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Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP  
Secretary of State  
Ministry of Defence  
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Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) to urge you to give priority to the need for an effective UK strategy towards the United Nations, at a time when the international system is under increasing strain.

This year marks the UN's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since 1945, it has had a transformative impact on the world, from the promotion of dialogue between adversaries to multilateral agreements on trade and collective security. For the UK, the development of a rules-based global order has delivered stability and prosperity, serving also to cement the UK in international power structures in a manner that has endured even as the global distribution of power has changed.

The breakdown of this system would have serious consequences for the UK, in terms of its security, ability to trade and international standing. Our long period of global peace will not endure unless governments consciously will it to last. Political leadership, however, too often remains trapped in national agendas. International compromises, of the kind that made the UN possible in 1945, still appear too costly when measured by the familiar criterion of national interest and we are now witnessing the fading effect of the UN's guiding principles in restraining nationalistic ambitions.

Ultimately, the UN's success depends on states' willingness to work together and to invest in the global system. The UK remains one of the most powerful UN member states. Its capacity to lead, its convening power and multilateral skill are well-suited to the modern political environment and it will be some time before emerging powers are able – or willing – to match it. By exercising concerted leadership, it could do much to restore communications between big powers, forge diplomatic compromises and champion practical solutions.

With this in mind, UNA-UK has led a number of initiatives over the past year to encourage greater UK engagement with the UN system. We believe the UN should have a prominent place in the Government's new National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). These policy pronouncements should articulate a strategy that acknowledges the link between the health of the UN system and the UK's security and prosperity.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has an important role in providing leadership and support on these issues, particularly given the Government's commitment to spending 2% of GDP on defence. Our recent reports (shared with your UN policy team) set out specific opportunities for UK action that would support this, focussing on areas where the UK could and should play a stronger role: UN peacekeeping, atrocity prevention and multilateral nuclear disarmament.

The main recommendations for your department are summarised below.

*Recommendations to the MOD on national security strategy*

- The MOD should advocate a national security strategy that is focussed on current and emerging risks and places emphasis on addressing the underlying drivers of instability. Building on the SDSR consultation, the MOD should support opportunities for public debate, particularly with the younger generation, on defence and security issues.

- The UK should maintain an effective military capacity to protect vital national interests and to contribute to international operations sanctioned by the UN, and increase investment in non-traditional military capabilities including cyber-resilience, peacekeeping and humanitarian relief.

*Recommendations to the MOD on UN peace operations*

- The UK should set out a clear rationale for participating in UN peacekeeping, as a framework for strategic deployments to operations that are collectively funded, UN-authorized and address potential risks to the UK. The MOD should ensure that the forthcoming SDSR includes a coherent approach that spans the UK's work on the Security Council, at UN Headquarters and in the field in UN Missions, and commits to strengthening UN operations by increasing contributions of military, police and civilian personnel.
- The MOD should work with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office to cultivate a culture change in the way in which the UN is viewed internally, making it a desirable, career-enhancing activity and fostering institutional knowledge.
- The MOD should be open to deploying to ongoing UN operations, including through examining models of co-deployment or operational partnerships in support of UN Missions with NATO or European allies.
- The MOD should push for funding mechanisms to be flexible enough for the UK to be able to commit support to UN Missions.

*Recommendations to the MOD on atrocity prevention and the responsibility to protect*

- The UK should state that the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – which can destabilise countries and regions and lead to conflict, displacement and extremism – is in its national interest and a foreign policy objective.
- The MOD should articulate doctrine on, and provide relevant training for, protecting civilians and responding to the threat or commission of atrocity crimes.
- The MOD should set out a framework for evaluating the impact and success of missions aimed at the protection of populations from atrocity crimes.

*Recommendations to the MOD on multilateral nuclear disarmament*

- The MOD should encourage the Government to continue and increase its efforts to promote dialogue on the hardest security issues, including multilateral nuclear disarmament.
- The MOD should support the Government in making progress on its international obligation to disarm under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including by:
  - Expanding the scope of diplomatic dialogue: for example, through meetings of defence ministers within the 'P5 process', and through meetings with international counterparts to make progress on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty;
  - Supporting the setting out of a clear rationale for the UK's nuclear programme and posture, and committing to review it regularly;
  - Developing parallel strategies for managing any threats identified as relevant to the UK's nuclear weapons capability through complementary non-nuclear means; and
  - Identifying the conditions necessary for multilateral nuclear disarmament.

The UK must use its resources to strengthen the rules-based international order on which global stability and our own security and prosperity depend. By investing in UN initiatives, the UK can address national and global challenges that affect the everyday lives of people in this country and beyond, while maintaining its position in the international system. Doing so would be the most appropriate way in which the UK can mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our global organisation.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Jeremy Greenstock  
Chairman, UNA-UK