



**United Kingdom
Permanent Representation
to the
Conference on Disarmament**

**Statement By
Ms Fiona Paterson
Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom
to the Conference On Disarmament**

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Mr Secretary General, Distinguished colleagues,

Having assumed the Presidency of the CD, I would like first of all on behalf of the UK Delegation to thank our Ukrainian colleague, Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda, for the valuable work he and his delegation have done over the four weeks of their presidency. This period, at the beginning of the second session, has witnessed a strengthening of the consensus on the need to get back to work, specifically on the desire to see CD1840 adopted as our programme of work.

Dear Colleagues,

The United Kingdom is a strong advocate of multilateral disarmament, and supports efforts to sustain and strengthen international security through such endeavours. The Conference on Disarmament, a key part of this multilateral architecture, has a long and distinguished history. We are all well aware however that the last decade has seen a degree of stagnation and malaise.

The United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence called in his February address to the Conference for us to 'redouble our efforts' on moving forward the debate and seeking solutions. With the successful establishment of the P6 Presidency platform, and the emerging consensus around recent draft declarations, we are at last seeing light at the end of this decade-long tunnel. Now is the time to demonstrate our desire to create a safer and more ordered world by restarting our work.

In the course of the 2008 plenary sessions we have witnessed a succession of senior figures reminding us of our obligations, and voicing clear signals of support for the Conference. UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon opened the conference in January by noting that when, in 2007, the Conference was on the verge of reaching a decision on a programme of work, he called for a spirit of compromise – which did not materialise. He renewed this call for 2008; let us not disappoint this year.

We have seen further strong statements calling for us to begin substantive work, including from the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Abdelwaheb Abdallah, the US National Nuclear Security Administrator Mr Thomas D'Agostino, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Sergey Lavrov, and the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Yang Jiechi.

Distinguished colleagues,

Draft Declaration CD1840, tabled on 13 March, represents the culmination of over two years of discussion, work and refinement, during which all Delegations have had the opportunity to air their views. We now have a declaration, a proposed programme of work, which commands almost complete consensus at this Conference. As we all know, that would not only allow us to begin negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty but also to commence substantive discussions on three other Agenda Items: Nuclear Disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, issues related to Prevention of an Arms

Race in Outer Space and appropriate arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Let us recognise that beginning negotiations without pre-conditions on a FMCT, as many have called upon us to do, would give us the opportunity to further identify those areas which present difficulties to Delegations. - The process of negotiations, the starting of which would in no way prejudice the outcome, is the very platform for designing an outcome acceptable to all.

We will all, my own country not least, have difficulties with aspects of that negotiation – there is no point in pretending that it will be easy. But let's not lose sight of the bigger picture. A series of powerful interventions over the last year or so have reminded us of the pivotal importance to global security of progress on multilateral disarmament. Globally, nuclear arsenals have significantly decreased - and are set to continue doing so – witness France's announcement in March, and the commitment by US and Russia to work for a legally binding successor to START. We have repeatedly underlined our commitment to work for a world free from nuclear weapons. The vital next step down that road is a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. No state claims to object. The right way to resolve our differences over the details is through negotiating. The world is bewildered by our failure even to begin doing so.

My P6 colleagues and I strongly hope the call for action can be heeded.

Dear Colleagues,

My delegation and I look forward to productive co-operation with all of you during the United Kingdom Presidency. It is our intention to hold P6 consultations and Presidential consultations with regional groups on Monday mornings, CD plenary sessions on Tuesday mornings, and to pursue intensive consultations in close co-operation with our P6 colleagues during the remainder of the week, for the purpose of identifying and addressing any remaining areas of difficulty. To this end we remain especially open to suggestions any delegation may have on CD1840 which they, after consultations with others, consider will bring us even closer to consensus. We seek to end frustration and start meaningful work.

Distinguished colleagues,

When we look at what has been achieved by the Conference on Disarmament in the past, the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to name but two of the accomplishments, we see the magnitude of what we would be capable of producing were we to begin substantive work. We should not allow this opportunity to re-make the Conference on Disarmament the bastion of multilateral arms control that it used to be, which is firmly within our grasp, pass us by.