

NPT Preparatory Committee
Verification Statement on behalf of ‘the Quad’
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United States

Mr Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the United Kingdom and our close partners Norway, Sweden and the United States.

In 2015, our four countries established a unique nuclear verification partnership colloquially referred to as the Quad. This is a partnership between two Non-Nuclear Weapon States and two Nuclear Weapon States and seeks to solve the very real challenges associated with verifying that nuclear disarmament has occurred.

The Quad is built on a common understanding that a future comprehensive nuclear disarmament scenario will impact the security of all states. Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Weapon States alike will need to have confidence that disarmament has taken place. The challenge is how to provide this confidence while upholding existing non-proliferation obligations, as well as safety and security requirements.

Since 2015, the Quad has been working to tackle this verification challenge, building on the work of the UK-Norway Initiative and previous UK-US arms control exercises. And in October 2017 we conducted the first-ever multilateral nuclear disarmament verification exercise. The exercise, known as LETTERPRESS, explored the practical challenges associated with the monitoring and verification of nuclear weapon declarations. LETTERPRESS was held in strict conformity with all States’ non-proliferation obligations and was able to investigate real-life considerations related to the inclusion of Non-Nuclear Weapon States in nuclear disarmament verification. Though it did not involve actual nuclear weapons, the exercise benefitted from further realism by being held at former nuclear weapon storage facilities in the UK.

The Quad has identified a broad range of lessons from LETTERPRESS relevant to the future development of verification technologies and procedures, as well as the functioning of multilateral inspection teams. We believe these lessons should be shared as widely as possible. We have produced a report for the Preparatory Committee summarising what we have learned, which we hope you will find useful. In addition, we will continue to engage and share more detailed technical lessons learned with other complementary initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Over the course of the next year, the Quad will be investigating some specific challenges identified by LETTERPRESS, including developing verification strategies, building capacity and addressing technical issues such as data authentication. We look forward to keeping the international community informed of our progress.

Mr Chair,

Multilateral disarmament verification is a vital component of an incremental and pragmatic approach towards our goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The Quad Partnership shows how Non-Nuclear Weapon States can play an important role in this process and provides a realistic testbed for evaluating verification technologies and procedures. It has demonstrated key concepts for how multilateral nuclear disarmament verification could be implemented in the real world. In this way, the Quad Partnership helps to lay the groundwork for meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament and towards the fulfillment of Article VI of the NPT.

Thank you.