

Foreign Affairs Committee – Global Security: Non-Proliferation

United Nations Association of the UK (UNA-UK)

1. UNA-UK is the UK's leading independent policy authority on the UN and a UK-wide membership organisation, supporting the work of the UN and its agencies. We campaign for a strong, credible and effective UN, promoting the principles of multilateralism and adherence to international law contained in the UN Charter. UNA-UK is independent of the UN system and receives no funding from it, allowing us to be critical of the UN's decisions and activities when we need to be and enabling us to call for the organisation to be reformed so that it is better equipped to fulfil its fundamental functions.

2. UNA-UK is non-party political. Our head office in London provides policy expertise to support the advocacy work of UNA-UK members. It maintains an ongoing dialogue with UK government ministers, parliamentarians and the media on issues relating to the UN and acts as the Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN.

3. At its 2008 Annual Conference in Exeter on 28-30 March, UNA-UK unanimously endorsed a resolution on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the key elements of which were:

- to seek through the Security Council the development of a nuclear-weapons convention as outlined in the 13 point plan of the 2000 NPT Review Conference with the aim of securing immediate restraint and eventually general and complete disarmament; and
- to give strong support to the Reykjavik initiative aimed at achieving progress towards a world free from nuclear weapons, and urgently needed efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

UN's role in Nuclear Non-proliferation

4. UNA-UK welcomes the launch of the Committee's inquiry, and will focus its response on Nuclear Non-proliferation. Nuclear weapons pose an undeniable and growing threat to human survival. The current geopolitical circumstances make the need to manage the associated risks more urgent than at any other time since the Cold War. Today, the nuclear threat touches the interests of all states, as it is bound up in wider systemic issues of energy security, regional power balances and global terrorism. Dealing with these threats requires a concerted international approach at the UN and the adoption of a strategy that is as wide-ranging and complex as the risks faced.

5. There is an urgent imperative to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – the cornerstone of the international nuclear regime – which has been brought to near breaking point in recent years. The erosion of confidence in the NPT was most evident in 2005, when states failed to reach agreement on ways to strengthen the regime and move closer towards achieving its objectives. The primary obstacle to progress was essentially that nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states could not agree whether to emphasise non-proliferation or disarmament. There is now an urgent need to reach agreement on the major challenges facing the NPT at its next Review Conference in 2010.

6. There is an emerging consensus that, as an integral part of this process, practical steps must be taken along the path of nuclear disarmament by the five recognised nuclear weapons states in line with the commitments they entered into at the NPT Review Conferences in 1995 and 2000. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has stated that achieving progress towards nuclear disarmament is one of the four most pressing global challenges faced today. In the US,

four former leading statesmen – Henry Kissinger, George Schultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn – have launched the Nuclear Security Project, an initiative calling for a fresh drive to achieve nuclear disarmament. Such an approach has been supported by both presidential candidates. What is urgently needed now is to turn these laudable intentions into practical actions. This means making tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament, whilst taking steps to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime.

Recommendations

7. The UK, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a depository to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has particular responsibility for maintaining international peace and security by reversing recent trends towards a weakening of the NPT. The UK is ideally situated to take the lead in addressing the complex challenges faced as it has demonstrated the greatest commitment to disarmament out of the five recognised nuclear-weapon-states.

8. UK support for the US-led Nuclear Security Project has been expressed by four UK statesmen (Lord Hurd, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Lord Owen and Lord Robertson), as well as by leading members of the government and senior opposition MPs. EDM 2053, calling on the government to stimulate and support developments which enhance the prospects for non-proliferation and a fresh drive for nuclear disarmament, has already been signed by 75 MPs. What is needed now is to translate this emerging consensus into practical action.

9. UNA-UK believes that the UK government should be prepared to engage in concerted advocacy and action to further nuclear disarmament by:

- Raising awareness of the urgent need for action to counter the threats posed by nuclear weapons. Securing bipartisan recognition that tackling the threat is not a party political issue but a vital and urgent national interest which needs a common purpose and shared vision.
- Pressing all nuclear-weapon-states to de-alert their existing weapons and their means of delivery.
- Launching a joint initiative with the new US administration to work towards the shared vision of a world free from nuclear weapons. This should include the UK government urging the new US President to re-submit the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to Congress for ratification.
- Energetically pursuing existing proposals to use British nuclear weapons expertise to conduct ground-breaking research into the technical challenges and requirements of verifying nuclear disarmament.
- Pushing for the start of negotiations without pre-conditions on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament.
- Strengthening the international safeguards and inspections system. This could be achieved by increasing the IAEA's capacity and budget, and by initiating dialogue between the nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon-states over the need to make adoption and ratification of the Additional Protocol a requirement on all NPT signatories.
- Giving a high priority to securing agreement on a mechanism, overseen by the IAEA, guaranteeing access to the safe and peaceful use of fuel for civil nuclear purposes and avoiding the further proliferation of uranium enrichment and reprocessing technology.
- Continuing working towards establishing a standard response when a state breaches or leaves the NPT.
- Assisting states meet their obligations under UN resolutions aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation.

Written evidence submitted by the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom
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10. UNA-UK believes that a revival of the multilateral disarmament process which has languished and in some cases regressed in recent years should be a major objective of UK foreign policy in the years ahead, and that HMG should be prepared to make its own substantive contribution to such a process.

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