OPENING REMARKS

My Lord Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to provide evidence today for your inquiry on the Non-Proliferation Treaty and nuclear disarmament. As I’m sure you’ve heard from other witnesses, the NPT continues to be the foundation of the global non-proliferation regime, nearly 50 years since it entered into force. Its fundamental bargain – that all states will work to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons; all states will work towards disarmament; and all states can access the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy remains sound. NATO, consistent with the goals set forth in the NPT, is committed to seeking a safer world for all and to taking practical steps and effective measures to create the conditions for further nuclear disarmament negotiations and the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons. That said, as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.

Unfortunately, the system established by the NPT is under stress today. Countries like Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are expanding their nuclear arsenals. Although France, the United Kingdom, the United States have all made significant nuclear reductions since the end of the Cold War -- and NATO has reduced the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe by 85% - pace of disarmament has slowed in recent years, with numbers largely holding firm. The most notable non-proliferation win within the last decade – preventing Iran from “going nuclear” – is a fragile win at present. And the rise of the “nuclear weapons ban” movement, which culminated in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017, threatens to undermine the strong nuclear safeguards and monitoring regime governing peaceful nuclear energy technology and eroding long-standing norms of behaviour.

As Director for the Nuclear Policy Directorate at NATO, I am keenly aware of all these challenges. In my role, I focus on ensuring NATO’s nuclear capabilities provide an effective deterrent against potential threats for as long as NATO remains a nuclear alliance. Given the nature of this work, there are naturally
issues that I won’t be able to discuss in a public forum. That said, I will strive to answer your questions as thoughtfully and thoroughly as I can within classification constraints.

Thank you, again, for your attention to this important topic and for inviting me here today.
Current Security Environment
It is clear we live in dangerous times. I would agree that the risk posed by nuclear weapons has increased in recent years, particularly the threat from nuclear weapons in the hands of state actors. Russia’s continuing belligerent behaviour, including their nuclear rhetoric and destabilising actions, has brought the Euro-Atlantic theatre closer to military conflict than at any time since the end of the Cold War. As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, almost all nations that possess nuclear weapons are expanding their nuclear arsenals. With increased tensions between the US and Russia, there is a real threat of great power conflict with a nuclear dimension. And of course, as nuclear weapons arsenals expand elsewhere in the world, particularly non-strategic nuclear weapons, the threat of terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons or materials remains a significant challenge.

That said, I do not want to leave the Committee with the impression that I think the actual use of nuclear weapons is imminent. All responsible nations with nuclear weapons know that the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict would, as several successive NATO Communiques have stated, “fundamentally alter the nature of the conflict.” So all bets would be off and we would all be in unknown territory. The credibility of our nuclear forces is a key contributor to deterrence. This is why it is so vital that we constantly evaluate the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear arsenals, so we can make sure our deterrent capabilities work and work well.

INF Treaty
It’s too early to tell what the possible end of the Treaty will mean for nuclear risks in Europe. Certainly, NATO must evaluate how Russia’s development and deployment of intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missiles affects our defence and deterrence posture – which includes nuclear, conventional, and missile defences capabilities. NATO will have to take meaningful steps to ensure that Russia does not gain a significant military advantage through the development and fielding of these systems. At the same time, any steps to enhance defence and deterrence will be accompanied by NATO’s continuing call on Russia to return to compliance with INF and restore this important pillar of Euro-Atlantic security as well as remain committed to the broader arms control
architecture. It is disappointing that we heard over the weekend that the
Kremlin has decided to cease working this problem at the negotiating table. The
US has indicated that it stands ready to engage with Russia, and the allies
support further dialogue. The United States has said it will revoke its INF
withdrawal notice if Russia returns to compliance. But given that Russia has
refused to engage the United States in a substantive and meaningful way for
over 5 years on its INF Treaty violation, I can’t say that I’m surprised that
instead of engagement, Russia is choosing to end its own participation in INF
and announced it will develop new nuclear capabilities.

