STATEMENT

By

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Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Intervention by the United Kingdom in the General Plenary

Mr Chairman,

As this is the first occasion the UK has taken the floor, let me begin by saying how pleased we are to see you presiding over the second session of the Preparatory Committee. You will have our support, co-operation, confidence and thanks for taking on this challenging role.

At the outset, the UK would like to record its endorsement of the statement made yesterday by the Greek Presidency on behalf of the European Union.

Mr Chairman,

It has been an eventful year for the NPT. We moved one step closer to universality with the accession of Cuba. We welcomed the further disarmament measures by the US and the Russian Federation in the Treaty of Moscow. But the NPT has been challenged by North Korea's admission of a uranium enrichment programme and, subsequently, its announced intention to withdraw from the Treaty. I will say more about this later.

We have heard – both from delegations and in the media – claims that we need to “save the NPT” or questions like “is the NPT dead?” I believe that the NPT is in fact remarkably strong. It has the greatest membership of any arms control Treaty. It remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It retains the wholehearted support of the United Kingdom and the vast majority of the international community.

The DPRK

One of the most significant challenges to the NPT in recent years has been the DPRK’s failure to abide by its obligations under the NPT, culminating in the announcement by that country on 10 January this year that it intended to withdraw from the Treaty. The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, deplored this action, as did many others.

We urge the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear weapons programmes and any nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner and to meet the other requirements of the NPT. We believe that only strict compliance with the NPT and full implementation of IAEA safeguards can provide the necessary assurances and enable the DPRK to achieve its stated desire for positive international relations.
The UK supports the diplomatic efforts that are underway. We welcome the talks in Beijing last week as a step towards verifiable, irreversible dismantlement of the DPRK’s nuclear weapons programmes.

We know that others share our concerns. This was more than apparent in yesterday’s statements. This is a multilateral issue. We hope that others will join with us in urging the DPRK to reconsider its position. It is important that these concerns should be reflected in your summary of the PrepCom’s proceedings.

Iraq

Iraq offers a very different example of non-compliance. Over a period of 12 years, Iraq failed to comply with 14 mandatory UN Security Council resolutions related to WMD. UNSC Resolution 1441, passed unanimously on 8 November, acknowledged that Iraq was in breach of its obligations, and gave it one last chance to comply – or face serious consequences. Unfortunately, Iraq chose not to take that opportunity. Rather, it chose not to offer the immediate, unconditional and active co-operation demanded by the Security Council. There remain unsolved questions regarding Iraq’s nuclear programme. Further investigation needs to be carried out to answer these questions.

Compliance / Safeguards

The UK fully supports the IAEA and its work, including peaceful uses of nuclear technology. In this context, the UK would like to highlight the importance of the IAEA’s work on safeguards. Safeguards underpin the NPT. Safeguards are in the front line of the defence against states who would cheat on their international obligations. We call upon all states which have not yet done so to agree, bring into force and comply with Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, and Additional Protocols to those agreements, with a view to achieving a global system of strengthened and integrated safeguards.

In this connection the UK highlights its strong support for a properly funded safeguards system. The IAEA has made a convincing case for increased funding. Member States must ensure that adequate resources are made available to allow the Agency to do the job that we want it to.

We also support the role of the export control regimes in combating WMD proliferation and contributing to international peace and stability.

Mr Chairman,

The international community requires credible assurances that nuclear material is not being used by a state for purposes contrary to its obligations under the NPT. Iran, like all non-nuclear weapon states, has a right to a civil nuclear programme for energy, provided
it complies with the provisions of the NPT. We welcome Iran’s recent co-operation with the IAEA, but also express our concern regarding the recent disclosures made about the scope and scale of its nuclear programme. We call on Iran to co-operate fully with the IAEA in order to resolve outstanding questions regarding its nuclear programme and urge the conclusion and entry into force of an IAEA Additional Protocol at the earliest possible opportunity.

Universality

We continue to urge Israel, India and Pakistan to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states. We believe Israel should resolve international concerns about its nuclear status. We call on India and Pakistan to work together to reduce nuclear tensions in the region by entering into a bilateral dialogue on confidence building measures as soon as possible. We believe that this is a vital pre-requisite to their fulfilling the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 1172.

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

The UK continues to support the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and is playing an active and constructive role as a Nuclear Weapon State in their development. Since the last session of the PrepCom, the UK has been pleased to engage in talks with the five Central Asian States and with the other Nuclear Weapon States on the draft treaty and protocol for a Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. We hope that such a Treaty and protocol can be agreed in the near future. Likewise, we hope for progress in the near future on the protocol to a nuclear weapons free zone in South East Asia. We look forward to receiving responses from the South East and Central Asian states soon.

