Mr Chairman, I’m grateful for this time set aside for Regional Issues to examine three problem areas: the Middle East, South Asia and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The UK has submitted a written report on the Middle East to the UN Secretary General, as requested by the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We regard that report, together with my intervention today, those the UK made last week, including in the General Debate, and any other interventions we make in the Committee, as constituting a comprehensive report to the current session of the Preparatory Committee.

Last week, we heard suggestions for further definitions of the format and frequency of reporting. We continue to believe it is for states parties to make these kinds of decisions. No one format is likely to be appropriate for all states parties or even for all nuclear weapon states. The information that it will be appropriate to report will vary considerably between states and perhaps within states over time.

Mr Chairman, the UK has supported the First Committee resolution on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. In this respect we have continued to call on
Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state and to conclude an associated fullscope safeguards agreement with the IAEA. We have reiterated these messages to Israeli officials, most recently in Jerusalem last June and in London last month.

The Final Document in 2000 called for reaffirmation of, or declarations of support for, a "nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East, as well as the development of zones free from all weapons of mass destruction." The United Kingdom has consistently supported resolutions in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly calling for the establishment of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

The UK has also taken steps with other countries in the region to establish the conditions for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Together with our EU partners, we have carried out extensive lobbying activities to secure adherence by states in the Middle East to key non-proliferation agreements. Since the last NPT Review Conference, we have lobbied states in the region on the question of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Convention on Chemical Weapons, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the IAEA Additional Protocol.

We also recognise the impact that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has on international efforts to create a Weapons of Mass Destruction-free zone in the region. The UK is committed to efforts to move the Middle East Peace Process forward. We are actively engaged in efforts to end the violence, build confidence
and resume talks based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1402 and 1403 and the principle of "land for peace".

One of our greatest concerns in the region, is Iraq's longstanding failure to comply with its UN disarmament and monitoring obligations and failure to co-operate with UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors. Recently in Texas, the UK Prime Minister set out succinctly the UK's objective: Saddam Hussein "has to let the inspectors back in, anyone, any time, any place the international community demands". The Prime Minister made it clear that to "allow WMD to be developed by a state like Iraq without let or hindrance would be grossly to ignore the lessons of 11 September and we will not do it."

The UK will remain at the forefront of international efforts to secure full, accurate disclosures of Iraq’s illicit ballistic missile, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes. We believe that the international community cannot afford to ignore this threat. Rigorous UN inspections would give the international community welcome assurance that Iraq's programmes no longer pose a threat to regional and global security. It is therefore essential that UNMOVIC and the IAEA are allowed to fulfil the mandate they have been given by the Security Council.

Only full Iraqi co-operation with these conditions will give us the assurance that Iraq no longer has the capability to threaten the Middle East and the wider world with weapons of mass destruction.
Mr Chairman, other would-be proliferators around the world have been following the international response to Iraq's WMD programmes for the past 10 years. If we do not deal effectively with these issues, it will send a signal to these countries that they can get away with it – that the international community is not prepared to act to stop proliferation.

For this reason alone, we cannot afford to fail.

The second region I would like to turn to is South Asia. Recent tensions in the region have increased our concerns about the potential for nuclear conflict.

Since the countries concerned conducted their nuclear tests in 1998, there have been no signs that either side is prepared to take the steps set out by the international community under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1172.

Despite this lack of progress, the UK remains strongly committed to the goals of 1172. We urge India and Pakistan to work together to reduce nuclear tensions in the region by entering into a bilateral dialogue on confidence building measures as soon as possible. This is a vital pre-requisite to their fulfilling the requirements of Resolution 1172, including accession to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states.

We welcome India and Pakistan's continuing moratoria on testing but urge both to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Pending the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty, we also urge both states to observe a
moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Mr Chairman, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has a track record which is of grave concern. In 2000, the NPT Review Conference's Final Document noted, amongst other causes of concern, that the “IAEA continues to be unable to verify the correctness and completeness of the initial declaration of nuclear material” and “is therefore unable to conclude that there has been no diversion of nuclear material” in North Korea. Two years on, the situation has not changed. North Korea’s continuing failure to comply fully with its safeguards agreement and failure to meet its obligations under the 1994 Agreed Framework undermines regional and global stability. We cannot afford to let a state that joined the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state renge on those commitments.

The steps that North Korea needs to take to resolve the concerns of the international community are clear. We call for immediate and unconditional compliance with IAEA inspections. The Agency needs to be allowed to carry out the checks necessary to determine the full extent of past nuclear activity. The UK fully supports the KEDO project. Nonetheless, it is vitally important that North Korea co-operates now with the Agency if the delivery date of 2005 for key nuclear components is to be met.

The danger of regional nuclear proliferation being combined with the spread of ballistic missile technology potentially poses even greater threats wherever it occurs. This is a key reason why we urge North Korea again to stop its trade in missile
technology as a measure to curb the possibility of Weapons of Mass Destruction being coupled with delivery systems.

Mr Chairman, the NPT is a strong Treaty. It enjoys the full support of nearly all the countries in this world. It is vital that all of us continue to press for the universalisation of the Treaty and full compliance with it. It is imperative that the states in the regions I have mentioned above fulfil their international obligations to us all.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

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