UNITED KINGDOM

STATEMENT

By

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to the
Conference on Disarmament

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Please check against delivery
The continued existence of nuclear weapons has implications for everyone’s security: the ways in which we seek to prevent their spread, and to move safely to a world without them, are critically important for all of us. This year’s First Committee provides us with an essential opportunity to take stock of the progress that has been made across the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, and to look forward to the future challenges which we must meet.

Whilst it is right that we mark successes and bank positive developments, we also have to look forward to ensure that we have the structures and the shared commitment to address the real challenges of today and the future.

UK position

The UK is committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We have a strong record of fulfilling our disarmament commitments and of living up to our international legal obligations which flow from our membership of the NPT as a Nuclear Weapons State.

While nuclear weapons exist, and while the future security environment remains so uncertain, the UK government remains committed to retaining a credible, minimum nuclear deterrent. We set out a number of new disarmament measures exactly a year ago in our Strategic Defence and Security Review, announcing that by the 2020s we would:

- reduce the number of warheads onboard each of our submarines from 48 to 40;
- reduce the requirement for operationally available warheads to no more than 120;
- reduce the number of operational missiles on the Vanguard class submarines to no more than 8; and
- reduce our overall nuclear weapon stockpile to no more than 180.

We also announced a new, stronger security assurance that the UK will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against Non-Nuclear Weapons States Party to, and in compliance with their obligations under, the NPT.
On 29th June we announced that the programme for implementing these warhead reductions had commenced, and that at least one of our submarines now carries a maximum of 40 nuclear warheads.

Where are we now?

The NPT Review Conference in 2010 was a success. We secured for the first time a cross-pillar Action Plan with real commitments across all the pillars.

We need to continue to build on the momentum from this success, and use it to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of the international rules based architecture.

Work has already began to translate the RevCon final document from a Plan into tangible Action – and we should all recognise and welcome both the bilateral and multilateral progress that has been made in 2011. In February the New START Treaty entered into force, and at the end of June the five NPT-recognised nuclear weapon states took part in the second P5 Conference in Paris.

P5 Conference

The meeting was a vital opportunity for the five nuclear weapon states to focus on concrete progress towards fulfilling our NPT disarmament obligations. It was significant not only for the substantive discussions that we had, but for building trust and confidence between the five nuclear weapon states, and for the public outreach event with NGOs and non-nuclear weapon states. We were delighted that the Conference set in train a number of new confidence-building initiatives on which the P5 will collaborate, including a working group on nuclear weapons definitions and terminology.

Our discussions covered the range of disarmament, transparency and confidence-building issues – and we look forward to continuing those discussions in the months and years ahead. The P5 also discussed the report we are called upon, by the NPT Action Plan, to present.

But the NPT is not just about the role the P5 plays to fulfil their disarmament commitments. All Parties to the NPT share the responsibility to strengthen it, to ensure all three pillars are
strengthened, to deliver against the agreed Action Plan and to report their progress in doing so. The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative is a great example of countries taking a lead to make progress across the pillars of the NPT. And we have been working for a number of years with a non-nuclear weapon state, Norway, to try and overcome some of the challenges associated with verification of nuclear disarmament.

**UK – Norway Initiative**

This initiative – the first of its kind – has seen our two countries carry out ground breaking research into the verification of nuclear warhead dismantlement. The work was founded on the principle that any future disarmament process would need to be underpinned by a verification regime that can demonstrate, with confidence, that nuclear disarmament has taken place.

The collaboration has successfully demonstrated that nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states can work together to take forward our disarmament commitments without breaching our respective non-proliferation obligations under the NPT, without compromising national security and without undermining standards of safety and security. Developing effective and mutually trusted solutions to technical and procedural disarmament hurdles will be vital for enhancing trust between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states and for building an effective system of verification.

We look forward to hosting, in partnership with Norway, a technically focused workshop in London in early December to develop this work and to share our progress with technical experts from those non-nuclear weapon states that have expressed an interest in the research conducted to date. And, as announced following the P5 Conference, the UK will also host a separate confidential expert-level meeting with our P5 partners to discuss lessons learned from the research.

In addition to the work that the UK has been doing unilaterally, bilaterally and with the other NWS and NNWS on nuclear disarmament, we continue to press strongly for progress on the key multilateral instruments that will help us to move towards the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.
CTBT

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty continues to be one of the UK’s key disarmament priorities. We were one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Treaty, and continue to maintain a voluntary moratorium on nuclear test explosions. We welcome and congratulate Ghana and Guinea on their ratifications during the past year, bringing the treaty closer to universality. In support of this aim, the UK is supporting a project to promote ratification among small island countries.

