



Ministry of Defence

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De Sir Jeremy,

Thank you for your letter to the Defence Secretary dated 15 September 2015, the Secretary of State has asked me to respond on his behalf as the Minister responsible for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) relationship with the United Nations (UN). The UN Association UK has always been held in high regard by the MOD, and your recommendations were interesting and helpful.

The UN is a fundamental part of the rules based international system and in these times this could not be more important. Since its creation in 1945, the UK has been a firm supporter of the UN and its international presence as you know. The UK is proud of the work it has done in concert with the UN and its members.

However, as you summarised in your letter, the current political climate leading up to the UN's 70th anniversary has led to difficulties for the organisation, which have had a detrimental effect on its international influence. The UK is determined to continue and strengthen our support for the UN.

On the National Security Strategy the United Nations will form a key part of our international proposition. Recognising the fact that the UN is an important ally in shaping a stable world, we are considering the extent to which we can expand our contribution as part of the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The UK is one of the biggest financial contributors to UN peacekeeping budgets, providing around £323M a year. These resources have been of immense help to many different peacekeeping operations; in addition to this, the UK will now also provide a further commitment to UN Peacekeeping, providing support to UN activities in South Sudan and Somalia.

The UK takes our responsibilities regarding genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity seriously. Ethnic cleansing and the widespread perpetration of other atrocities, whether they occur in war zones or not, fly in the face of the principles and objectives of the MOD, and the UK as a whole. This is an area we feel particularly strongly on, and as such has great influence within the MOD.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock
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The MOD's Doctrine, Concepts and Development Centre publishes a huge amount of information and doctrine regarding the Law of Armed Conflict annually; from individual guides to joint doctrine publication, the DCDC helps to permeate the whole Department with knowledge of our international obligations. Such knowledge is also imparted in more active ways; all Service Personnel receive Law of Armed Conflict training throughout their career. This includes learning of the protection afforded to civilians during armed conflict as well as how to respond to the threat or commission of war crimes.

Regarding assessment and evaluation, there are of course a range of evaluation techniques and principles that are applied across MOD activities (e.g. Battle Damage Assessment, targeting and approvals processes, lessons capture, post operational reports and Royal Military Police conducted investigations). DCDC capture many of these assessments through established reporting processes which, once analysed, are reflected in doctrine (either during formal updates on a 2-4 year cycle or sooner through publication of Joint Doctrine Notes).

The Government remains dedicated to continuing its work with partners across the international community to control proliferation and to make progress on multilateral nuclear disarmament. As a country, we aim to build trust and confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, and to take tangible steps toward a safer and more stable world, in which countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

In this regard the MOD and the UK have been carrying out multiple activities, aimed at making the world a safer place. We initiated the P5 process in 2009 to build mutual understanding between the Nuclear Weapon States and are currently undertaking ground-breaking work with Norway on disarmament verification. We also contribute towards the development of the CTBT's verification regime and campaign for its Entry into Force, as well as actively pushing for the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Missile Cut-Off Treaty within the Conference on Disarmament.

We are proud of the fact that the UK is widely recognised as the most forward-leaning of the nuclear weapon states on nuclear disarmament and is committed to maintaining only a minimum credible deterrent. We have reduced the size of our own nuclear forces by well over 50% since our Cold War peak and our nuclear arsenal represents 1% of the total global stockpile of nuclear weapons.

The world has changed greatly in the 70 years since the UN was established, yet one thing that has not is the UK's commitment to it. I hope that in this letter I have demonstrated the importance of the UN to the MOD and the Government as a whole. I thank you for again for you letter; and I look forward to hearing more of your insights and expertise as we work towards helping the UN reach its next anniversary.