And let me emphasise, NATO fully supports the US decision to withdraw from the
Treaty at this time. Arms control is only effective when all parties are abiding by
their commitments and a world in which Russia continues to violate the Treaty –
deploying missiles specifically designed to hold NATO at risk – while other
parties are held accountable is not a tenable situation and does not contribute to
stability in Europe. Make no mistake that while there are no new US
intermediate-range missiles in Europe, there are Russian ones. The Kremlin,
however, is continuing its attempts to obfuscate and deny responsibility even
now by stating that it will only take steps that are a “quid pro quo” with the
United States in developing and deploying intermediate-range cruise missiles to
Europe. Given the potential range of these missiles and the fact that they are
mobile and easily movable, means that Russia can target most of Europe from
well with-in its own territory and at the very least, move them to the Russian
border region with Europe undetected in a crisis. So these statements by the
Kremlin are essentially meaningless and designed to constrain and divide NATO
not demonstrate restraint.

New Technologies
Although we live in unpredictable times, we also live in times of unprecedented
technological change. The introduction of artificial intelligence and autonomy,
new bio-medical therapies, advances in space and cyber space – these
technological advances all have the potential to transform large sectors of our
society in unprecedented and tremendously positive ways. But the advancement
of new technologies also poses inherent risks to nuclear deterrence and the way
we conduct our nuclear business. From my personal view, however, these are
manageable challenges – I am not a technological alarmist. But we do have to be clear-eyed about the challenges, make smart decisions about business practices, and make substantial investments in protecting critical capabilities. And we have to continue to work to attract the best and brightest of the next generation of experts to the nuclear mission to manage this transition.

While NATO is beginning to explore the implications of emerging technological capabilities, including impacts on nuclear deterrence, other international bodies have been grappling with some of these questions for years. For instance, the limitations on armaments in space and the potential for rules of the road governing cyber operations have been discussed in the context of the UN First Committee for decades. The potential development of lethal autonomous weapons systems is under consideration in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. And the use of any weapon system, of any type, is governed by the principles of international humanitarian law.

In the nuclear domain, we seek to prevent any vulnerability to our nuclear command and control as well as our nuclear weapons infrastructure. I believe that because of the criticality of these systems to maintaining nuclear deterrence, our mission has actually been fairly successful in understanding potential risks and identifying areas for improvement as technologies change and mature. But it’s a constant process to stay ahead of emerging technologies and one that requires significant and sustained investment. Maintaining this investment in the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear forces, particularly in NATO nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) modernization, is one of my highest priorities.

In March last year, President Putin also referred to new technologies with respect to Russia’s future nuclear weapons capabilities and programs. NATO takes these statements seriously and we view them with concern. We continue to review Russia’s development of these and other nuclear and missile capabilities to ensure our deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective.

NATO Nuclear Policy
Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO’s overall capabilities for deterrence and defence. As a means to prevent conflict and war, credible deterrence and defence is essential and will continue to be based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities. NATO also remains committed to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, but as long as nuclear weapons exist, our Heads of State and Government have made clear that NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.

Allies remain committed to continuing to bolster deterrence as a core element of collective defence and to contribute to the indivisible security of the Alliance. NATO has taken steps to ensure its nuclear deterrent capabilities remain safe, secure, and effective in the face of the changing security environment – contributing to the credibility of our deterrence. That said, the strategic forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies. The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and contribute significantly to the overall security of the Alliance. These Allies’ separate centres of decision-making contribute to deterrence by complicating the calculations of potential adversaries. NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies on United States' nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and the capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies. National contributions of dual-capable aircraft to NATO's nuclear deterrence mission remain central to this effort. Supporting contributions by Allies concerned to ensure the broadest possible participation in the agreed nuclear burden-sharing arrangements further enhance this mission.

