



United Kingdom  
Mission to the  
United Nations

**Statement on behalf of the United Kingdom to the High-Level  
Meeting on Disarmament,**

**68th Session of the UN General Assembly, 26<sup>th</sup> September  
2013**

Mr President,

The journey to nuclear zero is a long and difficult one but we are already well on the way. Significant steps already taken include the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, IAEA safeguards and the Additional Protocol.

We should continue to take steps on the path to nuclear disarmament and to implement the NPT Action Plan that was agreed by consensus in 2010. This roadmap of actions offers the best route for making progress on this path.

There are no shortcuts. Much remains to be done to help create the conditions for multilateral nuclear disarmament.

We continue to believe it is only through a comprehensive, cross-pillar, step-by-step approach that we will achieve our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr President,

The UK has long been committed to this goal.

Successive British governments have played an active role in helping to build an international environment in which no state feels the need to possess nuclear weapons.

We are not there yet.

The greatest challenges to progress remain insecurity and uncertainty, both of which there is no shortage of in many parts of the world today.

The risk of proliferation, in particular, has been a growing concern. Both the DPRK and Iran continue to develop their nuclear programmes, with the DPRK withdrawing from the NPT and Iran evading safeguards; terrorists are as determined as ever to gain possession of nuclear weapons; and technological and information advances have made the spread of knowledge and materials easier than it has ever been.

### **Prospects for multilateral disarmament**

Mr President,

We have moved from living in a world of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons standing at a moment's notice to launch during the Cold War, to a world in which most nuclear weapons states have significantly reduced their arsenals and their operational readiness.

In 2010 we saw the agreement of the first ever Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Action Plan, in which all 189 signatories reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty and committed to make tangible progress towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Under that Plan nuclear weapons states committed to make concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, including reducing the overall global stockpile, and reducing further the role and salience of nuclear weapons in our military doctrines.

Next year we will set out publicly how we have made progress on the Action Plan.

### **The UK's disarmament actions**

Mr President,

The UK's own record on nuclear disarmament is strong.

We have greatly reduced the number of our nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War. Our nuclear weapons have, for almost twenty years now, been de-targeted and placed on several days notice to fire.

We have built on that strong record, announcing in our 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review that we are reducing our overall stockpile, reducing the number of warheads onboard our submarines, and reducing the number of operational missiles.

We have been clear that our policy is to have the minimum credible deterrent and that the UK would only consider using nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO allies.

Having led by example through our own actions, we are working to help build the trust and mutual confidence between states needed to achieve multilateral nuclear disarmament.

And we are working with the international community to make it as hard as possible for others to develop, produce or acquire nuclear weapons.

### **Building trust and mutual confidence**

Mr President,

The P3 states are clear, as reflected in our joint statement to this meeting, that nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states must cooperate to create an environment in which the goal of disarmament can be achieved and the proliferation of nuclear weapons halted. The P3 are engaging in high-priority, regularized dialogue among nuclear weapons states on disarmament-related issues to an unprecedented extent and are fully committed to the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency.

It is only through moving forward together, step-by-step, through balanced and reciprocal disarmament, that we will achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

That is why the UK instigated a dialogue among the P5 states in London in 2009, where we reaffirmed our unconditional support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty and engaged in meaningful dialogue, aimed at building the mutual understanding needed to help us take forward our shared disarmament commitments.

Since then, we have held further conferences – in Paris, Washington and Geneva. The P5 will hold its fifth conference, hosted by China in Beijing, in 2014.

Building confidence between nuclear weapons states and between us and non-nuclear weapon states are equally important if we are to find a realistic route towards global disarmament.

To that end, we have been conducting ground-breaking work with Norway on the verification of warhead dismantlement.

This initiative has been the first time that a nuclear weapons state has engaged in such an open way with a non-nuclear weapons state on such a sensitive issue.

We have shared what we have learned so far with the P5, and with a range of non-nuclear weapons states, and we will continue to share developments as we move forward.

**Making it as hard as possible to develop, produce and acquire nuclear weapons**

Mr President,

As well as improving collective trust and understanding, we need to continue our efforts to make it as difficult as possible to develop and produce nuclear weapons, particularly by those who pose a threat to global security.

On this the UK is making a strong contribution.

We have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – indeed we were, along with France, the first to do so.

We are vocal campaigners for the entry into force of the Treaty, and will continue to take every opportunity to urge all those who have not yet signed and ratified it to do so.

We continue to actively support the need to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which would put an end to the future production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

And we are firm supporters of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which irrefutably shrink the geographical space that nuclear weapons can exist within.

The UK has signed and ratified the protocols to three nuclear weapons free zones, in South America and the Caribbean, in Africa and in the South Pacific.

We are also looking to conclude the necessary preparations to bring about the realisation of the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in South East Asia, and also in Central Asia.

We support the objective of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East and the convening of a conference on this as soon as possible.

Mr President,

The UK is also active in seeking to reduce the risk of proliferation from the civil nuclear sector, and strongly supports a universal safeguards system to uphold the NPT's non-proliferation regime.

The IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol should be the universal safeguards verification standard. We continue to urge all those non-nuclear weapons states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and/or Additional Protocol as soon as possible.

The risks of proliferation are all too real.

The international community was reminded of this following the DPRK's most recent nuclear test in February which directly violated UN Security Council resolutions, along with its threats of "all out nuclear war".

Its continuing efforts to sell dangerous proliferation-sensitive technology to other countries must also be a focus for our efforts.

We, with our E3+3 partners, continue to pursue negotiations with Iran.

We remain fully committed to the ongoing diplomatic process and to finding a peaceful, negotiated solution that leads to full compliance by Iran with UN Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors' resolutions.

But urgent, concrete steps need to be taken by Iran to allow progress. Despite frank and lengthy discussions, significant differences remain and the Iranian position remains intransigent.

We hope Iran comes to the next round of talks ready and willing to take the steps needed to address the international community's serious concerns.

The risk of new states acquiring nuclear weapons is grave, but so too is the risk of sensitive knowledge and materials falling into the hands of non-state actors. We remain committed to shaping the direction of global nuclear security.

Mr President,

Despite the successes of the step-by-step approach, the current international environment raises significant challenges for global disarmament and risks reversing the progress we have made.

The UK has worked hard to build trust and transparency among nuclear weapons states and has led the way in engaging with non-nuclear weapons states toward the goal of a nuclear zero.

And while we are encouraged by the increased energy and enthusiasm around the nuclear disarmament debate, we believe



that this energy would have much greater impact if channelled toward existing processes, helping to tackle blockages and making progress in the practical, step-by-step approach that includes all states that possess nuclear weapons.

It is regrettable that the agenda today did not allow for a fuller discussion across all three pillars; they are all equally important and essential for further progress.

We remain committed to this comprehensive, cross-pillar, step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament and will carry on working with civil society and all UN member states toward this end.

It is crucial, Mr President, for all states that possess nuclear weapons to engage fully with existing multilateral processes on non-proliferation, peaceful uses and disarmament. Only this way will we truly achieve our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

[This was followed by a statement on behalf of France,  
the United Kingdom and the United States]