



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

**Statement to the Conference on Disarmament
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Mr President,

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be here at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. It is the first time that a British Minister has addressed this conference in a number of years, but I thought that, particularly following last year's disappointments at the NPT Review Conference and at the Millennium Review Summit, a visit now would be a timely opportunity for me to set out the UK's priorities in disarmament and non proliferation and to underscore our continuing commitment to both.

There is a lot of talk today about the non-proliferation regime being in crisis, the Non Proliferation Treaty being on the verge of collapse and the UN disarmament machinery in disarray due to a lack of political will amongst the member states. I want to emphasise that whilst there are real grounds for concern - and I understand the strength of feeling in many countries - these should spur us into action, not cause us to sink into pessimism. Now is a time for focused engagement, for a determination to meet our obligations as members of the Conference on Disarmament.

The NPT Review Conference last year was a disappointment. Regrettably, some participants - a very small number of countries - seemed from the outset to want to work against, rather than for, a substantive outcome. Even though the vast majority of states present in New York wanted to achieve real advances, a small minority made this unattainable. I do not make this point in order to dwell upon it. I recognise that perspectives on the NPT RevCon outcome vary. Furthermore, I would argue that though the RevCon did not conclude with a substantive Final Document, there was much detailed and useful discussion of ways in which the NPT could be strengthened. We hope that such good ideas will survive and be taken forward in various ways. By way of illustration, suggestions were put forward at the RevCon last May on measures to discourage withdrawal from the NPT. These drew widespread support and we hope such ideas can be built upon in the next NPT Review cycle. And looking forward is key. We need to learn from the 2005 Rev Con experience. The NPT is too important to us all for us to continue with recriminations. We need rather to re-engage positively and together, as we head into 2007.

Of course, the disappointments in May last year gave us an added incentive to get strong and meaningful commitments on non-proliferation and disarmament agreed at the Millennium Review Summit in September. With that in mind we worked tirelessly with the EU and with the group of 7 countries brought together by the then Norwegian Foreign Minister to propose text that we hoped could find agreement across the whole UN membership. We were extremely disappointed that in the end no language on non-proliferation or disarmament was able to be

agreed, although many valuable advances were made in other areas such as Human Rights and UN reform. But here too, we must re-new our collective effort at the multilateral level. It is all the more important that the CD again gets down to real work, the work for which it was instituted: the negotiation of valuable multilateral disarmament instruments.

It will come as no surprise to anyone if I say that the UK remains fully committed to the NPT and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. And while we see the NPT as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the framework for nuclear disarmament, we will not let last year's disappointments prevent us from moving forward on both fronts. For example we continue to 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. While we fully recognise the right of States who are in compliance with their obligations under the NPT to use and benefit from nuclear technology, as set out in Article IV, it is clear that the nuclear fuel cycle presents particularly acute proliferation risks.

I am sure I don't need to remind this Conference that these are the matters of the real world that we have to connect with outside this Chamber. This Chamber may have a life of its own, but there are events occurring out there which we have to be extremely serious about and we have to tackle as a matter of real urgency. Otherwise, the deliberations in this hall will mean nothing, and certainly mean nothing to the millions of people who are looking for a lead to this hall and this Conference.

There are some very interesting proposals in this area, to establish either "real" or "virtual" banks of nuclear fuel, with some element of international involvement. But this is far from straightforward, as one can see from the fact that Governments and experts have been trying to find a solution to this for some years. There remain a number of complicated technical and political issues to resolve, but I believe that there is now increasing international political will to reach an agreement on the way forward.

We will continue to believe in the need for strong and comprehensive export controls to prevent the uncontrolled spread of nuclear supplies and technologies. In cases where illicit transport of such goods is already in progress we believe that interdiction under the Proliferation Security Initiative will continue to have an important role to play.

Like everyone else we are concerned at the prospect and growing threat of nuclear terrorism and we are seeking ways to counter it. So we are working actively to ensure the renewal of the mandate for the UNSCR 1540 Committee and continue

to stand ready to meet the obligations contained within the resolution, and to help others to do so.

Of course we are also pursuing a wide range of non-nuclear issues, both here in Geneva and also in New York, aimed at improving security and reducing conflict. This afternoon I will be making a policy speech on one of these, the initiative for a treaty on the trade in conventional arms, known as the Arms Trade Treaty.

