2017 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Vienna, 2-12 May 2017

Pillar II

Statement by the United Kingdom

Mr Chairman,

I must first point out that the UK will hold a General Election on 8 June. Candidates in that election have a range of views. The statement I am about to make sets out the long-standing British view on non-proliferation.

Mr Chairman,

At the outset, the United Kingdom would like to align itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the European Union. I would also like to add some further remarks in a national capacity.

It is of course vital that the NPT remains fit for purpose in a world where we continue to face threats to international peace and security. The United Kingdom is committed to strengthening non-proliferation architecture, combating programmes of concern and building trust between neighbours, and we continue to work actively to reduce the risk of non-proliferation. The UK has consistently been at the forefront of international efforts to tackle proliferation. We devote substantial efforts to this.

Mr Chairman

The UK condemns in the strongest possible terms the DPRK’s continued development of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes in direct violation of UNSCRs 1718, 1874, 2087, 2270 and 2321. The UK has worked closely with UNSC partners throughout the development and adoption of these UNSCRs.
This robust engagement clearly demonstrates that the UK is prepared to support significant measures in response to the DPRK’s illegal programs. We deplore all the DPRK’s ongoing nuclear weapons activities and urge the DPRK to refrain from any actions that may violate UNSCRs, posing a threat to regional peace and stability. We echo the call for the DPRK to fulfil its commitments under the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, and to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We hope to see progress being made during the next review cycle.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is an important contribution to the non-proliferation regime. Since Implementation Day JCPOA on 16 January 2016, the UK has worked with our partners in the Joint Commission to ensure the deal’s success. We welcome the latest report from the IAEA confirming Iran is in compliance with its nuclear-related commitments. The UK remains absolutely committed to rigorous implementation of the JCPOA.

The prevention of the proliferation of ballistic missiles is of the utmost importance to the UK. Such proliferation in tandem with the illicit development of WMD poses a grave danger to regional and global peace and security. In this regard the work of the MTCR, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary, and other arms control and non-proliferation regimes is key and we encourage other states to work towards, or complete the process of, becoming state parties to the MTCR.

The UK is also actively engaged in the Proliferation Security Initiative, a multilateral response to the challenges that are posed by the proliferation of WMD, working through coordinated efforts to stop this proliferation trade. Last year the UK hosted the PSI’s operational experts meeting that serves as a forum to discuss and develop concepts to further the initiative.

We are also committed to improving the security of nuclear and other radioactive material. At the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington last year, we announced strong new commitments, including undertaking the largest single movement of Highly Enriched Uranium to the United States; to lead international efforts to strengthen the cyber security of nuclear plants; and a further investment of
over £10 million to improve nuclear security worldwide. Following the culmination of the Nuclear Security Summit process we continue to support the central role of the IAEA in strengthening the nuclear security framework globally and ensuring it has adequate resources to do so.

Mr. Chairman,

The United Kingdom is fully supportive of the role of the IAEA and its efforts to improve the effectiveness of safeguards implementation through the State Level Concept. We believe that a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement plus an Additional Protocol should be the universal verification standard.

The UK welcomes the fact that the vast majority of countries in the world have a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also note the fact that 146 countries have now signed an Additional Protocol and 129 have brought it into force, a demonstration of its widespread acceptance. We call on all States which have not yet done so to sign and bring into force the Additional Protocol as soon as possible.

We deplore Syria’s ongoing non-compliance with its nuclear safeguards obligations. We strongly urge Syria to cooperate fully with the IAEA by immediately providing access to the information, documentation, sites, material and personnel in Syria that the IAEA has requested.

The UK is also a strong supporter of the evolution of safeguards implementation to the State Level Concept (SLC). The SLC will enable the IAEA to focus its efforts on areas of greatest safeguards significance. It will also result in less predictable safeguards, increasing its deterrence value.

We also underscore our firm support for the continued evolution of the safeguards system. Our support takes many forms, including through the UK Safeguards Support Programme which, inter alia, provides training for IAEA inspectors, analysis of environmental samples and the provision of non-English open sources of
information that could reveal indications of undeclared nuclear activities. We also provide consultants, including assistance aimed at the resolution of non-compliance.

In addition, the UK believes that changes to the Small Quantities Protocols (SQP) are important because they remove a potential loophole in safeguards implementation in States without a nuclear facility and without an Additional Protocol. This is because the amended SQP requires a declaration of any nuclear material held by the State, which the IAEA can then verify, and the early provision of design information should the State decide to construct a nuclear facility.

The UK implements effective strategic export controls in regards to its nuclear transfers in line with the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee control lists; and by fulfilling its obligations, the UK contributes to minimizing nuclear proliferation while ensuring that State Parties of the NPT are able to access nuclear technology for peaceful uses. We consider current export control procedures to be robust and proportionate, and are committed to the responsible transfer of nuclear items (equipment, technology and materials) in line with our international obligations.

Mr Chairman

The United Kingdom supports the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which contribute significantly to bolstering the non-proliferation regime and enhancing regional and international security. By ratifying protocols to treaties on nuclear weapon free zones, the UK has given assurances to around 100 countries covering much of the globe including regions as diverse as Africa, Latin America and the Pacific. We remain committed to signing the outstanding Protocol for the South East Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.

The UK reiterates its support for a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We will be making a separate statement on this issue.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.