STATEMENT

By

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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On specific time attached to Cluster 2: Regional issues

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I would like in this time set aside for regional issues to examine three areas of concern: the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula and South Asia.

**Middle East**

The United Kingdom has submitted a written report on the Middle East. But I would like to highlight some of the concerns raised there in my statement today. I shall begin by reaffirming our support for the 1995 '95 Review Conference Resolution on the Middle East.

The United Kingdom recognises that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians impacts on international efforts to create a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The United Kingdom is committed to moving the Middle East peace process forward. We believe the roadmap still describes the best route to peace, and we need to get back to it. Prime Minister Sharon's proposals to withdraw from Gaza settlements and some in the West Bank, in line with Israel's roadmap commitments, are to be welcomed. "The international community must seize the opportunity to inject new life into the peace process. The UK is actively engaged in efforts to end the violence, build confidence and resume talks based on the various Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace."

The United Kingdom has consistently supported resolutions in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly calling for the establishment of a Middle East nuclear-weapons-free zone. We have also committed to support the UN First Committee resolution on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

We have taken steps with other countries in the region to establish the conditions for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Together with our EU partners, the United Kingdom has carried out extensive lobbying to secure adherence by States in the Middle East to key non-proliferation agreements. Since last year's Pugwash, we have lobbied those states on the issues of signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and accession to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Israel, of course, is not a State Party to the NPT. The UK has always, and continues, to support the universalisation of the NPT. We therefore continue to call on Israel to adhere to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state and to conclude an associated full scope safeguards agreement and Additional Protocol with the IAEA. In order to place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. We have reiterated those messages to Israeli officials in recent months.

We call upon all states in the region which have not yet done so to conclude, bring into force and implement a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, as well as Additional Protocols to these arrangements, to demonstrate their commitment to international peace and security.

We welcome the new opportunities for the people of Iraq to determine their own future. We are confident that this process will not involve weapons of mass destruction. Coalition forces continue actively to investigate Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons programmes, and we have found further evidence that these programmes continued throughout the period of UN inspections. The United Kingdom acknowledges the value of independent validation of any discoveries they may make.

We have detailed in Chapter 1 our concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, and the importance of Iran's full and transparent co-operation with the IAEA to resolve international concerns. We urge Iran to resolve these concerns in order to contribute to the pursuit of peace in the Middle East.

**The Korean Peninsula**

Mr Chairman, the United Kingdom has already commended extensively on the situation regarding the DPRK. The UK welcomes the diplomatic efforts that are under way. DPRK attendance at the continuing series of talks is a positive step forward. The UK fully supports the six Party Talks process, and regards it as the best prospect for the resolution of the issue. In order to achieve a Korean Peninsula free from nuclear weapons, we urge the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear weapons programmes in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner. We believe that only strict compliance with the NPT and full implementation of IAEA safeguards is
help provide the necessary assurances. We also call on the DPRK to clarify the exact status of its nuclear programmes.

Until the DPRK resolves the concerns of the international community regarding its nuclear weapons programme, we urge all countries to prevent the export of nuclear-related materials, expertise and technology to the DPRK.

South Asia

The United Kingdom welcomes the recent rapprochement between India and Pakistan, but we remain concerned about the potential for accidental escalation to nuclear conflict in South Asia. We strongly urge India and Pakistan to work together to reduce nuclear tensions in the region. And we call upon them to continue to carry out confidence building measures, including implementing those envisaged in the Lahore Declaration. We continue to support contacts on Tracks I and III. We urge both countries to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states as soon as possible and to place all their facilities under IAEA safeguards.

We welcome India and Pakistan's continuing moratorium on nuclear weapons tests, and urge both to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We want to see an early start to negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, and hope that both India and Pakistan will participate in them. In the meantime, the United Kingdom urges both states to observe a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Pakistan has been a source of nuclear proliferation through the activities of AQ Khan, and India has developed its domestic technological base to the extent that it could be an attractive target for procurement networks. We urge both to ensure that comprehensive, effectively implemented export control legislation exists, and stand ready to provide any assistance required. We need to find effective ways in which to work with both in the future on wider efforts to counter proliferation of sensitive technology.

Libya

The past year has seen some notable successes in countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. On December 19, Libya declared that weapons of mass destruction were not the answer for its security. Nor were they the answers for the region. Libya declared its intention to dismantle completely and verifiably its weapons of mass destruction programmes, and to limit the range of Libyan missiles to under 300km. This is the first time a country has volunteered to dismantle its WMD programmes under international supervision.

The United Kingdom and the United States offered full support to Libya in helping to declare its programmes to the relevant international bodies, as well as assistance in dismantling Libya's WMD programmes.

Since 19 December, the Libyan authorities have co-operated fully and pro-actively with the international community, in particular the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in order to put those commitments into practice. Libya has already signed an Additional Protocol with the IAEA, and is putting it into practice. Libya has also joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, and made a full declaration of its chemical weapons stock. All its unfilled chemical weapons munitions have already been destroyed. Libya has also ratified the CTF.

The President of the United Nations Security Council issued a statement on 22 April welcoming Libya's decision and the positive steps taken to date to fulfill its commitments and obligations. It is a striking example of the way in which proliferation problems, where there is goodwill, can be solved through negotiation and engagement and, where there is genuine cooperation, of how much can be achieved in a short period of time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to highlight our support for a peaceful Middle East and a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. The United Kingdom calls upon all States in the region to make this a reality.

We urge the DPRK to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Korean Peninsula is free of nuclear weapons. And we call upon India and Pakistan to live up to their international obligations.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.