I am submitting this as an individual but am also a Co President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND). I am extremely pleased that the committee has chosen to examine this highly important issue at a time when the Treaty regime appears to be crumbling. The UK's role could and should be very important.

I have worked with parliamentarians from around the world on this issue both through PNND and the International Parliamentary Union. Following the successful motion I took through the IPU Conference (on behalf of the UK) in 2009, the IPU produced a handbook for parliamentarians entitled Supporting Nuclear Non Proliferation and Disarmament. This has been translated into several languages. We saw this as essential if further support was to be achieved to progress the work then raising awareness of the issues amongst parliamentarians and supplying them with objective material on the subject was very important.

I was pleased at that time that the UK was supportive and willing to take a lead on promoting the non proliferation and disarmament agenda.

I would therefore especially like to address the Question 9 of the call for evidence.

Since that time the UK has not only failed to take a lead it has chosen not to take part in the various Conferences and forums that have been convened to progress a stalled process.

The Committee will have heard that the UK chose not to attend the first two Conferences of the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear War. The UK did decide at the last minute to attend the last one in Vienna. However it did not take part in the UN Open Ended Working Group that was convened to try and address the stalled process. The UK seemed to regard the UN Ban Treaty as an irritation and something that was best avoided. In answers to both oral and written questions the Government maintained that the NPT was the only forum for discussion and negotiation on matters of non proliferation and disarmament.

This has led to very negative perceptions of the UK amongst non nuclear weapons states. The parliamentarians and civil society members who expressed a view to me felt that we were moving against the spirit of Article 6 of the NPT whilst at the same time dismissing their deep concerns by not even discussing their very real fears in conferences convened to address how to diminish risks.

The Minister on 20/2/2018 summing up the Government’s attitude to the Ban Treaty, had many criticisms of the Ban Treaty and dismissed the fact that 122 countries support it. Frustration arises that instead of playing a constructive role and arguing through the points the UK disagreed with they chose to simply dismiss it “the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons represents a significant backward step” and states that “the Government will never recognise that its prohibitions represent an emerging rule of customary law”.

Baroness Susan Miller - Written evidence – (NPT0001)
I hope the Committee will explore what the Government intends to do once the 50 countries have ratified the Treaty.

I am sure the Committee is exploring the void between the NWS and their faith in the NPT and the other 122 countries who feel deeply that the Ban Treaty is essential to ensure a nuclear disaster avoidance strategy for the 21st century.

Received 8 January 2019