

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOHN DUNCAN
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
16 MAY 2006**

Mr President

As this is the first time that I take the floor in the CD let me begin by saying how delighted and indeed honoured I am to join this forum in Geneva, especially at this particular time. I have heard about the untiring work you and your predecessors have carried out this year in an effort to break the impasse of previous years. May I assure you and all the other CD Presidents in 2006, as well as the Friends of the Chair, of my personal support and of my Delegation's continuing support for all your efforts. And to my CD colleagues, may I say how much I am looking forward to working alongside you and to sharing views.

Mr President

Multilateral arms control and disarmament has been at a low ebb following last year's disappointing NPT RevCon and Millennium Summit outcomes. And there has been a worrying and damaging polarisation of attitudes on these issues in the international community. But you and your fellow P6 Presidents have refused to give way to pessimism. Instead you have recognised, as my Minister of State, Dr Kim Howells said in this very room 7 weeks ago, that "there are matters of the real world that we have to connect with [outside this Chamber]". And you have determinedly set about reinvigorating the work of the CD through thematic debate. The UK welcomes your initiative to return the CD to serious work, as we have also welcomed other initiatives designed to allow us to meet our obligations as CD Members. We need to use the CD purposefully if we are to meet key arms control and disarmament challenges. We need an agreed Programme of Work.

Mr President

To this end, I have asked three UK experts to be available to participate in this week's discussions. It is no secret that the UK sees the immediate commencement of negotiations without pre-conditions on an FMCT as a first priority, a view shared by our EU partners. We recognise others in this Chamber hold different views. But thanks to you and the P6, Mr President, we have a unique opportunity this year to listen, to share concerns and to explore ideas in an effort to find consensus on a way forward. And so one of my experts will give a brief presentation tomorrow setting out in more detail the reasons why the UK is convinced that it is in everyone's interests to begin FMCT negotiations without further delay. Since 1995 the UK has done more than talk. We have also taken practical steps to pave the way for an FMCT, including stopping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, placing our facilities which can produce Highly Enriched Uranium or plutonium under international safeguards, and increasing transparency about our remaining stocks of fissile material for defence purposes.

Mr President

I should like to take this opportunity to reaffirm to colleagues today, that the UK takes both its NPT Article VI and Article IV commitments to disarmament and to non-proliferation seriously, and we will continue to stand by those commitments. And I think our disarmament record to date is a good one. We have

- reduced our reliance on nuclear weapons to one system, Trident;
- reduced the readiness of our nuclear forces to a single Trident submarine on deterrent patrol at any one time;
- Trident missiles are not targeted at any country;
- the UK holds fewer than 200 operationally available warheads – the minimum level necessary for our national security;
- in all, we have reduced the explosive power of UK nuclear weapons by 70% since the end of the Cold War.

Mr President

Turning to non-proliferation, whose very corner-stone is the NPT, the UK will not let last year's disappointments prevent us from moving forward. We will take every opportunity to encourage all States to adopt the IAEA's Additional Protocol and are actively working with others to formulate appropriate incentives for countries to forego fuel-cycle facilities. Whilst fully recognising the right of States who are in compliance with their Article IV obligations under the NPT to use and benefit from nuclear technology, it is clear to us that the nuclear fuel-cycle presents particularly acute proliferation risks.

The UK will continue to call for strong and comprehensive export controls to prevent the unrestrained spread of nuclear supplies and technologies. Where illicit transport of such goods is already in progress we believe that the Proliferation Security Initiative will continue to have an important role to play.

Like everyone else the UK is concerned at the prospect and growing threat of nuclear terrorism and seeking ways to counter it we worked actively to ensure the renewal of the Mandate of the UNSCR 1540 Committee. We continue to stand ready to meet the obligations in the UN Resolution and to help others to do so.

The UK is also pursuing a wide range of non-nuclear issues, both here in Geneva and in New York, aimed at improving security and reducing conflict. My CD colleagues here will already have heard my Minister of State, Kim Howells speak on one of these – the initiative for a Treaty on the Trade in Conventional Arms, known as the Arms Trade Treaty.

Mr President

Let me say once again, how pleased I am to be here at the CD. I look forward to future discussions within this Chamber. The challenges we must meet are not just British concerns, but global ones.

Thank you Mr President.