

Speech: Science and Innovation – Impact of the Newton-Picarte Fund in Chile

Thank you for joining us today to celebrate the impact of the Newton-Picarte fund in Chile and the contribution of the British Council.

The Newton Fund was created by the UK Government in 2014. A total of £735m has been invested by the Government to work with 15 countries up until 2021. In South America our partner countries are Chile, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia. The objective of the fund is to encourage science and innovation collaboration between the UK and developing economies, supporting their socio-economic development. The Newton Fund is part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA). A key characteristic of the fund, which distinguishes it from other UK Government ODA funding, is that partner countries provide match funding, thereby creating a partnership in which both countries are investing equal resources.

Since its official in-country launch in August 2014, through the signing of the MOU between Minister Céspedes and myself, representing the Ministry of Economy and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy respectively, I am pleased to say that the Newton-Picarte Fund has helped to firmly position the UK as one of Chile's leading science and innovation partners.

Through the Newton-Picarte fund in Chile we have been able to finance collaboration across the scientific spectrum with programmes in key sectors such as agriculture, engineering, natural and social sciences and medical and health research – in total more than 200 initiatives. More importantly the fund has been the vehicle through which UK and Chilean researchers and universities have been able to establish partnerships, which we hope will continue for the long term.

The great success of the Newton fund can largely be attributed to the excellent work carried out by the British and Chilean Delivery Partners, who jointly have been in charge of designing, implementing and managing the programmes. The British Council, due to its presence in Chile, has been one of our closest allies in strengthening Chile's scientific and innovative excellence, developing advanced human capital, mobility and networking, through programmes such as Institutional Skills Development and the Communication Skills Workshop.

Chile is expected to graduate from the OECD DAC list of ODA recipient countries this year, with retrospective effect from 1 January 2017, after exceeding the high income country threshold in 2012 and 2013. Consequently the priorities and objectives of the UK-Chile Newton partnership will change to focus on global development challenges and those facing other developing countries, as opposed to Chile's own development challenges.

This year we will launch four activities which reflect this new focus – broadening the impact of joint British and Chilean research to benefit developing countries. These will be the final bilateral Newton programmes, which we will launch in Chile. In future years Chile will continue to be involved in regional Newton fund programmes, one of which we hope to launch this year on biodiversity. Please do ask our Embassy science team, Francisco and Alvaro, as well as British Council colleagues, if you would like more information.

Chile is a part of the Science and Innovation Network (UK SINet) of the UK Government. UKSINet is a network of around 90 officers in more than 30 countries in the world, that build links and collaborations in science and innovation in each country. Francisco is in charge of leading this work here in Chile, which reflects the importance that the UK Government places on our relations with Chile in science and innovation.

The Newton Picarte fund has enabled the UK to develop a relationship with Chile which is delivering significant impact. We are grateful to the British Council and to all of you for your help in making the fund such a success and we look forward to building on that success with you in the future. Because science and innovation is important for our economies, our societies and for the world.