

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation and A World Free From Nuclear Weapons,
Comments by Simon Manley, FCO Director Strategic Threats, at Wilton Park Non-
Proliferation Conference, 20 December 2007**

Intro

- FCO is pleased to be supporting this annual fixture in the nuclear non-proliferation calendar. Valuable opportunity for informal exchanges which I can assure you feed directly into the UK policy debate.
- Focus of session is discussion of prospects for the elimination of nuclear weapons – I'll come to what steps we are taking towards achieving this crucial goal. But first, a few words on the key non-proliferation challenges, and some ideas on how we should address them.

NPT priorities, Iran

- Some participants here talk of the NPT in crisis, or even terminal decline. It's a legitimate perception, but not one I share.
- Threats to the regime are real. Iran, DPRK, terrorist efforts to acquire CBRN materials, what to do about nuclear weapons states outside the NPT, the civil nuclear renaissance with its accompanying proliferation risks. You've discussed these already in some detail. They are all different, and need different approaches to address them.
- NPT is a collective endeavour because its principles are in our collective interest. There's a common thread to any response which would be effective – concerted international action. And that's the underlying rationale of UK action in this field.
- On Iran, the most serious threat to the non-proliferation regime, this means working through the IAEA on one hand, and the UNSC on the other. It means making clearer that there is a generous offer on the table which confirms Iran's right to benefit from civilian use of nuclear energy. But it also means that we have to step up targeted pressure by the UNSC, not losing sight of the fact that Iran continues to defy 3 UNSCRs.
- No doubt Iran, and the other challenges I've referred to, are putting the NPT under strain. But our response is not to give up on the NPT, or look around for alternatives, but to work in this review cycle for international action to strengthen the Treaty – in all its aspects.
- On non-proliferation: to strengthen the non-compliance aspects – many good ideas already aired in this conference, including beefing up penalties for withdrawal.

- On peaceful uses of nuclear energy: to promote the rights of all to benefit, while remaining alive to the risks. Some excellent proposals on the table on reliable access to nuclear fuel, including UK enrichment bond. Turning some of these proposals into action would be an important step forward. We need now to generate new momentum in this area.
- On disarmament, reasserting the vision of a world free from nuclear weapons, while working in a practical way towards achieving that goal.

A World Free from Nuclear Weapons

Margaret Beckett made clear at the Carnegie conference in June the UK's commitment to revitalise the vision of a world free from nuclear weapons. Her speech continues to guide UK policy.

She said "Believing that the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons is possible can act as a spur for action on disarmament. Believing, at whatever level, that it is not possible is the surest path to inaction. If there will always be nuclear weapons, what does it matter if there be 1000 or 10,000?"

This is a powerful argument against those that Sir Michael Quinlan, one of Britain's greatest thinkers on this subject, has called the "dismissive realists" – those who argue that successful abolition is so fanciful, at least without an international environment so vastly different from today's, that it is idle to spend time talking about it.

Mrs Beckett also noted the perception in the NPT community that even though nuclear weapons states had reduced their arsenals considerably, there was a reducing commitment to nuclear disarmament – because arms control treaties are expiring or under threat of extinction, because of the disappointment of the 2005 Review Conference and the lack of progress on an FMCT or a CTBT.

There are complex reasons for the current set of stalemates – no one state or group of states is to blame. But the result is that for the health of the NPT it is all the more important for nuclear weapons states to demonstrate their conviction in the achievability of nuclear elimination.

That doesn't mean beginning a negotiation towards zero tomorrow. As the NPT preamble suggests, getting to zero will require a much more secure and predictable global context. We will need effective arms control, resulting in much reduced nuclear arsenals. And we will need confidence that the trend towards nuclear proliferation has been reversed, and that states will adhere to their non-proliferation obligations. The responsibility for getting the world to that point lies with all states.

But we can begin now with serious work that will be vital to the eventual negotiation. We can foresee now, for example, that any such negotiation would require declarations about numbers of warheads, the verification of their dismantlement, and verification that

everything that ought to have been declared had been. These are not straightforward issues, and there is thinking and work that can be done about them now.

One issue relating to declarations, for example, is precisely how you would define a "warhead" and what exactly "dismantlement" should mean. It is because of the need to consider issues like this more fully that we funded the workshop run by the IISS, to which I believe Mark Fitzpatrick referred last night.

As for the issue of verifying dismantlement, this is the focus of the work now ongoing at the UK's Atomic Weapons Establishment. They are looking at four particular areas. Firstly, managing access to sensitive nuclear weapons facilities, secondly, authentication of objects presented for dismantlement as warheads, including the use of information barriers to protect design information; thirdly, chain of custody problems in sensitive facilities; and fourthly the monitored storage of dismantled nuclear weapons. We plan to report the progress made to the NPT review cycle.

An important strand of this work, as Kare Aas may have mentioned last night, involves co-operation with Norway. We are already finding invaluable the perspective offered by an independent non-nuclear weapons state, because a successful regime will require mutual trust.

Verifying that everything that ought to have been declared has been declared will probably be the most difficult task - and increasingly important as numbers reduce. This will require a lot more thought but is fortunately an issue with a considerable lead-time.

To begin a process towards zero, it's also fair to say that a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, or something like it, is a prerequisite. It is inconceivable that we can attain our ultimate goal in the absence of a worldwide ban on the further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. An FMCT would therefore be a huge step forward for disarmament, and we will continue to do our utmost to work for the start of negotiations at the CD.

With the use of nuclear energy set to expand, we nonetheless face a world in which significant quantities of fissile material will be in circulation. And so a world free from nuclear weapons will require further arrangements to assure states against any misuse of the civilian nuclear energy facilities that will continue to exist, particularly of any enrichment or reprocessing plants.

Finally, it is inevitable that before giving up their last nuclear weapon, nuclear weapons states will require some kind of assurance against the redevelopment of nuclear capabilities – in other words, "nuclear breakout", by others. In one of the thoughtful papers on disarmament he produced for this year's PrepCom, Chris Ford argued that the answer was to "ensure the maintenance over time of a balance of costs and benefits such that would be violators understand that potential development or reconstitution of nuclear weapons would be unprofitable and would make them less (not more) secure". I think that summarises the challenge well. We will never make "breakout" impossible, because

we cannot eliminate the knowledge of how to produce a nuclear weapon. But there are a number of steps we can take to make breakout such a high-risk, high penalty option that nuclear weapons states will be reassured that no other would dare try. One element will be ensuring that any attempt to redevelop a nuclear capability is detected as soon as possible. That's a difficult challenge, likely to require many of the tools of verification: reporting, safeguards, monitoring, inspections, remote sensing, and more. There would presumably need to be pre-determined, disabling sanctions for any violators. A further part of the solution might conceivably be the development of a global "strategic insurance" of some sort: either a deterrent, or defences, to significantly reduce the potential for breakout to result in any military advantage.

But as I imagine you will have discussed all this and more in greater depth in your groups, I shall now give way and listen to the fruits of your debates.