STATEMENT

By

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr Patrick Lamb
Member of Delegation

NPT Preparatory Committee 2004

Cluster I

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Mr Chairman,

I should like to start by saying that the United Kingdom supports fully the statement made by Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

The UK will give details of its contribution towards global and verifiable nuclear disarmament in the special time allocated to Chapter 1. I do not, therefore, propose to cover those same points here today. Instead, I shall focus on the non-proliferation aspects of the Treaty, and compliance with them, including the role of export controls, the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Partnership.

Compliance

Mr Chairman,

The United Kingdom believes that compliance with the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is of central importance. In recent years we have had cause to question, or express our concerns about the adherence to obligations under the NPT by certain states parties. This has led to questioning by the UK and other governments as well as by the world media about the validity of the NPT. In the view of the United Kingdom, it is not the Treaty that is found wanting, but rather the compliance of certain states parties.

Iran

We continue to have serious concerns about the extent of Iran’s nuclear programme. The fact that much of it was pursued clandestinely and uncovered only as a result of international pressure serves only to increase international suspicions. We welcome Iran’s signature of the Additional Protocol, and in particular its commitment to implement the provisions of the protocol pending ratification. In this context we note the crucial importance of the declaration which Iran has undertaken to make in mid-May being full and accurate in all respects. This will be a key test of Iran’s compliance with the verification mechanisms of the NPT. We note that the Additional Protocol has still to be ratified, and we urge Iran to do so as soon as possible as a further sign of its good faith.

North Korea/AQ Khan

North Korea’s non-compliance with its NPT obligations and its obligations under a number of other instruments such as the Framework Agreement and the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula have posed a severe challenge to the NPT. The further evidence provided by AQ Khan that, far from freezing its existing illegal activities, North Korea was actively pursuing additional routes towards nuclear weapons highlights the need for effective international co-operation to uncover and stamp out the international networks which supply covert activities around the world. We strongly urge all states party to work actively with the IAEA to combat further proliferation. We also continue to support the Six Party talks process which we regard as the best prospect for the resolution of this issue.

Export Controls

The United Kingdom is committed to a strict export control policy and robust export control procedures. The UK government plays a very active role in all export control regimes including the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Within the NSG we support the proposal to make signature of the IAEA Additional Protocol a condition of supply for nuclear items or technology, and we are working on other proposals to strengthen the NSG Guidelines.

However there is a category of states that the Treaty cannot easily cover. By definition under Article IX, paragraph 3 of the NPT, only the UK, the US, France, China and the Russian Federation are recognised as nuclear weapon states. Yet we are all aware there is a large number of states whose compliance is in doubt, who either possess nuclear weapons or the technology, and possibly the intent to acquire them. It is vital for the maintenance of international security and stability - in other words, it is in all our interests - to ensure that such States do not become outward proliferators, and we urge all states party to make this clear in their dealings with these countries.
The promotion of international peace and stability depends in part on effective implementation of export controls that are consistent with commitments made under the various export control regimes. We need to be vigilant against the risk posed by the unscrupulous or deliberate supplying of goods or technology that would contribute to the development of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, as well as the risk posed by the interest of certain terrorist groups in acquiring or utilizing weapons of mass destruction. For all of these reasons, we must strengthen export controls, and strengthen enforcement of these controls.

Counter-Proliferation Resolution

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption on 28 April of the Security Council’s first-ever resolution addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/Res/1540(2004)). This resolution underlines the international community’s determination to tackle a real, urgent and horrific threat, that these deadly weapons or materials might fall into the hands of terrorists or other non-State actors. It requires all States to adopt robust national legislation that will criminalize attempts to acquire or traffic weapons of mass destruction and the requirement to establish controls that thwart such efforts. The resolution explicitly states that none of these obligations contradict or challenge Member States’ rights or obligations under the NPT.

In the face of the threat from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we argued that it was not only appropriate for the Council to act, it was imperative for it to do so. We are therefore glad that the Council has responded with such conviction, demonstrated by its unanimous vote on this resolution.

Throughout the discussion of the resolution, the sponsors sought to work closely with Council members and, perhaps uniquely, with the wider United Nations membership. We are very grateful to all those who engaged with us in that dialogue, helping to improve the resolution and, we hope, make its implementation a reality.

We hope that the Council Committee established by the resolution will be the heart of that cooperative and collaborative approach. We recognize, as does the resolution, the potential importance of technical assistance.

PSI

Mr Chairman,

Since the launch of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in May 2003, the United Kingdom has been one of a core group of countries working to drive that initiative forward. In less than one year since its launch, PSI has established itself as an important instrument to respond effectively to some of the most serious security challenges of the 21st century. PSI has succeeded in raising world-wide awareness of the threat posed by trafficking in WMD, their delivery systems and related materials, and in fostering the international co-operation that is required to stop WMD-related shipments and proliferation networks.

Trafficing in WMD constitutes a global threat to international peace and security. Acting in full conformity with international law, PSI complements efforts by the international community to prevent proliferation of such items, including existing treaties and regimes. PSI is a global initiative with an inclusive nature and it relies on the widest possible co-operation between states from different parts of the world. To date, more than 60 countries have expressed support for the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles. The United Kingdom believes that just as proliferation can be a multifaceted phenomenon, so too the responses may have to be flexible and may need to take many shapes and forms.

At the most recent PSI meeting in Lisbon, participants agreed to look to expand the role of the PSI to not only interdict shipments of WMD but to cooperate in preventing WMD proliferation facilitators (i.e. individuals, companies and other entities) from engaging in this deadly trade. PSI participants have agreed to pursue greater co-operation through military and intelligence services and law enforcement to shut down proliferation facilitators and bring them to justice.

The Global Partnership

Mr Chairman,

The United Kingdom continues to participate actively in the G8 Global Partnership. The Partnership aims to reduce the risks associated with the WMD legacy of the former Soviet Union, and the UK has pledge up to £750m over 10 years to fund projects in line with the Partnership’s aims.
Our work includes the dismantlement of decommissioned nuclear powered submarines in north-west Russia, a nuclear safety programme, and the restraining and redeployment of ex-weapons scientists. We have also pledged £10m to assist in the disposition of Russian weapons-grade plutonium declared surplus to defence requirements. We very much hope that the Multilateral Plutonium Disposition Group can make progress in its discussions so that remaining issues can be resolved speedily.

These projects directly reduce the risk that terrorists may acquire sensitive materials and expertise. The UK's active role in this co-operative endeavour demonstrates our commitment to taking concrete counter-proliferation measures, and we encourage other countries to consider becoming involved in co-operative threat reduction work.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman,

It is important to remember that the strength of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty resides in the balance of its provisions. As we made clear in our opening statement and will reinforce in our special time statement, the UK attaches great importance to disarmament and to peaceful uses. We know that others do the same. The United Kingdom therefore hopes that, for the future success of the non-proliferation regime and the maintenance international security, states parties will also acknowledge and emphasise the real and imminent danger posed by proliferation.

It is vital for international security that the number of states with nuclear weapons does not increase. There is an obligation on all of us not to export the materials or technologies that would aid any state in pursuing such a nuclear weapons programme. States must remain in compliance with their obligations under the NPT in order to assure the international community that they are not seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. Any Non-Nuclear Weapon States that have acquired or are seeking to acquire such weapons, and those States outside the NPT, should follow the lead set by Libya and verifiably and irreversibly dismantle their programmes.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.