UNITED KINGDOM

GENERAL STATEMENT

By

Ambassador Jo Adamson

UK Ambassador
to the
Conference on Disarmament

Head of the United Kingdom Delegation

at the

2012 Preparatory Committee for the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

VIENNA, 30 APRIL 2012

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GENERAL STATEMENT

Introduction

1. I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman on your appointment and assure you of our support in your efforts to ensure a successful outcome to this Preparatory Committee.

2. The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement given on behalf of the European Union.

3. I would now like to add some remarks on behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom.

PrepCom and NPT

1. This is the first time that the NPT states parties have met formally since the 2010 Review Conference, as we are now embark on a new review cycle together. The major success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference was the demonstrable commitment from all 189 state parties to the grand bargain that the NPT represents, and its three pillars of disarmament, non-proliferation and the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. There was consensus support for a cross pillar action plan, for the first time in the NPT’s history. The significance of this should not be underestimated.

2. This was a major success for multilateralism, and we should feel proud of our achievements, and the work of our then Chair, under the stewardship of my colleague from the Philippines. We must now build on that success, and implement the action plan that we all signed up to.

3. In recent years, the NPT has come under unprecedented pressure from a combination of factors: the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea; the risks of terrorist groups acquiring nuclear materials; the expected global renaissance in civil nuclear energy potentially leading to the dissemination of sensitive technology; and a fraying of the international consensus that has underpinned the Treaty due the competing priorities of states parties.

4. But all States benefit substantially from the NPT, in terms of both enhanced security and cooperation on civil nuclear energy. It is too important to be allowed to be undermined. The NPT must be strengthened across its three pillars during this Review Cycle, to remain fit for purpose in a world where we continue to face threats to international peace and security. This is at the heart of all states parties common interest and common responsibility.
5. The UK wants to bridge the perceived divides and help to build a shared understanding of what we can all gain from the NPT. The shared success of 2010 showed that we are moving in the right direction; the UK believes that we must continue to build on that positive momentum, right the way through to the RevCon in 2015.

1. 2011 was the so-called ‘fallow year’ in the cycle, and yet we saw the second P5 Conference in Paris, agreement by the P5 and ASEAN on the P5 Protocol to the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, which we will discuss in greater detail over the next two weeks, promising steps forward on the Middle East WMD Free Zone Conference, and a momentous report from the IAEA on the military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear programme.

7. This Preparatory Committee has a strong procedural remit, being the first in the review cycle, but we must also look to build on the consensus from 2010, and the positive developments that we saw in 2011. The UK sees this first PrepCom as an opportunity for state parties to collectively reaffirm their unconditional support for the NPT and their commitment to action plan implementation.

Disarmament

8. As a nuclear weapon state, the United Kingdom is fully aware that it has particular responsibilities to fulfil. The UK remains fully committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and we believe that we have a strong track record in meeting our disarmament commitments and obligations under the NPT.

9. As long as large arsenals of nuclear weapons remain and the risk of nuclear proliferation continues, the UK’s judgement is that only a credible nuclear capability can provide the necessary ultimate guarantee to our national security. The UK Government is therefore committed to maintaining a minimum national nuclear deterrent, and to proceeding with the renewal of Trident and the submarine replacement programme.

10. We have taken a number of additional important disarmament steps during and since the 2010 Review Conference, and we will give further detail of these measures in our statement under Pillar I. But, in general terms, these important confidence building measures include increasing the UK’s transparency by announcing for the first time the overall size of our warhead stockpile and publishing the most detailed Security and Defence Review in our history, reducing the number of warheads on our submarines, reducing our nuclear weapon stockpile and drawing up an updated negative security assurance to non-nuclear weapon states. We have already started the implementation of these measures, and have started to reduce our warhead numbers 15 years ahead of schedule.

11. We also continue to work closely with our P5 partners on implementation of the NPT Action Plan. Co-operation within the P5 has come a long way. Let us not forget that at the height of the Cold War, which many of us in this room can remember well, these same states that now meet recurrently to talk about disarmament confidence
building measures, on matters that go right to the heart of national security, were almost on the brink of confrontation.

12. The UK is committed to building trust between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, and taking tangible steps towards a safer world where the UK and others are able to relinquish their nuclear weapons. Our close partnership with Norway on the complex issues surrounding nuclear warhead dismantlement verification demonstrates this. Again, the UK will provide more detail on our collaboration with Norway on verification in the Cluster I statement. But I would also like to take this opportunity at the early stages of PrepCom to say that we'll also host a side event on this verification workstream, which I would encourage all states parties to attend.

13. And finally, on the wider disarmament agenda, let me reiterate that the UK will continue work with our international partners to continue making every effort possible to promote Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and to get negotiations started on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

**Non-Proliferation**

14. We are committed to strengthening the non-proliferation architecture, to build trust between neighbors, and to combat programmes of concern – safeguarding the security of NPT states parties. We welcome the E3 plus 3 and Iran talks on 14 April in Istanbul and the statement issued there by Baroness Ashton. We will give further detail of the UK position on non-proliferation during the cluster session II. But allow me to highlight some of the key points now.

15. Some States Parties may suggest that it is hypocritical for the UK to maintain its nuclear weapons while calling on others to desist from their development. Let me make clear that the UK does not insist on "non-proliferation first." The UK fully accepts that progress must be made across all three pillars in parallel in order to fulfill the 'Grand Bargain' at the heart of the NPT.

16. Equally, none of us should be in any doubt that the Treaty currently faces challenges from within. Article IV provides for the enjoyment of the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But these inalienable rights come hand in hand with obligations. Obligations to comply fully with the provisions of Articles I, II and III of the Treaty. Those who would develop clandestine nuclear weapons programmes through manipulation of Treaty rights should continue to be taken firmly to task by the international community. We must work together to ensure that all States Party fulfill their obligations to the Treaty so that all of us can enjoy those benefits in peace.

**Peaceful uses**

17. The UK is committed to supporting the expansion of civil nuclear, whilst ensuring that neither safety, security nor non-proliferation are compromised as enshrined in the NPT. We recognise that global energy demand is increasing and we remain committed to promoting the safe expansion of nuclear energy for those States who
choose to use it. The UK will give further details of actions undertaken as part of our commitment to the action plan during the Pillar III cluster.

18. Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight a further UK side event on closing the gap on nuclear skills training, taking place on Wed 9th May, and again, encourage all States Parties to send a representative where possible.

CONCLUSION

19. The UK firmly believes that NPT offers the best chance we have of getting the balance right on nuclear issues: with progress towards the long term goal of a world free of the threat of nuclear weapons, while promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Action Plan, as agreed at the 2010 RevCon, is our roadmap on how to deliver that long term goal. It is a goal to which I am personally committed. If we fail, we risk the uncontrolled spread of nuclear weapons to rogue states and terrorist groups. It is a shared responsibility of us all to ensure we do not fail. And I hope that the States Parties represented at the PrepCom for the next two weeks are ready and willing to take on that responsibility.