The UK would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm support for the objective of establishing an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction. We have submitted a report to the UN Secretariat outlining the UK’s contribution on Middle East issues, including our contribution to the realisation of the 1995 NPT Resolution on the Middle East, which the UK co-sponsored.

NSAs

Mr Chairman,

The issue of the UK’s security assurances appears to have been the subject of some speculation in recent months. This may be a useful occasion to underline, as we did last year, that the UK position has not changed. We remain committed to our negative security assurances as we gave them in 1995, as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 984.
Disarmament

I would now like to turn to disarmament.

The UK continues to support the disarmament measures listed as part of the 2000 Final Document and the 1995 Review Conference decisions. As you know, the former document includes “13 practical steps” in which nuclear weapon states can pursue nuclear disarmament.

We continue to value all reductions in nuclear weapon levels whether achieved through unilateral, bilateral or multilateral means. Such initiatives have been highly important in the history of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We therefore warmly welcomed the talks between the United States and the Russian Federation and their culmination last May in the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, more commonly known as the Moscow Treaty. We believe this Treaty, with its commitment to substantive reductions in the US-Russian strategic arsenals, is an important contribution to strategic stability and nuclear disarmament.

The UK will be setting out in more detail the steps it has taken towards disarmament in its special time speech in cluster one as part of our commitment to report to states parties on our activities in this area.

The UK has already reduced its nuclear weapons to a single system at the minimum level necessary for the UK’s national security. We continue to encourage mutual, balanced and verifiable reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons world-wide. When we are satisfied that sufficient progress has been made that would allow us to include British nuclear weapons in multilateral negotiations without endangering our security interests, we will do so.

For example, we have reduced our operationally available stockpile to fewer than 200 warheads, which represents a reduction of more than 70% in the potential explosive power of our deterrent since the end of the Cold War.

Since the last session of this preparatory committee, we have dismantled our last Chevaline warhead -- part of our commitment to irreversibility in reductions in the UK’s nuclear weapons.

Our support for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty remains unchanged. We have not carried out a nuclear explosion since 1991, and we have now ratified the CTBT. Last year the UK co-sponsored and participated in two workshops looking at the civil and scientific benefits of the various CTBT verification systems with the aim of promoting signature and ratification of this treaty.
At the 2002 session, we called for the start of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. One year on, it appears that we are no closer to making progress. A global ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices remains a vital step towards nuclear disarmament. It will significantly increase international confidence and will be an important measure in the fight to combat proliferation. We welcome the initiatives taken here in Geneva to discuss the issue. But what we need to do is to negotiate in the Conference on Disarmament. An FMCT should not be held hostage to other issues. Those who wish to promote those other issues should rely on the merits of their case, not on linkages. Let us not reach the third session of this Preparatory Committee without progress on this issue.

We mentioned last year that we had begun a programme to develop UK expertise in verifying the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons internationally. We will share the initial fruits of that labour with you this week. We will set out some details in our speech in cluster one. Also, we will publish a working paper tomorrow entitled “Verification of Nuclear Disarmament: First Interim Report on Studies into the Verification of Nuclear Warheads and their Components”. We will be holding a lunchtime seminar on Thursday to present this work. We hope that many of those present today will attend the presentation and ask questions. There are information leaflets about the seminar at the back of the room.

NGOs

I would like to note that at the first session of the PrepCom last year and in speeches yesterday, we heard several references to the role of NGOs and civil society. We regularly meet with NGOs to discuss the NPT and related issues and we look forward to hearing the views of NGOs tomorrow.

Nuclear Terrorism

Before I conclude I would like to touch briefly on the threat of nuclear terrorism. The threat of terrorist use of biological, chemical or nuclear weapons or the dispersal of high-level radioactive sources concerns us all. We welcome the work that is being carried out to reduce this risk: by individual nations, by the counter-terrorism committee in New York, by the IAEA, by the G8 and other organisations. We also welcome work to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman,

The NPT has faced many challenges in its 33-year history. It has survived them all. It is a strong treaty and remains the legal basis of, and cornerstone for, the nuclear non-
proliferation regime. The NPT – provided it is given full support by states party - can rise to, and meet, these challenges and emerge with strengthened authority.

But we can only do this if we combine the focus on disarmament with renewed and strengthened attention to compliance and verification: if we deal effectively with the challenge from the DPRK; if we strengthen safeguards and fund them properly; and if we resolve concerns about the Iranian programme. We also need to keep the fight against all forms of terrorism, including the risk of nuclear and radiological terrorism at the front of our minds.

I hope states party will take the opportunities offered by the PrepCom to respond to our points in their own national statements, and that you, Mr Chairman, will be able to reflect our priorities in your final summary.

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