

**UK General Statement  
to the 2008 Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee  
by  
Ambassador John Duncan, Ambassador for Multilateral Arms Control and  
Disarmament, Geneva, 28 April 2008**

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Mr. President

Let me start as is customary by offering my sincere congratulations on your appointment as Chair of this Preparatory Committee. We are most grateful for the energy and hard work that you have put into preparing for this meeting over the past months. I can assure you that you will have the United Kingdom's full support in your endeavours to ensure the success of this important event.

The United Kingdom strongly endorses the statement made by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of its Member States. It represents the individual and collective commitment of twenty-seven States who will spare no effort in their contribution to this meeting and to the success of this review cycle.

In my national capacity I would now like to say a few words. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed almost forty years ago on 1 July 1968. It would be wrong to let the forthcoming anniversary pass without taking stock. Traditionally it's said that a human being reaches their prime at forty. Is the NPT in its prime? Perhaps not. The challenges of last few years have undoubtedly put the Treaty under pressure. But at nearly forty, it's very clear that the NPT remains the foundation stone of international non-proliferation architecture. If it didn't exist, the world would be a much more dangerous place, and we would assuredly need to re-invent it.

We have no doubt that the Non-Proliferation Treaty has served the world well over the last four decades. The hands of the so called "Doomsday clock" have never reached midnight as so many predicted. And holdings of nuclear arms have fallen precipitously and are now at their lowest levels for several decades. But, as I say, we face new challenges as we move forward in the new century and it's those challenges that make the NPT more relevant than ever.

The United Kingdom is unequivocally committed to strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty and let me be clear - To strengthening all three of its pillars.

The starting point, is that Non-proliferation and disarmament are not in competition. The world cannot be divided into non-proliferators and disarmers. There is no logic, no vision and no profit in championing disarmament and turning a blind eye to proliferation.

If one is truly committed to the goals of Article VI, if one is passionate about keeping nuclear weapons and fissile material for use in such weapons on a downward path – and I speak here as the representative of a country that has reduced its nuclear arsenal by 75% since the end of the Cold War – then you must be a non-proliferator.

There is no alternative. Let's be very clear. The emergence of a new nuclear-armed state or states would put the clock back a generation or more. It's not hard to imagine the consequences. A new nuclear arms race. The destabilisation of the region concerned. In sum, a huge blow to international peace and security.

It's a deeply unattractive vision. But it is one that we can prevent through our collective will and determination.

Let us remember the shared values and the common sense of purpose that made the Non-Proliferation Treaty possible. And let us reaffirm our obligations, all of our obligations, in the Treaty. For the United Kingdom that means a world where the international community will tolerate no proliferation. It means a genuinely invigorated approach to nuclear disarmament. And it means a world in which the NPT enables and facilitates the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, whilst underpinning our common security.

This is the task that lies ahead as we look to the Review Conference in 2010. Despite the difficulties, we made a good start last year at the first PrepCom. We now need to build on that. Over the next two weeks let us identify and deepen areas of convergence that can form the basis to taking forward our common endeavour and let us not forget that it is indeed "A Common Endeavour". So while we should not shy away from the more difficult or contentious areas - we need open and honest discussion, but let's make sure understanding and goodwill are the leaven in our debates.

Mr. President,

I look forward to sharing our detailed analysis and priorities in the individual cluster sessions. I wish you good fortune in the task ahead and pledge you our full support.