



United Kingdom

Statement at the UNDC 2017

Thank you Madam Chair,

I would like to start by congratulating you on your Presidency and assuring you of the full support of the UK delegation.

The UK is committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and we recognise our obligations under all three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We have a strong record on nuclear disarmament. We have reduced our own nuclear forces by over half since the height of the Cold War. We have only around 1% of the global stockpile of nuclear weapons. We initiated the P5 process to bring together the nuclear weapon States to build confidence and transparency to help develop the conditions which would enable disarmament. We have led the way on disarmament verification.

We recognise the frustration at the perceived slow progress on nuclear disarmament. However there are no shortcuts on the road to a world without nuclear weapons. We do not believe the negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons will lead to effective progress on global nuclear disarmament. The UK firmly believes that the best way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach and within existing frameworks. A step-by-step approach to global disarmament is what we need to build trust and confidence. It will provide for tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

The UK will continue to press for key steps towards multilateral disarmament including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We welcome the ratification by Burma and Swaziland during the past year. We fully support efforts to develop and sustain the verification system for the Treaty.

The UK will continue to work for successful negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. The UK has had a voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices since 1995. We will work constructively in the High Level Expert Preparatory Group established by the Canadian General Assembly resolution to explore ways to make further progress.

The UK was pleased to co-sponsor the Norwegian General Assembly resolution on nuclear disarmament verification. We will respond positively to the UN Secretary-General's call for views to help discussions by the Group of Governmental Experts in 2018 and 2019. We hope we will all take that opportunity. We will continue our work with allies on how we meet the challenges of verification.

Madam Chair,

The UK believes that Nuclear Weapons Free Zones contribute greatly to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to enhancing regional and international security. We remain committed to signing the Protocol to the South East Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty as soon as possible and to the objective of achieving a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone.

The UK strongly condemns North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile tests. These are in clear violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions and continue to threaten international peace and security. We urge North Korea to re-engage with the international community, and to take credible, concrete steps to prioritise the well-being of its own people instead of the illegal pursuit of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. The UK has engaged directly with North Korea to condemn its actions and continues to engage with a range of partners on appropriate multilateral responses.

The UK remains absolutely committed to the rigorous implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed between the E3+3 and Iran.

The UK's contribution towards building the conditions towards our shared aim of a goal of a world without nuclear weapons is and will continue to be strong. We are also concerned about the threat to global security through the illicit proliferation and use of conventional weapons.

Madam Chair,

Conventional

The UK is committed to playing a leading role in international efforts on conventional arms control across the full range of issues and in support of the numerous instruments and arrangements designed to deliver greater global security. We are pleased to act as President of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in 2017 and as a member of the Committee for Cooperative Compliance under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Transparency in the field of conventional arms is an important endeavour. Our commitment to annual reporting to the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Register on Conventional Arms, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are testament to this. The universalisation of all these instruments would be a substantial step forwards in building confidence in the field of conventional arms.

We call on those not yet States Parties or participating in such instruments to make ratification or accession a national priority.

The UK gives priority to the development and operation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). What is needed now is delivery against the Treaty's objectives and priorities – in particular understanding and tackling the challenges of universalisation and effective implementation. We look forward to furthering this important work at the Third Conference of States Parties later this year. We offer Ambassador Korhonen of Finland our full support in his leadership of that process.

We will continue to provide assistance where possible to those looking to join and implement the Treaty. This year, the UK provided £311,000 to the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund to assist States Parties to implement the Treaty.

The existing overarching framework of conventional arms control and Confidence-building measures, for example the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna Document, contain many effective elements which we should preserve and, where necessary, update to make them fit for purpose in the context of the evolving international security landscape. In particular, a renewed effort is needed to increase transparency and build confidence to reduce the risk of unintended escalation of tensions or military accidents. We continue to support our partners in their efforts to review these initiatives.

We must not underestimate the threats posed by small arms and light weapons (SALW) - the single most significant contributor to conflicts, violence and crime – and in particular the effects wreaked by the illicit trade. The diversion of licit transfers of small arms and light weapons continues to pose a threat to peace and security, undermines human security and exacerbates the illicit trade in wildlife. We must turn these negative impacts into positive action towards building peaceful and stable societies. We look forward to the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action in Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. We offer Ambassador Ramis of France our full support in her chairmanship. The UK continues to provide assistance for capacity building in the priority area of stockpile management including surplus disposal through destruction and ensuring better regulated exports. In 2016, we provided over £1.6 million for small arms and light weapons control in sub-Saharan Africa.

The UK is fully committed to achieving the goals of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, including their globalisation. The UK remains committed to clearing the Falkland Islands of anti-personnel mines in line with our obligation under Article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Phase 5 of Falkland Islands demining began in October 2016, and builds on four previous phases of demining that were completed between 2009 and 2016, clearing more than 35 minefields.

Whilst fulfilling its own obligations under these conventions, the UK also spends over £10 million per year through its Global Mine Action Programme on clearance of explosive remnants of war, survey, risk education and capacity building. It is currently operating in Burma, Somalia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Sri Lanka. The programme has delivered good results including 21

million square meters of land cleared and released for productive use by communities.

Madam Chair,

We look forward to constructive engagement in the Working Groups. The UK believes that it is in all our interests for the UN Disarmament Commission to demonstrate that it can reach agreement on priority issues and move the agenda forward. It was disappointing that last year we were unable to agree to establish a third working group to consider the implementation of Transparency and Confidence Building Measures in outer space activities. We hope that this year we can finalise the conventional weapons paper in Working Group II, thereby freeing up the agenda for other issues to be considered at next year's meeting. We therefore call on Member States to avoid linkages between the two working groups and to engage in a meaningful way on this important agenda. I would like to conclude by re-affirming the UK's support for the UN Disarmament machinery, including the UN Disarmament Commission.

Thank you