



**THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

# **STATEMENT ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

By

**Ambassador Matthew Rowland**

**UK Head of Delegation**

**to the**

**68th UNGA First Committee**

**New York, 16 October 2013**

Mr Chairman,

[Aligning clause with EU statement]

The UK maintains a resolute commitment to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

We have seen tangible progress towards that goal, and as well as reflecting on the challenges ahead, it is important that we acknowledge these successes and recognise just how far we have come since the darkest days of the Cold War.

All of us here today need to focus on our shared commitment where we are each prepared to do our part, across each of the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The UK is determined to support all initiatives that will build an international environment in which no state feels the need to possess nuclear weapons; and where states with nuclear weapons can disarm in a balanced and verifiable manner.

It falls to all states to help build that environment by living up to all the disarmament and non-proliferation commitments made as Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The agreement of the first ever Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Action Plan in 2010, with its elaboration of measures for all of us to take to ensure implementation of the NPT, was a major achievement. Ensuring that we all focus now on implementation of that Action Plan is essential to support the full realisation of the objectives of the NPT, including a world without nuclear weapons. Universalization of the NPT and related treaties, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, are also fundamental to future disarmament success.

The UK recognises that, along with the other nuclear weapons states, we have particular responsibilities. We have a strong record on nuclear disarmament.

British nuclear weapons have, for almost twenty years now, been de-targeted and placed on several days notice to fire.

We announced in our 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review that we would reduce the number of operational missiles and warheads on each of our submarines, as well as the number of operationally available warheads and our overall nuclear stockpile.

In addition, the UK has been clear that we would only consider using nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO allies.

The UK signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on the day it opened for signature, was among the first states to ratify, and has had a voluntary moratorium on testing since 1991, pending entry-into-force of the Treaty. We have had a voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices since 1995, pending the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

We have demonstrated a high level of transparency, both about the capabilities that we possess, and the limited role that they play within UK defence doctrine. For our part, then, we have done much to make progress toward a world without nuclear weapons.

But unilateral action will only get us so far towards this goal.

Having led by example, we want to build the trust and mutual confidence between all states needed to achieve multilateral nuclear disarmament. That is why the UK instigated a dialogue among the P5 states in London in 2009, to build the mutual understanding needed to help us take forward our shared disarmament commitments.

Since 2009, the P5 have held further conferences – in Paris, Washington and, most recently under Russian Chair, in Geneva. China will host the fifth P5 conference in Beijing in 2014.

We recognise the need for trust between nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states – not just between nuclear weapons states themselves. It is important that the P5 is more open with non-nuclear weapons states about the outcome of those discussions.

Our work with Norway on the verification of warhead dismantlement exemplifies the UK approach to greater transparency, and is a unique move by a P5 state to carry out such work with a non-nuclear weapon state.

All NPT States Parties need to ensure that the focus is maintained on all the aspects of the NPT and across all three pillars of the NPT

Those who call for new disarmament initiatives must show equal or greater energy to preventing Iran and the DPRK from acquiring nuclear weapons. They must show greater commitment to increase the understanding of the danger of nuclear conflict in South Asia, and they must seize every opportunity to make progress toward a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East.

We firmly believe that all new initiatives should contribute to the success of the NPT Review Conference in 2015 and the full implementation of the 2010 NPT Action Plan agreed by consensus by all 189 NPT States Parties.

Noting that action 15 of the plan is to begin immediately the negotiation within the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; we welcome the UN Group of Government Experts to be convened by Canada. We hope that the Group's recommendations will help move forward the discussion in the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all states invited to participate to do so.

The UK is a strong supporter of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which enhance regional and international security.

We have had positive discussions with C5 and P5 partners and are making progress towards signature of the P5 Protocol to the Central Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty. We hope for similarly positive discussions with the ASEAN states on outstanding issues concerning the Protocol to the South East Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone and that the P5 States can sign the Protocol as soon as possible.

We are fully committed to the establishment of a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone. We take our role as Co-Convenor seriously and have been working hard, with the Facilitator, to build the necessary consensus between states in the region so that the Conference can be held and the process can move forward. We welcome the Facilitator's efforts to hold multilateral consultations to agree the modalities for the Conference, and hope for strong regional participation at the meeting to be convened by the Facilitator in Switzerland later this month.

On peaceful uses, we remain fully committed to the promotion of safe nuclear energy by those who wish to use it – in line with Article IV rights. The UK is committed to supporting the expansion of civil nuclear, whilst ensuring that neither safety, security nor non-proliferation is compromised as enshrined in the NPT.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman,

The UK has unilaterally disarmed, further than any other nuclear weapons state, to a minimal credible deterrent.

On non-proliferation, all NPT States parties need to renew the shared determination to prevent nuclear proliferation, and to ensure that Iran and the DPRK cannot acquire and develop nuclear weapons technology. We must all actively support nuclear weapons free zones, and I repeat again the UK's commitment to make progress toward a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.

We share the frustration about the lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament, and remain open to suggestions about how the deadlock can be broken. But we also call on all NPT parties here today to ensure that we work together to realise the whole vision of the NPT. Only through balanced, reciprocal progress across all three pillars of the NPT, will we achieve a world truly free of nuclear weapons.