STATEMENT

By

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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Cluster 1

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Intervention by the United Kingdom in Cluster 1

Mr Chairman,

Yesterday the UK gave an overview of our contribution towards global and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Copies of that text are freely available. I do not propose to repeat these points today. Instead, I intend to focus on the non-proliferation aspects of the Treaty, and compliance with them.

The UK supports fully the statement made this afternoon by Greece on behalf of the European Union. This statement will focus particularly on compliance, the role of export controls, and conclude with the importance of sentiments expressed in the Kananaskis principles and the role of the G8 Global Partnership. Safeguards also have a vital role in ensuring compliance with the NPT: the UK’s views on these will be set out in our statement to Cluster 2.

Universality

Before I begin, however, I would first like to raise the issue of universality. Our commitment to global and verifiable nuclear disarmament also means that we continue to attach great importance to the universal adoption of, and compliance with, the NPT. We continue to call on India, Pakistan and Israel to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states. In the meantime, we urge India and Pakistan to carry out confidence building measures. The UK will say more on this under the UK’s speech on special time attached to Cluster 2.
Compliance

Mr Chairman,

Compliance with the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is of vital importance. In recent years we have called into question, or expressed our concerns about, the adherence to obligations under the NPT by certain states parties. This has led a minority of those in the UK press to question the validity of the NPT. In our view, this is much like questioning the validity of laws against murder simply because a murder has been committed. It is not the Treaty that is found wanting, but the compliance of certain states parties.

The UK has already made clear its position regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have deplored the announcement by this country on 10 January that it intended to withdraw from the NPT. I agree with the comments made by some states party that we should not get into a debate about whether the DPRK remains a state party to the NPT or not. Thus whilst the UK has an opinion about this issue, we consider it of secondary importance to those diplomatic efforts under way to ensure that the DPRK dismantles its nuclear weapons programme and any nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner. We wish to see the DPRK return to compliance with the NPT, as a non-Nuclear Weapons State, fulfilling all the Treaty obligations regarding development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, including materials and associated technology. This must include full co-operation with international inspectors.

Ultimately, the UK believes that only strict observance of, and adherence to, the NPT, including the full implementation of a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an Additional Protocol to that agreement, as agreed with the IAEA, can provide the necessary assurances to the international community that the DPRK has not, and is not, cheating on its international commitments.
Iran

As set out in our statement to the general debate, the UK also has concerns regarding the developments of nuclear technology in Iran. We shall be saying more about this issue in our statement during Cluster 2.

Export Controls

All of us have obligations under Articles 1 and 2 of the NPT. None of us needs reminding that these articles require those with nuclear weapons not to transfer "nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices" to any recipient whatsoever or to take any steps that will assist non-nuclear weapon states in acquiring such devices. In turn, non-nuclear weapon states undertake not to receive or develop such devices. The UK is committed to a strict export control policy and robust export control procedures. The UK government plays a very active role in all export control regimes including the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

There is a category of states that the Treaty cannot easily cover, however; by definition under Article IX, paragraph 3 of the NPT, only the UK, the US, France, China and the Russian Federation are classified as nuclear weapon states. Yet we are all aware that there are States not party to the Treaty, or whose compliance is in doubt, who either possess nuclear weapons or the technology and possibly the intent to acquire them. It is vital to international security and stability - in other words, it is in all our interests - to ensure that such States do not become onward proliferators, and we urge all states party to make this clear in their dealings with these countries.

The promotion of international peace and stability depends in part on effective implementation of export controls that are consistent with commitments made under the various export control regimes. We need to be vigilant against the risk posed by the inadvertent or deliberate supplying goods or technology that could contribute to the
development of nuclear weapons, and vigilant against the risk posed by the interest of certain terrorist groups in acquiring or developing weapons of mass destruction. For all of us, this means strong export controls, and strong enforcement of those controls.

Kananaskis Principles and the G8 Global Partnership

Mr Chairman, when G8 leaders met in Kananaskis last summer, the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction was high on the agenda. The necessity of working together to tackle that threat was recognised, and in that spirit the Kananaskis Principles were launched. In six brief points, the Principles lay out what states must do in order to prevent the worst case scenario: namely, a combination of the kind of attacks seen on September 11th and the use of nuclear or radiological materials. The Principles cover, for example, the need fully to implement existing non-proliferation treaties. But they make clear that treaties are only one, crucial, part of the picture: physical protection, border controls, and export and transhipment controls are also vital to reduce the threat posed by WMD terrorism. The UK commends the Kananaskis Principles and urges all states to support and enact them. With this in mind, we welcome the information session on the Kananaskis Principles and the Global Partnership that France will host tomorrow.

Dealing with aspects of the legacy of nuclear weapons is also of non-proliferation importance, to ensure, for example, that surplus fissile material is disposed of responsibly, rather than illegally acquired by states or non-state actors who would wish to use it for their own ends. In 2000, therefore, the UK announced a major new programme to contribute to international efforts to tackle nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation problems in the Former Soviet Union. This programme is now a key part of the UK's contribution to the G8 Global Partnership initiative launched at Kananaskis. The Prime Minister subsequently announced a commitment of up to $750 million over the next ten years for work under the Partnership.
Our contribution covers a range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives including nuclear safety work in the FSU and Eastern Europe. This funding will cover work on both nuclear legacy issues and chemical weapons destruction. This UK support also includes the £70m pledged by the Prime Minister in 2001 to assist in the disposition of Russian weapons-grade plutonium declared surplus to defence requirements. We hope the G8 Plutonium Group can continue to make progress in its discussions and the remaining issues can be resolved speedily. Ensuring that 34 tonnes of plutonium can never again be used in weapons will be an important achievement in co-operative non-proliferation.

Security Assurances

I have not focused on security assurances here today, because on Tuesday we made clear that the UK’s NSA remains as it was given in 1995 and as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 984.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman,

In his statement yesterday the representative of Germany expressed surprise that there should have been so little time devoted to non-proliferation in the statements of many countries to the general debate. We share that surprise, and are concerned by it. As has often been said in this room over the past four days, the NPT represents a balance. The importance that delegations, including the UK, attach to disarmament has been very clear. We hope for the sake of the future of health of the NPT, its regime and of international security, that states parties will also emphasise the real and imminent dangers of proliferation.

I would therefore like to conclude with three points: first, that it is vital for international security and stability that the number of states with nuclear weapons does not increase.
Second, that those who have acquired, or who seek to acquire, nuclear weapons either contrary to their obligations under the NPT, or outside the NPT, should roll back those programmes in a verifiable and irreversible manner - in accordance with the wishes of the international community. And third, that there is an obligation on all of us not to export the materials or technology that would aid any state in pursuing a nuclear weapons programme.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.