Overview of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Policy

1. This memorandum explains the Government’s approach to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT (1970) has been the cornerstone of global efforts in three areas: to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons; promote safe and secure use of nuclear energy; and pursue general and complete disarmament under strict international control. Globally, the number of nuclear weapons in the world has reduced by nearly three quarters since its peak in the mid-1980s. The UK’s stockpile has reduced by more than half from its peak. The NPT continues to be essential to the maintenance of a safe and secure world and we consider it to be a success in all three of its pillars. Coupled with the safeguards regime operated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has deterred all but a few states from acquiring nuclear weapons.

2. IAEA safeguards are a fundamental component of nuclear non-proliferation and we continue to attach great importance to their implementation. We believe that the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol together represent the current verification standard.

3. The UK has long been an advocate for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The development of civil nuclear energy must be accomplished without compromising safety, security or non-proliferation, and in accordance with safeguards. In line with the rights expressed in Article IV of the NPT, and on the condition that any countries doing so are in full compliance with their non-proliferation obligations, we recognise the inalienable right of all Parties to research, develop, and utilise civil nuclear energy for their own benefit.

4. The majority of states recognise their obligation to support and reinforce the existing counter-proliferation and disarmament framework, but there are challenges, and the unpredictable security environment we face today demands the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future. We strongly support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in curbing Iran’s nuclear ambitions, although we remain concerned about Iran’s development of ballistic missile capability, which is inconsistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2231, and its destabilising regional activities, including the proliferation of ballistic missiles and related technology. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear weapons programme continues to pose an unacceptable threat to the international community, as demonstrated by successive unanimous UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR). We are focussed on ensuring DPRK completely, verifiably and
irreversibly gives up its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programmes, as required by these UNSCRs. Russia’s development of new missile systems amounts to a material breach of the INF Treaty.

**Approach to 2020 NPT Review Conference**

5. Our objectives for 2020 are two-fold: to remind the international community that the NPT continues to be an effective and vital part of the international security architecture; and to highlight the UK’s own strong track record promoting disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as a responsible Nuclear Weapon State.

6. The UK has a strong record in fulfilling its NPT commitments. We have reduced the size of our own nuclear forces by well over 50% since our Cold War peak and we have about 1% of the total global stockpile. We have changed nuclear doctrines to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons, we have reduced the operational readiness of nuclear weapons and lowered their alert state, and we have increased transparency on the number of weapons we possess and on historic aspects of the UK programme.

7. The UK sees the start and early conclusion of negotiations of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices within the Conference on Disarmament (CD) as an essential step on the road to complete global nuclear disarmament. To succeed, such a treaty must be agreed on the basis of consensus and involve all the relevant parties. The CD is the only venue where all the countries that we want the treaty to cover participate and where decisions are made by consensus, as required for an effective treaty negotiation. With a verifiable treaty in place, we will be a significant step closer to our goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

8. The UK continues to be a vocal campaigner for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). We were one of the first to sign the CTBT in 1996 and ratified it in 1998. We continue to call on those who have not ratified to do so. We believe that the remaining Annex II states outside the Treaty (China, DPRK, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the US) should join as soon as possible. We press this whenever the opportunity presents itself. We recognise the valuable contribution of voluntary national moratoria to international peace and security as we continue our work towards the entry into force of the Treaty. However, it is evident that these individual and voluntary measures do not have the same permanent and legally-binding effect as the entry into force of the Treaty, which would put an end to nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions. For this reason, we consider the entry into force of the Treaty to be of utmost importance.

9. Nuclear disarmament verification is an example of ongoing progress on nuclear disarmament. The UK plays a leading role in international efforts. Establishing an effective nuclear disarmament verification regime will be
essential if we are to realise our long-term goal of multilateral nuclear disarmament. States will need to be confident that a nuclear-armed State has dismantled its warheads in a way that makes us safer, rather than in a way that proliferates nuclear weapons knowledge, and that such dismantlement is permanent and verifiable.

10. The UK started working with Norway on disarmament verification over ten years ago. The UK-Norway Initiative was the first ever technical project between a Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Weapons State in this field. In 2015 we established the Quad Initiative with the United States, Norway and Sweden, which undertook the first ever multilateral disarmament verification exercise at RAF Honington in October last year. This brought a new level of realism to such exercises by using our former nuclear weapons storage area.

11. Since 2015, we have played a leading role in the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, including co-chairing its working groups on Verification Objectives and Verifying Nuclear Weapon Declarations. We have co-sponsored the founding of a United Nations Group of Government Experts on Verification, and recently hosted a conference to prepare the first formal meeting of the Group in May. These examples of practical and effective cooperation improve trust between nuclear and non-Nuclear Weapons States. They take us closer to the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.

