

2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: New York, 27 April – 22 May 2015
Main Committee I
Statement by Mr. Guy Pollard MBE
Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom
to the Conference on Disarmament

Mr Chairman,

At the outset the United Kingdom would like to align itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union.

Mr Chairman,

The UK has made a strong contribution to the overall reductions in the global nuclear stockpile. At the outset of the NPT era, in 1968, the UK had approximately 460 warheads in-service across five types. Since the end of the Cold War, the UK has steadily reduced the size of its nuclear forces and since 1998, has reduced to a single platform, a single delivery system and a single design of warhead.

In January we announced our plans to reduce our nuclear stockpile to no more than 180 by the mid 2020s.

This takes our total number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120. This will enable us to reduce our overall nuclear warhead stockpile to not more than 180 by the mid 2020s.

The UK also has a strong record of reducing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in our defence and security policy. The UK views its nuclear weapons as a strategic deterrent - they are political, not military weapons. We would employ nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO Allies, and would not use any of our weapons contrary to international law.

Our nuclear weapons are designed to be used in a strategic, rather than tactical, role. They are designed to be used in days, rather than in minutes, which was the case during the Cold War. Since May 2010, our nuclear weapons have been targeted to be used only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO Allies.

In support of transparency on all issues relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we issued in 2014, a report in response to the call in Action 5 of the 2010 Action plan. We sought feedback from civil-society and non-nuclear weapon states, in the light of which we released a revised version in February.

The negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, in the Conference on Disarmament, further to the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive Programme of Work, is a priority for us. In this regard, we are pleased the Group of Government Experts established on this issue was able to produce a substantive report and commend the efforts of Ambassador Golberg for her chairing of the Group.

Mr Chairman

Verification is likely to play an increasing and crucial role in disarmament measures. The UK is a world leader on research into developing verification capabilities of warhead dismantlement, on which the UK-Norway Initiative, the first and only such established project between an NWS and an NNWS, continues to make progress. We will host two side events on this work on 4 and 7 May. The UK also has a long-running bilateral verification research programme with the US able to focus on different aspects of verification than the UKNI work. It will also be the subject of a side event on 11 May. The UK will continue its work on disarmament verification during the next Review Cycle, including within the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification recently established by the United States.

The P5 process serves two purposes . to build trust and confidence between P5 members and to build trust and confidence between the P5 and the rest of the world that the P5 are working together to take forward their disarmament commitments. We were very pleased that the P5 London Conference in February included a session with NNWS for the first time.

During this review cycle, the Process has enabled the P5 to report on progress against these commitments in a common format for the first time. The UK is committed to maintaining this level of transparency, and we anticipate reporting to the NPT States Parties during the next Review Cycle, in line with Action 21. The production of a Glossary has established a useful working method for the P5; with this in place we hope that the P5 can go on to discuss definitions of more difficult terms related to disarmament and strategic stability.

The very process of the P5 discussing these difficult issues has made an important start to improving mutual transparency between the P5. We believe the P5 Process is key to finding realistic and sustainable ways forward on multilateral disarmament. The United Kingdom will retain a credible and effective minimum nuclear deterrent for as long as the global security situation makes it necessary. However we remain committed to our obligations under Article VI and have made significant reductions to our nuclear weapons. The UK will remain at the forefront of global efforts to pursue a world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you Mr Chairman.