THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL DEBATE

By

Ambassador Matthew Rowland

United Kingdom Head of Delegation
to the

71st UNGA First Committee

Please check against delivery
Thank you Mr Chairman

This United Nations was formed because leaders across the world knew that they could only deliver security for their citizens at home if they could cooperate, as a community of nations, to deliver security across the globe.

Security is a particular focus for this committee and deserves more attention, not less.

Four particular challenges are likely to drive UK security priorities for the coming decade:

- The increasing threat posed by terrorism, extremism and instability.
- The resurgence of state-based threats; and intensifying wider state competition.
- The impact of technology, especially cyber threats; and wider technological developments.
- The erosion of the rules-based international order, making it harder to build consensus and tackle global threats.

I want to touch on each and the UK’s contribution to addressing these challenges.

Mr Chairman, The UK has the will and ability to work in the most fragile places. We can bring substantial resources and expertise to bear. And we are home to world-leading civil society organisations. We established ourselves as a global leader through our comprehensive 2011 Building Stability Overseas Strategy, which covers early warning, crisis response and prevention.

We will continue to be a steadfast, permanent member of the Security Council, meeting our NATO commitment to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence and making a leading contribution to UN peacekeeping efforts, where we have doubled our commitment, including new deployments to Somalia and South Sudan.

We will continue to honour our commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of our Gross National Income on development, building on the achievements we have already made to reduce poverty, deal with instability and increase prosperity the world over. And we will drive forward the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Democracy, the rule of law, open, accountable governments and institutions, human rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equality of opportunity, including the empowerment of women and girls, are the building blocks of successful societies. They are part of the golden thread of conditions that lead to security and prosperity.

*Mr Chairman*

The rules-based international order has enabled economic integration and security cooperation to expand, to the benefit of people around the world. It has done much to encourage predictable behaviour by states and the non-violent management of disputes, and has led states to develop political and economic arrangements at home which favour open markets, the rule of law, participation and accountability. The UK has consistently championed this framework.

The context is changing, driven by developments such as the growing role of non-state actors, the impact of technology and longer-term shifts of economic wealth to the south and east of the world.

Such changes create new challenges and opportunities. The rules-based international order has always relied for its effectiveness and legitimacy on the active participation and contribution of all states, in particular major states, and on the ability of institutions and relationships to adapt to reflect new opportunities and challenges. It will therefore be important to reflect the contribution of growing powers. We will continue to work with partners to adapt the rules-based international order to meet new challenges.

The rules-based international order also relies on enforcement of standards and laws covering a wide range of activities and behaviours, from the Geneva Conventions to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

There have been successes, in particular the work by the UK, France, Germany, the US, China and Russia and the EU to agree and implement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran so that it meets its obligations to ensure its nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. We will continue to support the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran.
Some powerful states and non-state actors, however, are increasingly ignoring international norms that they believe run contrary to their interests, or favour the West.

Rules and norms to counter the proliferation of illicit arms and weapons of mass destruction play a vital role in our security. The UK has consistently been at the forefront of international efforts to tackle proliferation. We devote substantial efforts to this, and will continue to do so.

We will maintain pressure on Syria to comply fully with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will support the mechanisms established by the UN Security Council and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to ensure that all those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria are held to account.

We will continue to insist that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abide by its obligations under relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and the NPT. This includes not conducting further nuclear tests, or tests involving ballistic missile technologies. We condemn the DPRK's two nuclear tests carried out this year and its testing of ballistic missiles. The DPRK is the only nation to have conducted nuclear tests this century.

We are committed to improving the security of nuclear and other radioactive material. At the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, we announced strong new commitments, including to undertake the largest single movement of Highly Enriched Uranium to the United States, to lead international efforts to strengthen the cyber security of nuclear plants, and to invest over £10 million during 2016 to improve nuclear security standards worldwide. We will support the central role of the IAEA in the international architecture and look forward to the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security in December this year.

We will continue to build trust and confidence between Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Weapon States, and to take tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world, where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

As a responsible Nuclear Weapons State we are committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and we recognise our obligations under all three of the pillars of the Treaty on the non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We will work with our international partners to tackle proliferation and to make progress on multilateral disarmament.
We remain committed to the NPT, and to the creation of a Middle East Zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to campaign for successful negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and universal membership of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The UK is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Given the increasing mix of State and non-state activity in space, we believe the risk of conflict in space could be reduced by establishing non-legally binding principles of responsible behaviour that apply to all space faring nations and organisations. We also strongly support transparency and confidence building measures as a means to increase the safety and security of space activity.

We look forward to next year's report by the Secretary-General on the state of coordination with the UN system on space TCBMs. We welcome the consensus reached in June at the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on a first set of 12 guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. We look forward to working constructively with other nations to make progress on the remaining 20 draft guidelines by 2018.

Mr Chairman

The UK was a leading architect of the current system of institutions and relations, and we have been at the forefront of its expansion since the end of the Cold War. We have helped to shape the norms that govern use of force, prevent conflict, advance human rights and good governance, promote open and fair international trade relations and support freedom of navigation.

We will work with allies and partners to strengthen and adapt existing institutions and rules so that they remain representative and effective. We will seek to extend the benefits of the rules-based international order by encouraging and supporting greater cooperation on global challenges.

In short, the United Kingdom has always been a proud and pro-active member at the very heart of this United Nations. As our new Prime Minister pledged here in New York just last month, the UK will be a confident, strong and dependable partner internationally – true to the universal values that we share together.

Thank you.