**P5 process**

12. The initial P5 Conference, which the UK hosted in 2009, succeeded in bringing together for the first time policy officials, military staff and nuclear scientists from all five Nuclear Weapons States. The P5 process demonstrates the commitment of the Nuclear Weapon States to work together to build mutual trust and confidence on these issues, which we believe will ultimately take us further towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

13. Regular conferences have been held ever since. China is the current co-ordinator of the group and in 2018 chaired meetings in the margins of the NPT Preparatory Committee and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee. China is hosting a meeting of the P5 in Beijing in January 2019. The P5 agreed two joint statements which were delivered at UNGA First Committee in 2018 and we are working currently to agree terms in a shared glossary of nuclear terminology, which will underpin shared efforts on nuclear disarmament.

14. The UK initiated a common reporting format on nuclear weapons, which was used by the P5 to report to the 2015 Review Conference. This encourages transparency by the P5 and demonstrates to the rest of the NPT membership that we are engaging in meaningful discussions.

**Non-Proliferation**

15. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran represents a major step forward in preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapons...
capability. The UK was one of the main negotiating partners and is a signatory to the JCPOA, the most detailed and long-running attempt to constrain Iranian nuclear aspirations to date. Three years into the deal Iran has complied with its commitments under the agreement, as verified by the IAEA’s reports. The UK is committed to the full and long-term implementation of the JCPOA, so long as Iran remains compliant.

16. While the UK deeply regrets the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, we share US concerns about wider Iranian behaviour. Iran’s ballistic missile programme – which is one of the largest in the world – is destabilising for the region, poses a threat to European security and is inconsistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015). This includes launches using related technology, such as space launches.

17. The DPRK WMD and ballistic missile programmes pose an unacceptable threat to the international community. The DPRK continues to challenge non-proliferation norms and the NPT itself. The UK has been prominent in urging the DPRK to return to compliance with the NPT. The UK has also played an active role in pushing the DPRK to renounce their illegal nuclear weapons programme through the agreement of a series of robust UN Security Council Resolutions and proactive sanctions enforcement. Our ministers raise the issue of DPRK in relevant international meetings and fora.

18. The UK is maintaining pressure on the DPRK regime in close coordination with the US and other partner nations, and we stand ready to assist in the denuclearisation of the DPRK using the UK’s unique capabilities. We continue to believe that negotiations are the best way to make progress towards the complete, verifiable, and irreversible end to DPRK’s WMD and ballistic missile programmes.

Export regimes

19. We play an active role in the export control regimes, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), to ensure that the technology and material needed to try to create a weapon do not fall into the wrong hands. The NSG helps to implement Article III.2 of the NPT and the UK was one of the Group’s founding members in 1974. The aim of the NSG Guidelines is to ensure that nuclear trade for peaceful purposes does not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and that international trade and cooperation in the nuclear field is not hindered unjustly in the process.

IAEA safeguards

20. The UK strongly supports the work of the IAEA in applying safeguards, an essential part of the non-proliferation regime. The UK also contributes financially to the IAEA and we continue to call on all States to offer their financial and political support for the IAEA’s work.

21. We believe that the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) and the Additional Protocol (AP) together represent the current verification standard
and we continue to encourage all States to sign an AP. The UK also strongly supports the IAEA State Level Concept, which will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguards implementation and use IAEA resources more effectively.

**Nuclear Weapon Free Zones**

22. As part of our commitment to the NPT, the UK supports the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZ) in order to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and enhance regional and international security. The UK has signed and ratified protocols to four NWFZ treaties, granting treaty-based negative security assurances to almost 100 countries in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), South Pacific (Treaty of Raratonga), Africa (Treaty of Pelindaba) and Central Asia (CANFWZ).

23. As part of the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995, States Parties adopted a Resolution on the Middle East, committing them to take practical steps to support the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. The UK, US and Russia are Co-Sponsors of this Resolution.

24. We remain fully committed to the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, and to the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We remain prepared to actively support and facilitate renewed regional dialogue aimed at bridging the differing views in the region on arrangements for a conference that is freely arrived at by all States in the region as set out in the NPT 2010 Action Plan.

25. The UK remains committed to signing the Protocol of the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (Treaty of Bangkok).

**Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Regime**

26. While we have considerably reduced the size of our nuclear weapons stockpile, others have not, and it would be irresponsible to disarm unilaterally while the capability to threaten us with nuclear weapons remains. The Government is therefore committed to maintaining a minimum credible nuclear deterrent for as long as the global security situation makes it necessary. We are clear this demonstrates the right balance between our commitment to long-term disarmament and our responsibility to ensure national security.

27. Maintaining and renewing elements of a State’s nuclear deterrent capability to ensure its continued safety and reliability, including through replacement and updating of obsolete elements of the system as they reach the end of their operational life, is a necessary aspect of being a responsible Nuclear
Weapon State. This activity is fully consistent with obligations under the Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

28. However, these modernisation programmes should be distinguished from those which provide States with a tangible increase in capability or diversification in delivery systems. The pursuit of new strategic technologies which increase or diversify a State’s overall capability is potentially damaging to disarmament regimes and has the potential to upset the strategic balance between States. The development of technologies which circumvent or breach arms control treaty restrictions also have the potential to undermine the credibility of arms control treaties.

