
Cluster III – Peaceful Uses

Statement

By

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UK Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva

2013 Preparatory Committee for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

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Mr Chairman,

1. My delegation fully supports the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Ireland on behalf of the European Union. I should like, in addition, to highlight one or two key issues relating to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

2. It is now over two years since the world witnessed the dreadful aftermath of the seismic events that occurred off the coast of Japan and the subsequent accident at Fukushima. This accident has focused global attention on the role that nuclear energy can, and should, play in meeting intense and expanding energy needs around the world. While decisions on whether to adopt, or to continue with, nuclear energy are for individual States, many countries are clear that nuclear energy will play a central role in balancing the need for energy security with objectives to mitigate climate change: in short, a safe, secure, and reliable supply of low-carbon energy. The UK, for its part, is committed to the promotion of safe nuclear energy by those who wish to use it – in line with Article IV rights. Indeed our own ambitious programme of nuclear new-build, based on the principle of no government subsidy, is testament to that commitment.

3. Of course, a commitment to nuclear energy comes with responsibilities. Recalling Action 59 of the Outcome Document of the 2010 Review Conference, for example, signatories are urged to consider becoming party to the various Conventions relating to nuclear safety, management of nuclear material, and nuclear accident procedures. These are crucial: moreover we commend the leadership of the IAEA in coordinating and implementing the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, and the Agency’s work in hosting the Nuclear Security Conference in July. The UK is proud of its support to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund, and will provide three million pounds to the Fund this year as part of its ongoing contributions. We urge other States who are able to provide contributions to do so. We also commend global efforts to minimise High Enriched Uranium, and replace its use in research reactors with Low Enriched Uranium wherever possible – Action 61 of the RevCon Action Plan. In this regard the UK is taking steps to defuel its last HEU-fuelled research reactor by early 2014.
4. The UK is also strongly committed to an effective and efficient safeguards regime, both in terms of promoting the best possible regulatory framework and making best use of limited safeguards resources. We fully support, and encourage, the IAEA in its efforts to introduce the State Level Concept – a system that uses all safeguards-relevant information about a State to draw up a State-level Safeguards Approach for the State. We look to this development – of differentiation without discrimination – to help take objective State factors into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of safeguards. We are also pleased to have been able to provide five hundred thousand Euros this year towards the new Nuclear Materials Laboratory of the IAEA.

5. Aside from nuclear power, effective safety, security and safeguards procedures also underpin the safe and assured use of small scale nuclear techniques, contributing markedly to a better quality of life in nearly every country. Wider use of nuclear applications, including those for medical diagnosis and treatment: crop protection, and understanding climate change better, is recognised as a major potential contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr Chairman,

6. Perhaps a theme running through the peaceful uses actions from the 2010 Review Conference is that of cooperation and partnership. No one country has ever realistically had all the necessary resources – human or material – or expertise or experience, to adequately and safely research, develop, and utilise nuclear energy for its own benefit, in line with the rights expressed in Article IV of the NPT. This will remain the case. Cooperation, at the scientific, technical, policy, and operational levels, will become even more important as resources become more stretched and we need to learn more from each other. So the frameworks for participating in the fullest possible exchanges of equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information – as urged in Action 48 - are fundamental. Based on our experience in the successful operation of nuclear facilities since the mid 1950s, the UK takes pride in its record as a partner on nuclear technology and skills. We continue to promote formal and informal cooperation agreements with others, and have concluded two – with Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates - since the Review Conference.

7. In this theme of cooperation the UK also strongly supports efforts to develop multinational approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle – steps under Action 58. By removing or reducing, for example, the risks of interruption to fuel supply, or

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removing the potential costs of unnecessary fuel cycle facilities, such measures can assist those States who seek to introduce or expand a nuclear power programme. Multinational approaches can also help reinforce international standards of safety and security. Moreover they pose no burden or impact on those States who do not wish to pursue nuclear energy or use them. The UK commends steps taken to date, and looks forward to further progress and ideas in this area, possibly covering regional possibilities, and different parts of the fuel cycle.

Mr Chairman,

8. In conclusion, the UK notes that the role of peaceful uses of nuclear energy can only intensify. The world seeks ever more energy, reliably and sustainably, and looks to nuclear technology to play an increasing role in securing better quality and duration of life for so many more people. In consequence, the role of the NPT – to help the world take advantage of what nuclear technologies have to offer in a safe, secure, and sustainable fashion – becomes ever more important. The United Kingdom is fully committed to the NPT and to the 2010 Action Plan. In this regard we strongly support the work of the IAEA, and look to the future as a committed global partner across the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

9. Finally Mr Chairman, as a State that is actively pursuing nuclear energy as part of its overall energy strategy, we warmly invite delegates to an event, to be held in Room XI tomorrow, Wednesday the first of May, at 1.15pm, that will present the UK’s experience of undertaking a path towards nuclear new build; in short the issues of a modern nuclear programme, and how we are tackling them, with the opportunity to pose questions to those involved. All are welcome.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.