



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR DAVID BROUCHER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

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Mr President. Let me take the opportunity of this, my first statement to the Conference on Disarmament, to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference. I will not add to your burden by stressing the responsibility that lies on your shoulders as President, but I will assure you of the support of the UK delegation in bearing that burden, and my own willingness to help in whatever way I can your efforts to move forward our work.

Let me also thank my colleagues in the CD for the warmth and the cooperative spirit I have experienced since my arrival in Geneva.

Mr President. Before my arrival in Geneva last year, my previous involvement in disarmament issues had been in the early-1980's: a time when we were still mired in the stale disputes that characterised much of what passed for international negotiation during the Cold War. It was with that in mind that last year in my first report to London as disarmament ambassador here, I said that I saw some important improvements in the arms control scene. Many others apart from me in this room know the value of the CWC, the NPT extension, the CTBT, the Ottawa Convention – to name only a few – because we remember times when they seemed out of reach. The CD made its contribution to those important advances, and others, in the early and mid-nineties. I am glad that the UK was also able to use the historic changes in the nineties to make some real advances in disarmament. Our unilateral reductions since the end of the Cold War mean that the potential explosive power of Britain's operationally available nuclear warheads has been reduced by more than 70%.

As the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said in a speech on this subject yesterday, arms control "has been one of the outstanding successes of international policy" of the last 50 years. But having made those important advances the international community is now in danger of getting stuck again. The past twelve months have brought some successes – one thinks of the agreement of a Programme of Action on Small Arms and the good results we had at the end of last year from the CCW Review Conference. But we remember the past year as much for its disappointments – including the inability of the parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to agree to measures to strengthen that

regime. Here in the CD we remember our failure, for the third year running, to agree a work programme. The momentum for progress in international arms control, so increased during the last decade, has been running down for at least those three years. We badly need to reinvigorate our work here and more generally.

Above all we must not risk squandering some of the achievements and agreements our predecessors worked so hard for. The world is in many ways a more dangerous and unpredictable place now than it was in the Cold War. The possible use of Weapons of Mass Destruction is more a real threat to civilian populations than has ever been the case before and this knowledge contributes to the sense of threat that people feel, and the risks that conflict entails.

Mr President. It was my predecessor's privilege to be sitting where you are now when the CD last adopted a programme of work, in 1998. The CD has done no substantive work since then. By my calculation that means that ambassadors of the countries represented here have trooped into this room more than seventy times – and each time, they have been unable to find a way out of the continuing impasse. They have not used facilities available to them from the UN for more than 2000 hours of negotiation. It is no wonder that there is a tendency to keep, or to take, arms control initiatives out of the CD.

Nor are the consequences confined to the CD. In April, the first PrepCom for the next Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty will talk about the implementation of that treaty. It is disappointing that the CD has not so far responded to the call of the last NPT Review Conference to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut off treaty, an utterly indispensable step for moving towards nuclear disarmament. And this is despite the fact that there has been international consensus on a negotiating mandate for such a treaty for more than six years. Jack Straw confirmed in his speech yesterday the UK's firm support for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and our determination that the Conference on Disarmament should overcome the road blocks and move forward.

During the last twelve months, the Amorim proposals have commanded the Conference's attention as the best opportunity for starting work. Since August 2000, nothing better has come along, nor does it look likely to. Indeed, nothing better is needed, in the UK's view, since the Amorim proposals protect the vital interests of every country in this Conference. Obviously there are differences of view: in particular over whether there should be a treaty negotiation on outer space. But the best way to get an agreement on that would be to start the debate on it that would take place in an Ad Hoc Committee - as allowed for by the Amorim proposals. The UK is keen for the CD to start work on its whole work programme.

Mr President. In his statement yesterday, Jack Straw noted the despair in some quarters that "the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is inevitable, and that our only hope lies in deterrence, defence and, in the last resort, retaliation." It is true, he said, that "proliferation continues, often in states which reject internationally agreed standards of decency, and that this means we cannot afford to regard the existing body of arms control methods as comprehensive." New times and new challenges need new responses. But they do not make the old responses worthless. The UK has played an active role in the negotiation and implementation of arms control agreements. We will carry on doing so, in fields as diverse as the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, the forthcoming negotiation on Explosive Remnants of War, the continuing work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO and many more.

Mr President. The work done by the Conference on Disarmament, and by these other institutions, has made the world safer. I am determined that the Conference on Disarmament should be active, and working to advance disarmament. The CD is currently a bastion of procrastination and inactivity. We must work together to change it into an effective vehicle for progress and real achievement.

Thank you Mr President.