The UK strongly supports the work of the CTBT Organisation in building up the treaty’s global verification regime. We have provided experts to assist with its efforts to establish a viable verification regime which is ready for entry into force. The UK looks forward to co-hosting with the CTBT Organisation an On-Site inspection meeting for P5 experts later this year, and we are pleased that the Integrated Field Exercise is on track to take place in 2014.

Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty

In addition to Entry into Force on the CTBT, we urgently want to see the start of negotiations in the CD on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. We see the treaty as vital component for our ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons - constituting an important building block of the international architecture alongside a strengthened Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty.

We share the international community’s overwhelming feeling of frustration that another year has gone by with the CD still unable to start negotiations or even agree to a Programme of Work. Having said this, we must recognise that some progress has been made. Our Australian and Japanese colleagues got the ball rolling by holding a number of productive side events in Geneva, which gave us the chance to conduct informative technical discussions on some of the elements of a future treaty. Since then, the P5 have been working closely together to fulfil our commitment in Paris to renew efforts to promote negotiations in the CD. We met in Geneva at the end of August and, on Friday, met with other relevant parties to discuss the way forward.
There are many complex issues associated with an FMCT, and breaking the deadlock in the CD will not be easy – we must focus our collective efforts towards this end. The CD remains the only option for negotiations on an FMCT because it includes all of the key nuclear players. The inclusion of all the key players in any treaty is essential if it is to fulfil the ambition of the international community to strengthen the global disarmament and non-proliferation framework in a meaningful way and to enhance global security. It is right that there has been considerable discussion of options to make progress in recent months: the CD’s continued frozen inability to function is unacceptable and unsustainable.

But we need to remember two things: first, that the inability for the CD to get to work on FMCT is not down to an intrinsic structural problem with the institution itself, but caused by one country blocking the will of the majority. We will not achieve our shared goal of agreeing a meaningful treaty which cuts off the future production of fissile material and enhances global security by initiating negotiations elsewhere. This will only lead, ultimately, to a Treaty to which some of the key players have not signed up and which does not meet its global security goals. Nor will we bolster the Conference on Disarmament by undermining its mandate and leaving it to languish – it is a unique forum which has proved its worth in the past, and one to which we are committed. The P5 are fully engaged in a common endeavour to set the CD to work negotiating an FMCT, and to this end we will continue the process which we have initiated by meeting again with other relevant parties in the near future.

Non-proliferation challenges

Whilst, we are pleased to report on this considerable progress on the disarmament pillar of the NPT Action Plan, there are considerable challenges in non-proliferation that we all need to work together to address if we are going to be able to create a safer and more secure world in which all States are ultimately able to relinquish their nuclear weapons.

The agreement to hold a regional conference in 2012 to discuss issues relevant to a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery represented a major step forward. We believe that this goal is achievable, but it will not happen overnight or without the commitment and support of all states in the region. The United Kingdom has been working hard, with the US and Russia, and in consultation with the region, towards the
appointment of a host and facilitator for the conference. We look forward to an announcement of this soon.

Nowhere is the challenge to our collective endeavour and collective responsibility more evident than the threat posed by the development of nuclear weapons in the DPRK and Iran. International concerns have been amplified by the revelations late last year of a recently constructed uranium enrichment plant in the DPRK, and by Iran’s determination to expand production of 20% enriched uranium, for which it has no plausible civilian use. But the real reason why Iran has remained consistently at the top of the IAEA’s agenda is because of Iran’s long history of trying to conceal their programme. Iran has failed over many years to declare a staggering amount of the nuclear material, activities and facilities that it ought to have declared under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

The international community cannot ignore this. We in the E3+3 are working tirelessly to try to resolve it – to encourage Iran to take the necessary steps that would re-build international confidence in the peaceful nature of their programme, after which we have committed to treating Iran like any other Non Nuclear Weapon State. We believe that all those Member States struck by Iran’s missed opportunities, both economic and political, resulting from unwillingness to cooperate with the international community, should urge Iran to reconsider its path. The international community must stand together in calling on the DPRK and Iran to comply with international law, to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and to refrain from any further provocative actions.

We were very encouraged by the fact that the NPT RevCon final document recognised that IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and an Additional Protocol are essential for the IAEA to carry out its international safeguards responsibilities to full effect, and that they represent the enhanced standard for verification of the NPT. We commend and support in full the action encouraging all State Parties to conclude and bring into force Additional Protocols. The United Kingdom has begun active engagement with our P5 colleagues and a number of other NPT States Parties to work together on delivering these commitments.
Conclusion

Mr Chairman, I will conclude by reiterating the UK’s commitment to continue to work both with other NWS and with NNWS to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It is incumbent upon all of us to take these essential mutually reinforcing steps as we seek our goal of a world without nuclear weapons and where we have removed the incentives for proliferation.