



United Kingdom
Mission to the
United Nations

**NPT Preparatory Committee 2019
Disarmament Statement
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Mr Chairman,

It is clear that over the last 50 years, the NPT has been a significant success. It has been integral in limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, in enabling the safe and secure use of peaceful nuclear technology, and in providing the frameworks necessary to deliver significant levels of global nuclear disarmament.

The UK has a strong track record in fulfilling our Pillar 1 commitments. Since our Cold War peak we have reduced the size of our nuclear forces by well over 50%. The number of operationally available warheads is now no more than 120 and we will reduce our overall nuclear warhead stockpile to no more than 180 by the mid-2020s. As a result, the UK now holds around 1% of the total global stockpile of nuclear weapons.

We are the only Nuclear Weapon State to have reduced our deterrent capability to a single system and have unilaterally reduced our warhead numbers to those needed to provide a minimum, credible nuclear deterrent. These steps form a responsible answer to the current and foreseeable international security threat.

We are clear we would only employ our nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances in defence of ourselves or our NATO Allies.

These actions, alongside many other measures, demonstrate our commitment to disarmament, and to building the confidence and transparency we believe is vital to deliver to our long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

However, the backdrop is more difficult now than for many years. There is an increasingly clear line between those states who uphold the international arms control framework and those who undermine it. Certain states continue to develop new delivery capabilities that we assess will undermine strategic stability. There is a continuing risk of further proliferation of nuclear weapons. We must be resolute in our determination to deter such threats and face down those who are seeking to undermine decades of progress.

We are therefore convinced that we must maintain our Nuclear Deterrent for as long as the global security environment demands. Current circumstances remind us that states may use their nuclear capabilities to threaten the UK, our Allies, or our vital interests. Abandoning the UK's nuclear deterrent unilaterally at this point would undermine our security, that of our Allies and of all States. It would not make anyone safer.

Mr Chairman

In light of these circumstances we believe further progress towards a world without nuclear weapons can only be made through gradual multilateral disarmament within existing international frameworks, negotiated using a step-by-step approach which takes into account the wider global security context.

Effective verification is vital to meaningful disarmament and to our shared future security, since the consequences of non-compliance would be so severe. The UK continues to play a leading role in developing nuclear disarmament verification solutions, including through international initiatives such as the “Quad” Partnership with Norway, Sweden and the United States; the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification; and the UN Group of Governmental Experts.

In support of the step-by-step approach we continue to press for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the start and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

The possession of nuclear weapons carries great responsibilities and all possessor states must make every effort to reduce any potential risks associated with these weapons and associated material. Behaviour and rhetoric matter. Greater dialogue and transparency will be critical in promoting the confidence required to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict, particularly through miscalculation or misunderstandings. We therefore welcome the US Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative and look forward to engaging in these discussions going forward.

It is through practical steps such as these that the UK believes real progress can be made to reach our goal of a world without nuclear weapons. I therefore reaffirm that the UK will not support, sign or ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We continue to judge that the treaty will do nothing to advance disarmament, and risks undermining the international consensus that the NPT has achieved.

Mr Chairman,

The UK remains determined to make progress on disarmament in accordance with the NPT. We know that multilateral disarmament will sometimes be challenging, but that motivates us to overcome the challenges and reinforces our commitment to making tangible progress. 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 real steps toward a safer and more stable world in which countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.