

2018 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Pillar I

Draft Statement by the United Kingdom

Mr Chairman,

As we set out in our General Statement, the backdrop is more difficult than for many years.

The future is deeply uncertain. There is an increasingly clear line between States who uphold the international arms control framework and non-proliferation system and States who undermine it. We must be clear about where responsibility lies for these steps backwards, and also united and resolute in our determination to deter threats and face down those who are seeking to undermine decades of progress.

Other states continue to develop new nuclear capable missile systems that we assess will undermine strategic stability and there is a continuing risk of further proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is a risk that states might use their nuclear capability to threaten us or try to constrain our decision making in a crisis.

In these circumstances, abandoning Britain's nuclear deterrent unilaterally would undermine our security, that of our Allies and that of all States. It would not make anyone safer.

So the UK will maintain its nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future. But we are a responsible nuclear weapon State. We would employ our nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence

of our NATO Allies. And we continue to offer the assurance that the UK will not use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against any Non-Nuclear Weapons State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons not in material breach of those non-proliferation obligations.

Mr Chairman,

We are committed to the achievement of Article VI under the NPT.

We firmly believe a consensus, step-by-step approach to multilateral disarmament is the best way of making progress towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

There is no doubt the security situation is difficult, but even in this challenging context we can move closer towards verifiable, treaty-based disarmament. To take one example, we play a leading role on nuclear disarmament verification to build “strict and effective international controls”. We are an active member of the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification where we will create the toolbox for a future verification regime. We have tackled the technical challenges of verification in Exercise Letterpress; for the first time working multilaterally with both Nuclear Weapon States and non-Nuclear Weapon States at a site previously used to hold nuclear weapons.

The UK is committed to a posture of minimum credible deterrence. A single submarine on patrol provides continuous at sea deterrence and does not target its weapons at any State. In January 2015, we delivered on our Strategic Defence and Security Review 2010 commitment to reduce the number of deployed warheads on each SSBN from 48 to 40. We also announced that we have reduced the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120 and we remain committed to further reduce our overall nuclear weapon stockpile to no more than 180 warheads by the middle of the 2020s.

We continue to press for the entry into force of the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty; to support the work of the Comprehensive Test Ban Organisation; and to call for successful negotiations in the CD on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We have had a voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices since 1995, and have declared the amount of fissile material produced prior to the onset of that moratorium.

Mr Chairman,

The UK remains determined to make progress against Article VI of the NPT despite the actions of States such as Russia and DPRK. But we must maintain our capability to deter the most extreme threats to our way of life. We will continue to work with partners across the international community, both Nuclear Weapons States and Non-Nuclear Weapons States, to prevent proliferation, to make progress on effective international controls, to build trust and confidence between states, and to take tangible steps toward a safer and more stable world in which countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

Thank you, Mr Chairman