save this service.

9 March 2011

² Source: BBC World Service (written statement) HC Deb 26 January 2011 c13WS