29. The development of new and novel offensive and defensive weapons technologies, both nuclear and non-nuclear, has the potential to diminish the security environment and undermine existing non-proliferation and disarmament arms control agreements. Emerging weapons technology, such as hypersonic capabilities and the continued development of dual-use delivery systems, have the potential to complicate the security environment further, as States will be less able to quickly determine whether a strike in preparation or underway is nuclear or non-nuclear. Such technologies may create over-confidence in the mind of a strategic competitor that it can use novel non-nuclear weapons to attack a Nuclear Weapon State without passing the threshold for a nuclear response. Similarly, these technologies could raise the potential for miscalculation by a threatened State, given the uncertainty over the likely impact of such an attack. As a result, the development of such technologies may result in States assessing that there remains a need to maintain a nuclear capability to ensure deterrence against new strategic threats of this nature.

30. The UK continues to work with allies such as NATO to ensure our continued security, continually monitoring technological developments and their potential impacts to all our Defence capabilities. We are confident the UK’s nuclear deterrent will not be rendered obsolete by new technologies, including cyber threats and underwater unmanned vehicles. Maintaining an effective and credible deterrent capability provides the UK and its NATO Allies the confidence that nuclear capable adversaries will not attempt to use their capability to coerce us into actions against our will.

**INF/New Start**

31. For a number of years, Russia has been in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Russia’s development and deployment of its SSC-8 cruise missile system amounts to a material breach of the INF Treaty. NATO is considering the political and military consequences of these new Russian missiles, as well as any opportunities to strengthen arms control. We will continue to encourage Russia to engage seriously in bilateral
discussions with the US. We believe the onus is now on Russia to demonstrate urgently that it will return to full compliance.

32. The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is evidence that Russia can play by the rules, if it chooses to do so. We support continued implementation of New START and encourage both sides to consider this as a priority issue in their bilateral discussions. It is for the US and Russia to decide a timetable and process for discussions on the future of this Treaty.

33. We support arms control measures that improve security and stability. An essential foundation for effective arms control is that all parties respect the agreements to which they are party. This is a view shared by many, including NATO Allies. Russia will need to address its violations of the INF Treaty before other countries are likely to have enough confidence in Russia’s intentions to contemplate any new or amended agreements.

34. As a leading member of NATO and one of the Alliance’s three nuclear powers, we play a significant role in shaping the policy across the full range of issues. NATO took significant decisions to adapt its defence and deterrence posture at the Wales and Warsaw Summits, and did so again at the Summit last July. NATO keeps its defence posture under close review.

**The Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons**

35. Our judgement is that the Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was adopted on 7 July 2017, does nothing to advance disarmament and risks undermining international non-proliferation work and the NPT. Along with all other NATO member states, we cannot support the treaty. The UK does not intend to sign, ratify or become party to the Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons. We firmly believe that the best way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach, within existing international frameworks.

36. The Treaty fails to address the vital questions that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament. It ignores the security context and does nothing to increase trust and transparency between nuclear weapons possessor States. It will not result in the elimination of a single weapon. It will create divisions across the international non-proliferation and disarmament machinery, which will make further progress on disarmament more difficult. Furthermore, the UK would not accept any argument that this treaty can constitute a development of customary international law binding on the UK or on other non-parties.

37. We believe that productive results on nuclear disarmament can only be achieved through a consensus-based approach that takes into account the wider global security context. It is only through building the necessary mutual trust between States, and through putting into place the right international framework to help build the conditions for further disarmament, that we can make progress on a realistic and effective route towards our
shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The UK, as a Nuclear Weapons State, has been pursuing a step by step approach to nuclear disarmament consistent with the NPT and our other treaty commitments.

38. For these reasons we, along with the other NPT Nuclear Weapons States and NATO allies, did not support the resolution establishing negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban treaty at the UN General Assembly.

Nuclear Security

39. We continue to support the development of new and emerging technology to improve physical protection of material in and out of regulatory control and efforts to further enhance the role technology plays in site and transport security. The UK also notes the importance of States’ response and preparedness to malicious acquisition or use of new and emerging technology to undermine or compromise security measures implemented to protect radiological and fissile material.

40. The UK takes every measure to ensure civil nuclear assets are protected through implementation of robust export control regimes and nuclear security guidance set out by the IAEA. Beyond physical protection of source material, the UK also supports initiatives to mitigate the upstream threat posed by non-State actors and provides regulatory and legislative assistance, as well as funding initiatives for States to adopt and meet obligations set out in treaties and conventions (e.g. UNSCR 1540 – countering the proliferation of WMDs, ICSANT (International Convention to Suppress Acts of Nuclear Terrorism) and CPPNM (Convention for the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material).

State Modernisation programmes

41. We continue to have concerns over India and Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programmes. India and Pakistan are not party to the NPT and as such they are not bound by the legally binding obligations of the NPT. Israel has never declared a nuclear weapons programme. We continue to work with all three countries to bring them more into the international non-proliferation regime and to encourage them to sign the NPT as Non-Nuclear Weapon States.

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