STATEMENT

By

Ambassador David Broucher

Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Conference on Disarmament

NPT Preparatory Committee 2004

Cluster I: Specific time: Disarmament/NSAs

3 May 2004

Check against delivery

www.fco.gov.uk/akdis
Mr Chairman,

Disarmament is an issue to which all of us here attach great importance, as of course do NGOs and civil society.

Let me begin by restating that the UK remains committed to the NPT in its entirety, including the goal of global and verifiable nuclear disarmament as set out in Article VI.

Indeed, we believe that our record on nuclear disarmament is a good one. The UK played a full role in achieving consensus on the Final Document agreed at the 2008 Review Conference and we continue to support the relevant disarmament measures, contained both in that Document and in the 1995 Review Conference decisions.

Over the past twelve years the UK has made substantial progress on our global nuclear disarmament obligations under Article VI of the NPT. This has included: the withdrawal and dismantling of our maritime tactical nuclear capability; the withdrawal and dismantling of the RAF’s WE177 nuclear bomb; and the termination of the nuclear Lance missile and artillery roles that we undertook with US nuclear weapons held under dual-key arrangements.

This left Polaris (later superseded by Trident) as our only nuclear weapons system. We are the only Nuclear Weapon State to have reduced to a single system and on this point we are proud to be the most forward-leaning of the Nuclear Weapon States.

Moreover, we have announced that our nuclear forces patrol on reduced readiness; only a single Trident submarine is now on deterrent patrol at any one time, normally at several days “notice to fire” and with its missiles de-targeted. We hold a total of less than 200 operationally available warheads. This amounts to a total reduction of 70% in the explosive power of our nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War.

We continue to encourage mutual, balanced and verifiable reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons worldwide. In this context we warmly welcomed the entry into force on 1 June 2005 of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty – the Treaty of Moscow – between the US and the Russian Federation. Such disarmament measures contribute toward international stability and offer support for NPT Article VI objectives.

Since 2000 the UK has moved yet further on implementing its disarmament obligations, completing the dismantling of our Chevaline warheads in 2002.

The dismantling of Chevaline builds on the important disarmament, transparency and confidence building measures that the UK has previously undertaken in support of Article VI objectives.

**Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**

The UK has both signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and remains firmly committed to that treaty. We have not conducted a nuclear explosive test since 1991. Our commitment is demonstrated by our continued support for the CTBT Organisation and its activities.

In September 2003 Baroness Symons, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, attended the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in Vienna, where she urged all states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty.

We note that some 171 States have now signed the CTBT, of which 112 have also ratified it. We welcome the increase in the number of States Party to this Treaty and urge all states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.
Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty

The UK is more transparent than any other Nuclear Weapon State about our nuclear and fissile material stockpiles. In 1995 we announced that we had stopped the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the fact that several other states have taken the same step.

And we call upon others, including those states not party to the NPT, to follow this example.

In 1998 we were the first Nuclear Weapon State to declare the total size of these stocks. We then voluntarily placed all our fissile material no longer required for defence purposes under international safeguards where they are liable to inspection by the IAEA. In 1998 we also initiated a fissile material "historical accounting" programme before publishing our report on Plutonium historical accounting in 2000.

We believe this global nuclear disarmament is a process and that a Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty is the next step in that process. We shall continue to work for the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT to begin at the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible, as part of a programme of work acceptable to all.

Verification

Since 2000, we have begun a programme to develop UK expertise in verifying the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons internationally. The overall aim of the studies, being carried out by the UK Atomic Weapons Establishment for the Ministry of Defence, is to examine and trial potential methodologies which could be used in a future nuclear disarmament verification regime.

We have undertaken this work as part of our commitment to making progress towards meeting the requirements of the disarmament provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This work should be seen in the context of the 2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document, which called for "the further development of the verification capabilities that will be required to provide assurance of compliance with nuclear disarmament agreement."

The research programme covers several key topics, including:

- Authentication of nuclear warheads and components;
- Disarmament of warheads; and
- Monitoring the warhead complex.

The work is in three stages with two interim reports and a final report in 2005. The first interim report was issued at the 2003 PrepCom and we presented our latest work in full at a lunchtime meeting on Friday 30th April. Our second report has been published as Working Paper 31 for this PrepCom and is entitled "Verification of Nuclear Disarmament: Second Interim Report on Studies into the Verification of Nuclear Warheads and their Components."

Mr Chairman,

I am conscious that several delegations believe that we should make Negative Security Assurances a particular theme of this Preparatory Committee meeting. While I welcome the opportunity to reaffirm the United Kingdom’s Negative Security Assurance given in 1995 and repeated in United Nations Security Council Resolution 984, the UK policy on NSAs has not changed.

We remain committed to the NSA we gave in 1995. In addition the UK supports the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and is playing an active and constructive role as a Nuclear Weapon State in their development. We have given NSAs through the Protocols we have signed to Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treties. The UK has signed and ratified protocols to the zones which cover Latin America and the Caribbean —
We therefore believe that our 1995 NSA and the Protocols we have signed offer Non-Nuclear Weapon States the assurance they seek regarding nuclear use. We believe the way forward is to make further progress with Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which will provide, on a credible, regional basis, the internationally binding legal instruments on NSAs that many are looking for. A general assurance to Non-Nuclear Weapon States Party to the NPT has already been given, and there is no need to repeat or elaborate it. Nevertheless, we remain ready to include this subject in the Work Programme of the Conference of Disarmament when that is agreed.

The UK is mindful of the commitment given in the PS statement in 2000 that the PS would exchange information on Positive Security Assurances and is committed to continuing that process.

**UK Policy**

At the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference held in Geneva last year Sweden asked the UK to elaborate on our need to keep nuclear arsenals at a level necessary for national security. I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the question raised by my former Swedish colleague.

The 1998 Strategic Defence Review and 2003 Defence White Paper affirmed that the UK is committed to working towards a safer world in which there are no nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. However, the White Paper noted that due to the continuing risk of nuclear proliferation and the retention by other countries of substantial nuclear arsenals, Trident was likely to remain a necessary element of our security. Let me stress that no decisions about whether or not to replace Trident have been taken and indeed, as the White Paper makes clear, they are not needed in this UK Parliament. In the meantime, we are continuing the policy we have had since the 1998 Strategic Defence Review of taking appropriate steps to ensure that the range of options for maintaining a minimum nuclear deterrent capability are kept open until the decision point, which is likely to be in the next Parliament. This entails replacing older facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston and decommissioning those no longer required in order to meet safety, regulatory and operational requirements.

Compared to what has been suggested during the SGO Plenary Session earlier in this PrepCom, we have no plans for developing any new types of nuclear weapons; and we have not changed Trident to have a tactical role. We have been very open about our warhead assurance programme, which is entirely consistent with the CTBT, is intended to ensure the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons and does not entail the release of any nuclear yield. As the Strategic Defence Review and Defence White Paper made clear, the UK’s nuclear policy remains one of “minimum deterrence” and has not changed. The only role for nuclear weapons in nuclear defence policy is political. Their purpose is to deter aggression, rather than to be used on the battlefield to gain military advantage. Nuclear weapons would only be used in extreme circumstances of self-defence and in accordance with international law.

Our commitment to nuclear disarmament remains as strong as ever. We have consistently stated that when we are satisfied that sufficient progress has been made – for example in further deep cuts in their nuclear forces by the US and Russia – to allow us to include the UK’s nuclear weapons in any multilateral negotiations, without endangering our security interests, we will do so.

We continue to value all reductions in nuclear weapons levels whether achieved through unilaterall, bilateral or multilateral means. As outlined in our strategy document ‘UK International Priorities’, published in December 2003, we are committed to work towards ‘a world safer from global terrorism and weapons of mass destruction’. Our commitment to the NPT remains a key element of this work.
Mr. Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that our commitment to the NPT remains undiminished. The UK has an excellent record on disarmament and continues to support the NPT in its entirety, including Article VI. As preparations for the 2005 Review Conference progress, we reaffirm wholeheartedly our commitment to the NPT and our determination to strengthen the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. On both points, the United Kingdom remains resolute.