THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

CLUSTER 1 ISSUES STATEMENT

to the

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

By

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United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations in Geneva

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. Chairman,

1. The United Kingdom would like to align itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I would now like to add some further remarks in a national capacity.

2. The United Kingdom remains fully committed to a world without nuclear weapons and we firmly believe that the best way to achieve this goal is through gradual disarmament negotiated using a step by step approach and within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

3. The United Kingdom understands the frustration expressed by those wanting to see faster and further progress towards a world without nuclear weapons. However, there are unfortunately no quick fixes to achieve nuclear disarmament. It requires incremental and sustained increases in trust and transparency between nuclear weapon states, and we continue to work diligently towards this end through the P5 process, most recently at the conference in Beijing in April. The sometimes differing views of the P5 Nuclear Weapon States makes this process challenging, but all the more valuable, which is why the UK has offered to host the next P5 Conference in London in 2015, in the lead-up to the RevCon.

4. We should also not forget how far we have come along the road of nuclear disarmament since the height of the Cold War. Overall, the number of nuclear warheads in the world now stands at around 17,000, including warheads in storage awaiting dismantlement. This is down from a peak of well over 60,000 in the mid 1980s.

5. Our own record on unilateral nuclear disarmament is strong. We have steadily reduced the size of our own nuclear forces by well over 50% since our Cold War peak, and all of our air delivered nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from service and dismantled. The previously announced reductions in our nuclear forces
to no more than 120 operationally available warheads and a total stockpile of no more than 180 warheads are continuing and will be completed by the mid 2020s. We now have just one delivery system provided by four SSBN submarines and have started the process to cut the maximum number of warheads onboard each deployed submarine from 48 to 40, while reducing the number of operationally available Trident missiles on each submarine to 8. These changes have already been completed on at least one of the vessels.

6. The United Kingdom has undertaken ground-breaking research into the challenges of verifying the dismantlement of nuclear warheads through the UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI), the first such project jointly with a non nuclear weapon state. We are also into the second decade of an active partnership with the United States on monitoring and verification research. I’m glad that many of you were able to attend the side events we organised yesterday to hear more about these initiatives.

Mr. Chairman

7. We also recognise that many delegations were disappointed that the United Kingdom chose not to attend the recent conference on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons in Mexico. The United Kingdom continues to be deeply concerned at the humanitarian consequences which could result from the use of nuclear weapons. That is why the United Kingdom continues to do our utmost to prevent their use and remains steadfastly committed to the long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

8. Much of the humanitarian consequences initiative has not, however, been focused on the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. It is focused instead on asserting that nuclear weapons per se are inherently unacceptable, a view we do not share. We consider that nuclear weapons have helped to guarantee our security, and that of our allies, for decades. We want a world without them, but we need to
proceed to it carefully. The right political and security conditions for an outright ban on nuclear weapons do not yet exist.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The United Kingdom supports the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which enhance regional and international security. We are therefore pleased to be signing the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Central Asia, and once signed the United Kingdom will ratify the Protocol as soon as possible. We hope that signature of this Protocol will encourage progress towards signature of the Protocol to the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, and we remain ready to work with South East Asian partners to resolve the outstanding issues.

10. In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would draw the attention of states parties to the more detailed information we have provided in our national report pursuant to Actions 5, 20 and 21 of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document. This demonstrates our continuing commitment to nuclear disarmament and to all three pillars of the NPT in an open and transparent way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.