THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

GENERAL STATEMENT

to the

THIRD PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE 2015 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

By

Peter Jones

Director Defence and International Security
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

New York, 28 April 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. Chairman,

1. I congratulate you on your appointment. My delegation will do all we can to support your efforts to ensure a successful outcome to this PrepCom and set us on a positive track to the RevCon in 12 months’ time.

2. The United Kingdom fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I would now like to add some further remarks in a national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

3. As we approach the end of this Review Cycle, we must continue to remind ourselves of our success in agreeing a cross-pillar Action Plan in 2010. This was a significant achievement. All States Parties are bound by that Action Plan, and my Government hopes that all will consider how to report on their own progress against it ahead of the RevCon. But we must recognise that the Action Plan was not a time-limited five-year exercise, and that we will need to agree the most appropriate way to make further progress on all of its issues.

4. The UK has been working diligently to make progress on the actions identified in the 2010 Action Plan, including Action 5. In 2010 we undertook to share the results of our efforts at this PrepCom, and we are pleased to be able to circulate a report with that information in the coming days.

5. The report follows a standard form agreed by the five NPT Nuclear Weapon States. That this has been achieved for the first time demonstrates the value of the P5 process and the incremental increases in trust and transparency between us that help create the conditions for disarmament. We recognise that there is much more work to be done, particularly at a time when Russia’s actions in Ukraine risk undermining trust.
6. We are nevertheless delighted that, along with the other Nuclear Weapon States, the United Kingdom will again demonstrate our commitment to legally-binding negative security assurances by signing a Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Central Asia, during this PrepCom. We do so now because the United Kingdom remains convinced that such assurances are crucial to making progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope to be able to take a similar step soon with respect to its South East Asian equivalent.

7. We welcome the informal consultations that have taken place between states of the region on arrangements for a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems – the first such conversations in almost two decades. We hope that an inclusive Conference will be convened soon. We also note the tentative progress that has been made with Iran since the last PrepCom, and hope that significantly more progress will be made so that the international community can be fully reassured about Iran’s nuclear programme.

8. There has regretfully been less progress on other issues. The United Kingdom deplores the DPRK’s ongoing nuclear activities, and remains concerned about Syria’s failure to remedy its non-compliance with the NPT. We also believe that State Parties must consider the ramifications of withdrawal from the NPT on individual and collective security, even whilst we continue to support the right of every State Party to withdraw. We hope that we will see progress on these and other issues by the RevCon.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The NPT has made a crucial contribution to international security over the past forty-five years. All States Parties must do what they can to ensure that the NPT remains at the heart of global dialogue on non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and we will talk more about our own priorities for each of the
pillars in our cluster statements. We also recognise that the NPT continues to face pressures and challenges. None are insuperable.

10. It is therefore right that we debate how best to achieve our common aims. That debate needs to support and strengthen our collective commitment to the NPT, not weaken it.

11. The UK is fully cognizant of the humanitarian consequences that could result from the use of nuclear weapons. We endeavour to prevent their use, and remain steadfastly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We recognise that the recent emphasis on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons stems, in part, from frustration with the pace of disarmament. We share that frustration. But it must be tempered with both realism and pragmatism.

12. We do not, therefore, support movements towards the negotiation of a ban treaty. Instead, we continue to believe that steps towards a world without nuclear weapons must be taken within the context of the political conditions that exist and the NPT’s multi-pillared approach. Disarmament cannot be achieved in isolation.

13. In summary, Mr. Chairman, the NPT continues to make a significant contribution to the strategic stability that the international community requires. We must uphold and strengthen the NPT because of, not despite, the complex security challenges that we all face. It remains the right framework for progress across all three pillars, including disarmament. And we must not allow our differences and frustrations preventing us seeing where we agree.

14. My delegation looks forward to substantive discussion, both this year and next, as we strive to achieve a consensual outcome in 2015 that reaffirms our support for the NPT. The United Kingdom looks forward to supporting you and playing its part in a constructive spirit.