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Dear Ray,

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 2020 Review Conference

During the debate on the Nuclear Weapons (International Relations Committee Report) on Tuesday 16 July, you asked about the Government's plans for the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

The Government will build on the success of the NPT's Third Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) held between 29 April-10 May 2019. We were pleased with the outcomes at PrepCom, and the general tone of States Parties' contributions, with a few exceptions, was constructive. The PrepCom Chair's attempt to agree consensus recommendations was highly ambitious – and never previously achieved at a PrepCom.

The Government published a draft National Report at the PrepCom, with the aim of discussing it with interested parties before tabling our final report at the Review Conference. The report sets out how we have implemented the three pillars of the NPT during this Review Cycle and includes important successes: our work on disarmament verification, domestic safeguards and our operational nuclear deterrence policy. A copy will be deposited in the House Library in accordance with the usual practice.

We are committed to working for a successful 2020 Review Conference. The NPT continues to be effective and a vital part of the international security architecture but, as reflected in the debate, it needs to be nurtured. The agenda for the Review Conference was decided during the PrepCom and includes substantive discussions in all three pillars.

The Government's specific objectives include:

- Demonstrating transparency. Therefore, we published our National Report a year early, in draft, and to obtain feedback.
- Championing the NPT. We want to engage with as many NPT States Parties as possible, to remind them of NPT successes as well as highlighting UK action on disarmament, particularly on disarmament verification.

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- Coordinating the P5 process. Continuing dialogue between the P5, including on nuclear policy and doctrine, with a view to improving mutual understanding. The Government also supports P5 dialogue with Non-Nuclear Weapon States.
- Ensuring attention on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including technical cooperation. We fully support the NPT Bureau's aim to bring practitioners (e.g. from the medical sector) into the NPT process.

A decision on our level of representation will be taken closer to the time. We expect the UK delegation to consist of officials from all relevant Government departments, including the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

During the debate, you asked whether the Government would add Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) to the agenda for the 2020 Review Conference. The issue of 'emerging technologies in LAWS' is discussed in a formal LAWS Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), which sits under the auspices of the UN's Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The UK Government plays an active role in these discussions.

The Government's view is that the LAWS GGE is the right forum in which to hold substantive discussions on LAWS, as it brings together a wide range of international experts from diverse backgrounds including policy, law, science and technology, military operations, humanitarian issues and academia. This breadth of experience is important given the multi-faceted nature of the LAWS debate.

I welcome your interest in this important conference, and our approach. The Government will continue to engage with Parliament as our strategy develops.

I hope you find this letter helpful. I will also place a copy in the House library.

*Yours sincerely,
Annabel*

BARONESS GOLDIE

Lord Collins of Highbury
House of Lords