

United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament
Statement on behalf of France, the United Kingdom
and the United States
by Minister Alistair Burt
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Mr President,

I am taking the floor on behalf of the governments of France and the United States, and my own government, the United Kingdom.

Step-by-Step Process

Mr President, Our three nations would like to see this High Level Meeting (HLM) reflect the principle enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that the undertaking of effective nuclear disarmament measures is a shared responsibility of all States Parties. Nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states must cooperate to create the conditions and environment in which the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation can be pursued with respect to the principles of irreversibility, verifiability, and transparency.

We share the view that a strong and effective non-proliferation regime is an essential condition for achieving disarmament, while progress towards disarmament enhances confidence in non-proliferation efforts. Success in halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons is among the international conditions that will further step by step progress toward the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

For our countries, a practical step-by-step process is the only way to make real progress in our disarmament efforts while upholding global security and stability – there are no shortcuts. There is no other way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons outside of methodical and steady progress. Following this process, we are seeking to advance negotiation of an Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty and entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). All NPT States Parties concur that the next priority step toward nuclear disarmament in the multilateral context is an FMCT.

Shared Responsibility

Mr President, We cannot consider disarmament in isolation from our other efforts to combat global dangers presented by Weapons of Mass Destruction, which include proliferation and terrorism.

We are committed to strengthening all three pillars of the NPT: disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. They are important in their own right, and complementary. All states should contribute to disarmament, not only through the pursuit of disarmament steps themselves, but also by helping to create the conditions for disarmament.

In order to uphold the integrity of the non-proliferation regime, we must address the issue of non-compliance by a few states with their obligations, while recognizing the right of compliant NPT parties to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Initiatives and Next Steps

Mr President, Our three nations are breaking new ground by engaging in high-priority, regularized dialogue among nuclear weapons states on disarmament-related issues to an unprecedented extent.

We wish to recall the unprecedented progress and efforts made by the nuclear-weapon States in nuclear arms reduction, disarmament, confidence-building and transparency, and note with satisfaction that stocks of nuclear weapons are now at far lower levels than at any time in the past half-century.

On Start, when fully implemented, the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the New START Treaty) will result in the lowest number of deployed nuclear weapons in the United States and Russia since the 1950s. We believe it to be a significant step in the implementation of Article VI of the NPT, and by promoting mutual trust, openness, predictability, and cooperation can help build a stronger basis for addressing the threats of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

We recall and welcome the reductions by my own country (the UK) in the numbers of warheads and missiles on board its nuclear deterrent submarines which will reduce the requirement for operationally available warheads to no more than 120 and a reduction in our overall nuclear weapon stockpile to no more than 180.

We also welcome the achievement by France of its objectives resulting in the reduction by one-third of the number of nuclear weapons, missiles and aircraft of the airborne component and leading to an arsenal totaling today fewer than 300 nuclear weapons.

We continue to meet at all appropriate levels on nuclear issues to further promote dialogue and mutual confidence to advance our NPT-related goals. We intend to report to the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee in 2014 as we have done in previous meetings, and as set out in Action 5 of the 2010 NPT Action Plan.

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr President, The entry into force of the CTBT remains a top priority. We are convinced that the national security of all states will be enhanced when the CTBT enters into force. Pending its entry into force we continue to call on all states to uphold their national moratoria on nuclear weapons test explosions and all other nuclear explosions and we encourage the remaining Annex 2 states, and all other states, to move forward toward ratification without waiting for similar action by other states.

Support for a Fissile Materials Cutoff Treaty

Mr President, This High Level Meeting provides an opportunity to reaffirm the objective of beginning negotiations on an FMCT within the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of CD/1299 and the

mandate contained therein. We are profoundly disappointed that the Conference continues to be prevented from agreeing on a comprehensive program of work, and continue to support the immediate start of negotiations on an FMCT. In this vein, We hope that the Governmental Group of Experts (GGE) to be convened in 2014 and 2015 will help spur negotiation on an FMCT in the CD.

Other Approaches to Nuclear Disarmament

Finally, Mr President, a few words on the other approaches to Nuclear Disarmament.

We fully understand the serious consequences of nuclear weapon use and will continue to give the highest priority to avoiding such a contingency. Our efforts in disarmament, non-proliferation, and nuclear security are aimed at avoiding the use of nuclear weapons.

We believe that there are already sufficient forums, specified by the UN Special Session on Disarmament in 1978, for discussion on these issues, including: the UNGA First Committee, the UN Disarmament Commission, and the Conference on Disarmament. And while we are encouraged by the increased energy and enthusiasm around the nuclear disarmament debate, we regret that this energy is being directed toward initiatives such as this High-Level Meeting, the humanitarian consequences campaign, the Open-Ended Working Group and the push for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

We strongly believe that this energy would have much better effect if channeled 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. This includes taking steps 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 multilateral nuclear disarmament. We remain committed to this comprehensive, step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament and will carry on working with civil society and all UN member states toward this end.

Mr President, There is no path to a world without nuclear weapons other than daily hard work on concrete steps toward that end. This requires a broad improvement in the international security environment and the steady pursuit of practical steps, with each step building on the last. We remain concerned that these efforts will shift the focus away from the serious threats posed by the non-compliance and proliferation challenges facing us.

Thank you, Mr President.