I have concentrated so far on NPT Article IV-related issues - and this is because these press upon us in the international arena. However, I wish also to speak of NPT Article VI-related matters because – clearly – this is an appropriate forum to discuss the issue of disarmament; the Conference on Disarmament, the international community's sole multilateral negotiating and disarmament forum. I share with all of you frustration at the CD's current stalemate and inability to agree a programme of work for more than 8 years. Delegates, what do we think that people outside of this Chamber think of us, that after 8 years we do not have a proper Programme of Work? This is not good politics by any definition, from any part of the world, and we need to address it very, very seriously. But this has not stopped the UK from moving forward unilaterally on disarmament measures. As you have heard many times from our excellent team here in Geneva, the UK has made substantial progress with regard to our nuclear disarmament obligations as set out in Article VI of the NPT.

Action has included the withdrawal and dismantling of our maritime tactical nuclear capability; the withdrawal and dismantling of the RAF's WE177 nuclear bomb; and the termination of the nuclear Lance missile and artillery roles that we undertook with US nuclear weapons held under dual-key arrangements. As a consequence, we have reduced our reliance on nuclear weapons to one system, namely Trident.

We are the only nuclear weapon state to have done this. Our nuclear forces patrol on reduced readiness. Only a single Trident submarine is on deterrent patrol at any one time, and it is normally retained at a reduced alert status. The missiles are not targeted at any country. The UK holds fewer than 200 operationally available warheads – the minimum level necessary for the UK's national security. In all, the explosive power of UK nuclear weapons has reduced by 70% since the end of the Cold War.

But my main message today is a politician's message, a Government minister's message and assurance: the UK continues to seek and to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. To this end, we continue to believe that a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) is the appropriate next step in pursuit of nuclear disarmament. And let me also make clear that the UK does not maintain its

nuclear deterrent indifferent to our nuclear disarmament obligations. The longer term objective is clear in terms of our NPT obligations. Whatever decisions we take as regards our nuclear deterrent in future, must be and will be consistent with our obligations under the NPT.

Mr President, as part of the continuing efforts by delegations here in Geneva to break the CD impasse, I welcome your and your fellow P6 Presidents' initiative to re-invigorate work in the CD by fostering an interactive thematic debate in the course of this year. I know, for example, that many ideas and initiatives were raised or noted by member states during the meetings allocated to discussion of nuclear disarmament. We welcome all such discussion and suggestions, even suggestions with which we might not agree in substance. We have no wish to stifle open debate. Indeed it is good to see again signs of enthusiasm and purposeful energy at the CD. But let me also enter a small note of caution. Whatever the level of enthusiasm registered in the discussions, agreements will not issue overnight. There are many deeply rooted and variant interests here which will not be easily reconciled. A steady process of confidence-building and enhanced understanding will be needed and the UK is determined to contribute to such a forward looking process.

I want also to be clear as well on what we see as the main immediate substantive goal. To our knowledge no delegation has disagreed on the value of starting negotiations on an FMCT. Of course, such negotiations will not be easy. But surely we can agree without prejudice to anyone's position, to begin negotiations on an FMCT without preconditions?

We are aware of differences of view on relative priorities but to UK eyes it is apparent that only committed movement on an FMCT without preconditions can provide beginnings of a way forward. We should be honest with ourselves: the package approach to starting substantive work in the CD has not delivered a consensus agreement on a way forward.

Some issues are not ripe for negotiation; but that this is so should not be a reason, let alone an excuse, for holding back from negotiation of an issue on which the CD could start tomorrow. The CD is too important a mechanism to be allowed to remain inactive; we need it to meet key contemporary arms control and disarmament challenges. We all claim to want to make progress in the CD, it is time to follow a pragmatic approach: it is time to start negotiating an FMCT.

As a demonstration of our commitment to that end, and to transparency more generally, yesterday we published a historical accounting report on highly enriched uranium in UK defence nuclear programmes. This follows a similar report that we published in 2000 on our holdings of Plutonium. I have a copy of

the report here, and hope to have it entered as a document to the Conference so that it is available to all delegations.

With that, let me say once again, how pleased I am to be here at the CD. I am grateful for the opportunity to set out the United Kingdom's commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation. But - as I hope I've made clear this morning - these are not just British concerns, they are global ones and I look forward to working with you, through the Conference on Disarmament, to meet these challenges.

Thank you Mr President.