



STATEMENT

By

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NPT Preparatory Committee 2004

General Statement

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Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by saying how pleased we are to see you presiding over this Third Preparatory Committee. I wish you every success. You have our full support and co-operation for the challenging task that lies ahead.

I would like to record at the outset our endorsement of the statement made by Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

The past year will go down in the NPT history books for many reasons: some good, some bad. It will be remembered for Libya's historic decision to acknowledge and renounce its WMD programme. It will be remembered for Iran's decision to sign the Additional Protocol. But many will also remember it as the year that AQ Khan admitted selling Pakistani nuclear technology over a number of years to a series of non-nuclear weapon states. And the year that Iran was found not to have declared significant elements of its nuclear programme to the IAEA.

Events over the year have shown that multilateralism can pay great dividends in the field of counter-proliferation. But they have also demonstrated how much remains to be done. Loopholes in the international machinery are being sought by states to develop clandestine weapons programmes. Terrorists are seeking nuclear materials. These threats are not receding. Information from Pakistan that North Korea was pursuing an undeclared uranium enrichment programme reinforces the importance of the 6 Party Talks process under way in Beijing. We fully support that process. We must redouble our counter-proliferation activities and work to strengthen the international machinery that supports them.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It retains the wholehearted support of the United Kingdom and the vast majority of the international community. Over the past year the UK has strongly supported NPT objectives. We have worked in co-operation with the US to facilitate Libya's decision to acknowledge and renounce its WMD programme. We have facilitated Libyan engagement with the appropriate international bodies, the IAEA and the OPCW, and in co-operation with these agencies we have provided assistance with dismantlement of Libya's programme. Together with our EU partners, France and Germany we have encouraged Iran to resolve international concerns about the purpose of its nuclear programme through active co-operation with the IAEA. In conjunction with the IAEA Board of Governors, we have secured Iranian agreement voluntarily to suspend development of its uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. We believe that Iran needs to allay the concerns of the international community about its programme, and pave the way for a sustainable long-term agreement.

There have been calls recently from some quarters to introduce new NPT mechanisms, including Annual Conferences to replace the Prepscoms and a standing bureau of the Treaty. The idea is that such measures would strengthen the NPT process. We disagree. Mechanisms to tackle proliferation and non-compliance already exist within the IAEA and the UNSC. Let's concentrate our efforts on strengthening those rather than tinkering with core elements of the Treaty.

Compliance

The UK remains a staunch supporter of the IAEA's work in all areas. We particularly congratulate it for its work over the past year. The IAEA's work on safeguards underpins the entire NPT; it is the front line of defence against states who would cheat on their international obligations. We continue to call upon all states which have not yet done so to agree, bring into force, and comply with Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols to those agreements. We should aim for these to become universal in the shortest time possible. No country that is developing nuclear technology for purely peaceful purposes should have anything to fear from such a step.

Within the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the United Kingdom has actively promoted the principle that Participating Governments adopt the Additional Protocol, as a condition of supply for the most sensitive of nuclear items – the so-called Trigger List goods. Last year States Party agreed a package of measures that effectively sets the Agency's budget for a 4-year period. This included a significant increase in resources for the Agency's safeguards activities. Recent events have highlighted how vital the Agency's work is in this area. We must all continue to ensure that the Agency has the funding it needs. For our part, the United Kingdom has wherever possible paid its contributions in full and on time and has made voluntary contributions to the Agency in the last year worth over half a million dollars.

Counter-Proliferation

The IAEA's work alone will not solve today's problems. A broad range of tools is required that will necessitate action by other international bodies and by national governments.

We should expand the work of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Through improved information sharing and enhanced operational readiness, PSI has created the practical basis for co-operation among states in interdicting shipments of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials. Since its launch last year PSI has gained the support of over 60 countries and the number continues to grow. We hope eventually to involve all countries that have the will and capacity to co-operate.

The Global Partnership is a genuinely multilateral effort to tackle the dangers posed by the weapons legacy of the former Soviet Union. We are now seeing results on the ground. Work under the Partnership includes programmes for the security and disposition of fissile material, improving border security, controlling radiological sources, and redirecting scientists and other specialists with weapons of mass destruction expertise into peaceful civilian employment, including commercial ventures. The UK is a strong supporter of the Global Partnership. We have committed up to \$750 million over 10 years.

The UK has put domestic legislation in place to give effect to our international commitments. The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 makes it an offence to aid or abet the overseas use or development of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. The Export Control Act 2002 extends current end-use controls to include the provision of technical assistance and the transfer of technology by any means.

We would ask other national governments to enact and enforce effective domestic laws and controls that support non-proliferation and criminalise proliferation: there must be stiff penalties for those that do not comply. The United Nations Security Council is currently negotiating a resolution to advance these goals. We hope that it will soon be adopted and stand ready to help states meet the obligations contained within it.

Peaceful Uses

The United Kingdom strongly supports the principle that States Party should have access to the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy as described in Article IV of the NPT. But the right to enjoy such benefits should be conditional on compliance with Articles I-III as the Foreign Secretary said in his statement to Parliament of 25 February. States Party that have failed to comply with their safeguards obligations lose the confidence of the international community. We should consider whether such states should not lose the right to the nuclear fuel cycle, particularly the enrichment and reprocessing capabilities which are of such proliferation sensitivity. This does not mean the states concerned could not construct and run civil nuclear power stations. These could still operate with fuel supplied by countries honouring their safeguards obligations. The fuel would be subject to Agency monitoring while in the receiving country, and would be returned to the country of supply when spent. This would prevent a seemingly civil programme masking a weapons programme.

