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Dear William,

Thank you for your broadly constructive and helpful letter of 30 June replying to my earlier letter of 18 June about multilateral nuclear disarmament.

I was, however, dismayed to hear that the Government has already, without even waiting for the outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, decided to maintain the UK's Continuous at Sea Deterrence policy; and that this issue will not therefore be considered in the review. What is the justification for excluding from the scope of the review an aspect of our nuclear posture which is, surely, an integral part of it? And against threats from which country are we providing an assured second strike capability?

As I am sure you are aware, considerable emphasis was placed in the agreed outcome of the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference on the desirability of the recognised nuclear weapons states reducing the alert status of their nuclear forces, and to their reducing also the role that nuclear weapons play in their military doctrines. Is it not a great pity for the Government to be ruling out an important step in that direction which we could, and I believe should, now be taking?

I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that this issue is likely to be raised when the Government reports to Parliament on the outcome of its Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick  
Chair, UNA-UK