

**Statement By Ambassador John Duncan
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom
to the Conference On Disarmament
Geneva, 23 March 2007
Draft Decision**

Mme President

May I begin by offering heartfelt congratulations on your appointment at this momentous moment. You may count on our support.

Mme President

The United Kingdom has made clear on a number of occasions, both at Ministerial level and in my own interventions that we attach considerable importance to getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work. We therefore very much support the efforts of the P6 Presidencies, both this year and last, to find a way to break through the impasse which has prevented the Conference from fulfilling our ambitions for it for nearly a decade. This work has been exemplary and in the highest traditions of professional diplomacy in harnessing our collective will.

Mme President

The Conference on Disarmament was established in the middle of the twentieth century as a forum which would allow what was termed at the time "military significant states" to engage in a dialogue with other members of the international community on issues of Arms Control and Disarmament. That solemn undertaking has guided the United Kingdom's reflections on the way discussion has progressed over the past 18 months.

The decision tabled before us deals with an issue of singular importance, the agreement to begin negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, and the United Kingdom made clear on a number of occasions that we see this as a top priority.

However, other members have raised other issues and explained the importance that they attach to substantive discussion. It is part of the bargain which underpins the Conference on Disarmament that we as one of the founding "military significant nations" should reaffirm our undertaking given some 50 years ago to take part in discussion on subjects, which are not our first priority and which indeed we may find uncomfortable.

Mme President

To focus overly on questions of detail would suggest that the CD membership have not had time to discuss and indeed test the mechanisms which are proposed by the P6. As others have commented, such an approach could be

read as an attempt to dissemble or hide issue of substance behind issues of procedure.

Nor Mme President would it be wise to attempt to use a decision to prejudge a negotiation. I am sure that this lesson is one that the CD membership collectively has well understood.

Mme President

The world has changed significantly since this conference was established. Military significant nations no longer means the same as it once did. However, perhaps our founding fathers were indeed wise in their choice of words. The fundamental principle they articulated still applies prestige/power, or as some have termed it "Orgueil national", go hand in hand with responsibility.

Mme President

It is because of the United Kingdom's commitment to the Conference on Disarmament, and our determination both to live up to the undertaking that my country made in joining the conference, as well as to contribute to efforts to get the conference back to work, that I am able to say today in this formal session that we can support the draft decision which has been tabled by the P6 Presidencies.

I am sure Mme President that other Delegations will reflect carefully on the matter and I am confident that we are on the brink of a momentous decision for CD, which will have implications going wider than this forum. But as others have commented the window of opportunity is a narrow one. The time for decision is indeed upon us.