Universality

India, Pakistan and Israel remain outside the treaty. We call on them to adhere to the treaty as non-nuclear weapon states. We would be against any move to amend the Treaty to give them formal status as nuclear weapon states. We believe that all three should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and join us in a moratorium on the production of fissile material and the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty as the next steps towards nuclear disarmament. We welcome recent efforts by India and Pakistan to work together to reduce nuclear tensions in the region through confidence building measures. We believe that this is an essential step to avoid the risk of escalation to a nuclear exchange. It is vital that the two sides get a realistic understanding of each other's decision-making processes and red lines. Pakistan has been a source of nuclear proliferation through the activities of AQ Khan, and India has developed its domestic technological base to the extent that it could be an attractive target for procurement networks. We need to find effective ways in which to work with both in the future.

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

The UK continues to support the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and is playing a constructive role as a Nuclear Weapon State in their development. The UK has continued to engage in talks with the five Central Asian and the South East Asian states. We hope for progress on both the Central Asian and South East Asian nuclear weapons free zones soon.

The UK also continues to support the objective of establishing an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction. We have submitted a report to the UN Secretariat outlining the UK's contribution on Middle East issues, including our contribution to the realisation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which the UK co-sponsored.

Negative Security Assurances

Our position on NSAs has not changed. We remain committed to our negative security assurance as we gave it in 1995, as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 984. In addition, the UK has given NSAs through the Protocols it has signed to NWFZ Treaties. Since 2000 the UK has signed and ratified the relevant protocols to the Treaties of Rarotonga and Pelindaba, which established the South Pacific and African Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, respectively. We believe that these commitments already give Non-Nuclear Weapons States the assurances they seek.

Disarmament

I would now like to turn to the third pillar of the NPT: disarmament.

The UK continues to support the disarmament measures listed in the 2000 Final Document and the 1995 Review Conference decisions. We value all reductions in nuclear weapon levels whether achieved through unilateral, bilateral or multilateral means.

The 1998 Strategic Defence Review and 2003 Defence White Paper affirmed that the UK remains committed to working towards a safer world in which there is no requirement for nuclear weapons. We believe that strengthening the international non-proliferation regime is an important element of our work towards this goal. Over the past decade the UK has made substantial progress on our global nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT (Art VI). This has included: the withdrawal and dismantling of our maritime tactical nuclear capability; the withdrawal and dismantling of the RAF's WE177 nuclear bomb; and the termination of the nuclear Lance missile and artillery roles that we undertook with US nuclear weapons held under dual-key arrangements. This left Polaris, later superseded by Trident, as our only nuclear weapons system.

Since 2000 we have completed the dismantling of our Chevaline (Polaris) warheads. We hold less than 200 operationally available warheads. This amounts to a reduction of 70% in the explosive power of our nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War, taking the UK from four nuclear roles to just one. We have announced that our nuclear forces patrol on reduced readiness; only a single Trident submarine is now on deterrent patrol at any one time, normally at several days "notice to fire" and with its missiles de-targeted.

These measures build on actions previously taken by the UK to build confidence and increase transparency in Article VI related issues. Among others, we have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). In 1995 we announced that we had stopped the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. In 1998 we were the first NWS to declare the total size of these stocks. We then voluntarily placed all our fissile material no longer required for defence purposes under international safeguards where they are liable to inspection by the IAEA. In 1998 we also initiated a fissile material "historical accounting" programme. The first stage of this work concluded in 2000 with the publication of our Plutonium historical accounting record at the time of the NPT Review Conference.

We continue to work for the re-commencement of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) and call upon others to join us in a moratorium on production. We believe that global nuclear disarmament is a process, and that an FMCT is the next step in that process.

Last year we held a lunch-time seminar to introduce some of the work that we have been doing to develop UK expertise in verifying the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons internationally. We have continued with this work and we invite you to see for yourselves what we have been doing at a presentation on Friday lunchtime. We will also be publishing a second working paper entitled: "Verification of Nuclear Disarmament: Second Interim Report on Studies into the Verification of Nuclear Warheads and their Components." There is an information leaflet about the seminar in the UK information pack at the back of the room.

Nuclear Terrorism

It would be wrong to conclude this speech without mentioning the threat of nuclear terrorism. Recent events in Madrid, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated all too clearly that there are individuals or groups in the world that are determined to wreak havoc on society and kill hundreds or thousands of innocent civilians in the promotion of their cause. The threat of terrorist use of nuclear weapons concerns us all. We welcome the work that is being carried out to reduce this risk: by individual nations, by the counter-terrorism committee in New York, by the IAEA, the G8 and other organisations. We also welcome work to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, let me repeat. The UK is fully committed to the NPT, is meeting its commitments under it, and will continue to work nationally, bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally to further strengthen its regime. We want to see a universal, verifiable instrument that guarantees a world free from nuclear danger, and so provides the security that all of us here today are looking for. The NPT offers the best hope of achieving that goal.

Thank you Mr Chairman.