



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Minister of State for
Europe and the Americas

19 April 2017

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Lord Wood of Anfield
Chair
United Nations Association-UK
3 Whitehall Court
London
SW1A 2EL

Dear Stewart,

Thank you for your letter of 24 March to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of the United Nations Association-UK, about a proposed treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. I am replying as Minister responsible for Defence and International Security.

The UK is complying with its obligations under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We remain determined to continue to work with partners across the international community to prevent proliferation and to make progress on multilateral nuclear disarmament.

The UK has a strong record against its NPT obligations and has made progress against or fulfilled many of the actions in the 2010 NPT Action Plan. We are the only nuclear weapon State recognised under the NPT that has reduced its deterrent capability to a single nuclear weapon system. We have reduced the operational readiness and lowered the alert state of nuclear weapons; we have increased transparency on the number of weapons we possess and on historic aspects of the UK programme. We continue to push for entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty and are strong practical supporters of the CTBTO, where we have contributed expertise and equipment to help build an operational on-site inspection capability; we continue to push for progress on starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. We submitted a detailed report on our progress at the 2014 NPT Prep Com and circulated a revised version of the report at the 2015 P5 Conference in London, reflecting feedback from Non Nuclear Weapon States and civil society.

The 2015 Review Conference did not reach a consensus outcome because of disagreement over establishing a conference on the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone; not because of the broader discussions on disarmament or non-proliferation, or the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. No final document is not the same as no progress. The Treaty's review process is an important part of taking forward the Treaty.

The UK Government will not attend the negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons which started on 27 March, along with almost all NATO allies. We do not believe these negotiations will lead to effective progress on global nuclear disarmament. The Government firmly believes that the best way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach and within existing frameworks. Such an approach is needed in order to build trust and confidence and to take tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

The UK takes its commitment to the rules-based international order very seriously. The UK remains an active member of international bodies which promote and safeguard the rules based international order. We lead on a range of dossiers in the UN Security Council. We also have a strong record on the promotion and protection of human rights, including through the UN Human Rights Council.

Y. r. w. s.
Alan

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP