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Mark Bunting,
Ofcom

**RE: Ofcom invitation to submit views re the role of
Channel 4 Television in the future of UK Public Service
Broadcasting**

Dear Mr. Bunting,

IBT is an educational charity which seeks to promote high quality coverage of matters of international significance. IBT (and its sister organisation, 3WE) has a long history of campaigning on these issues and arguing that international coverage on television is a necessary tool in informing us all, as global citizens. The views in this submission reflect the concerns of IBT's members which are shared by millions of UK supporters of our organisation. IBT/3WE have contributed to every major broadcasting policy consultation since the Government first began regulating converged communications in 1997. We were instrumental in persuading the government to amend the Communications Bill so that a requirement for public service television to cover 'matters of international significance or interest' was included in the final Act [Section 264(6)(f)].

Despite increasing globalization and global interconnections, international - especially developing world - our research has shown that coverage on mainstream television in the UK in recent years has been in general decline. Research also continues to indicate that television remains the primary source of information about the developing world for the UK public.

Since its launch Channel 4 has been one of the major consistent providers of international coverage to a mainstream television audience in the UK. *Channel 4 News*, *Dispatches* and *Unreported World* are all exceptional in terms of increasing our understanding of the wider world. These are only a few examples of the international coverage seen regularly on the channel. As such IBT believes it is crucial for UK citizens that Channel 4 continues to deliver on and improve this aspect of its PSB remit.

Additionally, it is IBT's view that Channel 4's role is essential in providing effective competition to the BBC and the commercial public sector broadcasters, thus maintaining the current model of PSB plurality in the UK which has undoubtedly helped maintain existing levels of international coverage on television.

IBT welcomes Ofcom's foresight in commissioning an early financial review of Channel 4. It is apparent from the LEK report that the potential scale and timing of the funding challenges facing Channel 4 are significant enough to require immediate attention. It is agreed by all parties that Channel 4's current business model is unsustainable in the long term and that this will have an impact on its ability to delivery its PSB remit.

IBT believes that Ofcom should implement short-term measures that will support Channel 4 in the immediate and mid- term while at the same time immediately beginning the process of seeking solutions to Channel 4's predicament in the longer term, because such solutions may well take some time to be determined and implemented.

In its submission Ofcom questions whether Channel 4's remit should extend to its other platforms as well as the core channel. It is IBT's view that while the current cross-funding operating model is being followed this extension of its PSB remit could undermine Channel 4's financial sustainability further. However, if another operating model could be devised which wasn't reliant upon income from these platforms, IBT would welcome Channel 4's PSB ethos being fully adopted across all platforms. IBT agrees that while Channel 4's commercial activities support its public service remit, they should not become ends in themselves.

We would like to take this opportunity to stress IBT's view that Channel 4 should remain a publicly-owned not-for-profit organization. It is our view that this is fundamental to Channel 4 maximising its PSB role. If it were privatised, we believe this would seriously undermine the delivery of PSB in the UK as the priorities of shareholders would be a greater priority than the need to deliver PSB.

IBT would welcome the opportunity to consult on the development of a framework to assess and measure Channel 4's public service delivery. We believe an expanded approach is required to measuring this and in order to ensure Channel 4's future public service delivery.

If you would like to discuss IBT's research findings or any of the views expressed in this submission, we would welcome the opportunity to do so.

Yours sincerely

Sophie Chalk
Campaign Co-Ordinator