



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State for
Europe and the Americas

22 May 2019

Our reference: MIN/48951/2019

Ben Donaldson
United Nations Association – UK
3 Whitehall Court
London
SW1A 2EL

Dear Mr Donaldson,

Thank you for your letter of 26 April about the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The UK remains firmly committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which has been a cornerstone of global security for the past fifty years, as well as limiting proliferation and promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We continue to support the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and firmly believe the best way to achieve this goal is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach and within the framework of the NPT. As I said to the House of Lords International Relations Committee on 6 March 2019, the UK is committed to the NPT process and we will continue to work with every one for as positive an outcome at the 2020 Review Conference as we can.

The UK used the opportunity of the recent NPT Third Preparatory Committee to hold constructive discussions with a wide range of Non-Nuclear Weapon States, including advocates of Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), as well as attending a meeting of the Nuclear Weapon States. The UK's statements to the NPT Third Preparatory Committee, as well as a statement made by the Chinese delegation on behalf of the Nuclear Weapon States on the P5 Process can be found on the UN website.

It continues to be our judgement that TPNW will not advance disarmament and risks undermining international non-proliferation work and the NPT. The UK does not intend to sign, ratify or become party to the TPNW, nor do we anticipate attending any of its meetings as an observer. The unpredictable international security environment we face today demands the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future. We cannot rule out further shifts in the international security context which would put us, or our NATO allies, under grave threat.

The UK will continue to work for further progress on global multilateral disarmament, in line with the NPT. We have a strong track record on our own disarmament. We have reduced the size of our own nuclear forces by over half since our Cold War peak and reduced to a single delivery system. We have reduced the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120. We are in the process of reducing our stockpile to no more than 180 by the mid-2020s. The UK will continue its leading role in disarmament verification and more information about this work can be found in the UK draft National Report on the implementation of the NPT, which was tabled as a working paper at the NPT Preparatory Committee.

I hope that this response has helped to explain the Government's position on this issue and provided reassurance that we remain committed to realising the long-term goal of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

y - sincerely
Alan Duncan

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP