
**Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review
Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

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**Working paper on disarmament submitted by the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

1. The United Kingdom is absolutely committed to the principles and practice of multilateral nuclear disarmament. Our ultimate goal remains unchanged: we will work towards a safer world free from nuclear weapons — and we stand by our unequivocal undertaking to accomplish their total elimination.
2. The United Kingdom continues to support the disarmament obligations set out in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has an excellent record in meeting these commitments. We also remain fully committed to the decisions and Final Document of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the NPT, including the relevant disarmament measures. And we remain committed to the implementation of the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East.
3. At the end of last year we published a White Paper explaining the decision of the United Kingdom Government to maintain a nuclear deterrent. In March, the United Kingdom Parliament voted to support this decision. The United Kingdom has decided to begin the concept and design work required to make possible a replacement for our current submarine fleet; and it decided to participate in a programme to extend the life of the Trident D5 missile system.
4. This does not mean that we have taken an irreversible decision that commits us irrevocably to possessing nuclear weapons in 40 or 50 years' time. It does mean, however, that the United Kingdom will take the steps necessary to keep open the option of retaining a minimum deterrent beyond the life of the current submarines, should that prove necessary. On present evidence, we have to assume that we will need to do so. We do not believe that the circumstances currently exist for the United Kingdom safely to choose now *unilaterally* to renounce our nuclear weapons.
5. It has been suggested that the United Kingdom's decision could generate a new arms race. But on the contrary, the White Paper sets out further measures to reduce the scale of our nuclear forces. We will now cut our stockpile of operationally available warheads by 20 per cent to fewer than 160. This amounts to a total reduction of the explosive power of United Kingdom nuclear weapons by 75 per



cent since the end of the cold war. United Kingdom nuclear weapons account for less than 1 per cent of the global inventory.

6. This decision adds to the substantial progress that the United Kingdom has already made towards implementing our nuclear disarmament obligations as set out in article VI. Other achievements since the end of the cold war have included: the withdrawal and dismantling of our maritime tactical nuclear capability; the withdrawal and dismantling of the RAF's WE177 nuclear bomb; and the termination of the nuclear Lance missile and artillery roles that we undertook with the United States of America under dual-key arrangements. Consequently, the United Kingdom is the only nuclear-weapon State recognized under the NPT which has reduced its deterrent capability to a single nuclear-weapon system.

7. We have also significantly reduced the readiness of our remaining weapons. Normally, only one Trident submarine is on deterrent patrol at any one time. That submarine is at several days' "notice to fire". Its missiles are not targeted at any country.

8. Building new submarines for our existing Trident D5 missile system does not reverse or undermine any of these positive disarmament steps. Any suggestion that the United Kingdom is further developing its nuclear weapons is a misunderstanding. The United Kingdom is retaining *not* modernizing its deterrent. There is *no* change in the capabilities of the system, *no* move to produce more useable weapons and *no* change in nuclear posture or doctrine. The United Kingdom's nuclear-weapon system will *not* be designed for war-fighting use in military campaigns. It is a strategic deterrent that we would only ever contemplate using in extreme circumstances of self-defence.

9. The United Kingdom has produced historical records of our defence holdings of both plutonium and highly enriched uranium. We ceased production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons in 1995. All excess fissile material stocks declared as surplus to defence requirements have been placed under international safeguards and we no longer exercise our right as a nuclear-weapon State to withdraw from such stocks for use in nuclear weapons. We have not conducted a test nuclear explosion since 1991 and we ratified the CTBT in 1998.

10. All these measures of transparency have been very widely welcomed. And we continue to look for more opportunities, where national security and non-proliferation constraints allow us. An example of this is the continuing work by the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston to develop our expertise in methods and techniques to verify publicly the multilateral reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. We continue to build upon this work and look forward to presenting our latest research in the forthcoming review cycle.

11. It is important, however, to realize that the conditions for complete disarmament are not ours alone to give. As article VI of the NPT suggests, it is something on which nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike have to work together.

12. The United Kingdom welcomes the series of bilateral agreements which have greatly reduced the major nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war, and looks forward to further progress. It is clear to us that considerable bilateral progress will have to be made in reducing the large nuclear arsenals before it will be helpful and useful to include the small fraction of the global stockpile that belongs to us.

13. It is also reasonable to suggest that a world in which complete nuclear disarmament became a possibility would be one in which we could all be confident in the compliance by all States with their non-proliferation obligations under a universalized NPT.

14. So the immediate and practical issue, that faces us all, is how to create the conditions for both of those objectives? In particular, what steps can we take to cap and set on an inevitably downward trend the numbers of weapons out there?

15. First, the United Kingdom believes that we must put in place a ban on further explosive testing of nuclear weapons. We welcome the increase in the number of States Parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

16. Secondly, we can cap the amount of weapons-usable fissile material. To this end the United Kingdom fully supports the recent proposal by the six Presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament. A fissile material cut-off treaty is the next logical step towards nuclear disarmament. It would mean that, for the first time since the nuclear age began over 60 years ago, there would be a ceiling on the amount of fissile material available for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is impossible to imagine the ultimate achievement of nuclear disarmament without the establishment of such a ceiling — a ceiling that can in due course be lowered, eventually to zero. We call on all members of the Conference on Disarmament to agree swiftly to the Presidencies' proposal and allow the Conference to get back to the work it was designed to do.

17. As we continue to work towards nuclear disarmament, the United Kingdom understands and respects the desire of the non-nuclear-weapon States to receive multilateral guarantees from the nuclear-weapon States that they will not be threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons. In this regard, the United Kingdom's policy has not changed — we remain committed to the negative and positive security assurances we have given to non-nuclear-weapon States in our letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1995, subsequently noted in Security Council resolution 984 (1995).

18. In addition, the United Kingdom believes that the best way of achieving the necessary guarantees sought by the non-nuclear-weapon States is through the protocols annexed to treaties creating nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs). The regional initiatives of NWFZs can build stability and support the wider international objectives of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This process, which began in 1967 with the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Treaty of Tlatelolco), has already achieved a track record of significant results. The United Kingdom has given further security assurances in association with the treaties of Rarotonga and Pelindaba and has, through ratification of the relevant protocols, granted treaty-based negative security assurances to over 100 countries. We hope that the Treaty of Pelindaba will come into fruition soon and encourage those African States that have not yet ratified to do so.

19. We therefore believe that our 1995 security assurances, and the Protocols to the NWFZ Treaties we have signed, offer non-nuclear-weapon States the assurances they seek regarding the use of nuclear weapons. The most appropriate way forward, and to give further effect to the desires of the non-nuclear-weapon States, is to make

further progress with NWFZs, guided by the objectives and principles of the 1999 guidelines of the Disarmament Commission. This will provide, on a credible, regional basis, the internationally binding legal instruments on negative security assurances which many are looking for.

20. In summary, the United Kingdom remains committed to our nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the NPT and continues to make progress to this end. But we also understand it is something on which nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapons States alike have to work together. The United Kingdom believes that the NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and strongly urges all States to work together in that forum to achieve the ultimate goal we all share — a safer world free from nuclear weapons.
