UK National Explanation of Vote on L28 Disarmament and Development

The United Kingdom is pleased to be able to support L28, ‘The relationship between disarmament and development’.

The report contains many constructive recommendations that we support. We welcome the mainstreaming of disarmament issues in development policy, particularly in the field of conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR).

We fully support the report’s recommendations on small arms and light weapons. They are consistent with the UN Programme of Action on this subject, and we agree that there is a need for its 2006 Review Conference to consider the subject of SALW transfers. We believe that the UK’s Transfer Controls Initiative has an important contribution to make in building consensus behind action in this area. We further support the report's recommendations concerning landmines and explosive remnants of war.

We also agree with the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) report that there is no automatic link between disarmament and development but that a complex relationship exists between the two.

However, we do not accept the report’s suggestion that little evident progress is being made on nuclear disarmament, nor do we accept that the integrity and effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime is in doubt. The UK has made dramatic reductions in its nuclear weapons. We now have a minimum nuclear deterrent, and we remain fully committed to our disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT has the widest membership of any arms control treaty and remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We also believe that the report does not give sufficient credit to unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral actions in disarmament and non-proliferation. Such measures have brought and can bring positive results and their value is recognised in the arms control field, including in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT review conference.