PrepCom 2019 UK Statement – 833 words

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I will now make some remarks in my national capacity.

For the past 50 years, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has extended the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, minimised the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and provided the framework and perspective for significant nuclear disarmament. To take the United Kingdom’s own example, we have more than halved the number of warheads in our arsenal since the height of the Cold War. This Review Cycle is an opportunity for us all to take a step back and consider the contribution made by the Treaty to international security and prosperity.

But we must also recognise the challenges to global security of the past few years:

- North Korea’s nuclear programme poses a regional and global threat. We encourage North Korea to engage in further dialogues to decrease tensions on the Korean Peninsula and to undertake complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation.

- We continue to support the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We welcome reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran remains in full compliance with its obligations. But we also have significant concerns over Iran’s ballistic missile programme, which is destabilising for the region. Iran continues to conduct ballistic missile activity that is inconsistent with UNSCR 2231.
We remain deeply concerned about Iran’s missile activity, including the consequences of proliferation to Yemen and elsewhere in the region.

- Russia is in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty. We call upon Russia to urgently return to full and verifiable compliance. We regret that Russia, as part of its broader pattern of behaviour, continues to deny its INF Treaty violation, refuses to provide any credible response, and has taken no demonstrable steps toward returning to full and verifiable compliance. Russia’s violations erodes the foundations of effective arms control and poses significant risks to European security.

These recent changes in the international security environment remind us that there remains a risk that states might use their nuclear capability to threaten the UK, or our vital interests. The UK’s independent nuclear deterrent remains essential to our security today, and for as long as the global security situation demands. But the UK is committed to the long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons, in line with the principle of undiminished security for all. We will continue to work tirelessly with all who share that goal to explore practical ways of bringing it closer.

Mr Chair,

Despite these challenges, we should recognise and celebrate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s successes over the past fifty years. Agreed by consensus in 1968 and unanimously extended indefinitely in 1995, it remains a fundamental part of the international rules-based system, based on self-restraint by all its signatories, and bringing tangible benefits to all.
As we embark on our discussions, therefore, we should keep in mind that there is more that unites us than divides us. We must all work actively together to achieve a successful Review Conference next year. We are support the idea of a high level segment, as well as an agreed, consensus based outcome. It is vital that this Preparatory Committee lays the groundwork for that outcome. This means at the very least agreeing an agenda and a chair for the Review Conference. We will support you, Mr Chair, as you work to secure these.

As a demonstration of the UK's commitment to the NPT review cycle, we have tabled a draft national report to this Preparatory Committee. We will present the report, which sets out UK contributions across all three pillars of the Treaty, at a side-event later this week. It includes key successes, such as our work on nuclear disarmament verification and on domestic safeguards, as well as setting out clearly and transparently our operational policy and doctrine. We welcome the engagement and feedback of all States Parties as we work towards submitting the final version at next year's Review Conference.

We will be holding a side-event to present the UK's Nuclear Sector Deal, which sets out how we will reduce the cost of building new reactors by adopting new construction techniques and innovative approaches to manufacturing. We will also host a discussion with Nigeria to illustrate how the NPT and the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency contributes to the expanding use of nuclear energy and technology.

Mr Chair,
Let me emphasise the UK's firm commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and our readiness to engage with all parties here today on how we can use the Review Process to advance the Treaty's objectives. It provides the framework for the most realistic route to full multilateral disarmament, in line with the step-by-step approach; and the framework for preventing proliferation and sharing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Its last fifty years have been a success. We should work together to ensure the Review Conference puts us on a trajectory to ensure the decades ahead are even more successful.