Furthermore, NATO remains committed to promoting areas of risk reduction and transparency. First and foremost, NATO has clearly stated that the primary role of NATO’s nuclear forces is for deterrence. We also highlight that nuclear weapons are unique and that the circumstances in which NATO might contemplate the use of nuclear weapons is extremely remote. Finally, NATO maintains full political control over nuclear decision-making, meaning that choices about the use and employment of NATO’s nuclear capabilities will be taken by the Nuclear Planning Group, either in the format of Defence Ministers
or Permanent Representatives. The United States maintains absolute control and custody of the nuclear weapons forward deployed to Europe.

**Nuclear Review/Declaratory Policy**

The Alliance continuously reviews our nuclear deterrence posture throughout the course of our business. Of note, the 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review states that:

"NATO will continue to adjust its strategy, including with respect to the capabilities and other measures required for deterrence and defence, in line with trends in the security environment. In this context, Allies will keep under review the consequences for international stability and Euro-Atlantic security of the acquisition of modern military capabilities in the regions and countries beyond NATO’s borders”.

We continue to do just that. In the Nuclear Planning Group, we have steadily reviewed our nuclear deterrence policy since then, from the top down – so at the political level, the political-military level, down to the operational level – and have taken steps to bring greater “coherence” between the conventional and nuclear components of NATO’s deterrence and defence posture as directed by Heads of State and Government in Brussels last year. And we continue to assess the effectiveness of our nuclear deterrence, not least in response to the world we see around us.

NATO’s Heads of State and Government have reflected the results of this review process through successive statements and communiques since 2012 – most significantly through the Summit Declarations from Wales, Warsaw, and Brussels just last year – outlining a declaratory policy that is complementary to the policies and declarations of our three Nuclear Weapon States – the US, UK and France. It is for those nations to declare their national policies, including the Negative Security Assurances they give. As in any other issue, NATO agrees on nuclear policy only by consensus, but within the context of the declaratory policy of those three Allies. Therefore, NATO’s declaratory policy cannot be
disaggregated or seen as something separate from those of our nuclear members.

NATO’s declaratory policy is deliberately ambiguous given the variety of scenarios with a nuclear dimension that could play out at NATO. As Heads of State and Government affirmed in Brussels last year, the fundamental purpose of NATO’s nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression. Furthermore, any employment of nuclear weapons against NATO would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict. Additionally, if the fundamental security of any of NATO’s members were to be threatened, NATO has the capabilities and resolve to impose costs on an adversary that would be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that any adversary could hope to achieve. Beyond these principles, Allies have not sought to outline specific scenarios where nuclear weapons would, or would not be used, again given the particularly unique nature of NATO’s deterrence and extended deterrence arrangements.

**Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**

Allies remain united in their strong opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and have repeatedly emphasised their commitment to full implementation of the NPT, including to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and the IAEA safeguards regime which supports it. Seeking to ban nuclear weapons through a treaty that does not account for the realities of the international security environment will not be effective, will not reduce nuclear arsenals, and will neither enhance any country’s security, nor international peace and stability. Indeed it risks doing the opposite by creating divisions and divergences at a time when a unified approach to proliferation and security threats is required more than ever. This is why no NATO ally has signed or ratified the TPNW.

Furthermore, NATO strongly rejects the notion posed by some that this Treaty changes the legal status of the Nuclear Weapons States under the NPT, nor does it impose any new obligations on our countries with respect to nuclear weapons possession, security assurances, or NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements. Allies
are unified in their belief that this Treaty in no way reflects or contributes to the development of customary international law.

That said, NATO takes seriously its contributions to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in full accordance with the NPT and in a step-by-step and effective way, which promotes international stability and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all. And much progress has been made in this regard. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has dramatically reduced the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe – by more than 85% from its Cold War peak - and its reliance on nuclear weapons in NATO strategy. Allies have repeatedly affirmed that we remain open to further arms control negotiations with the aim of improving the security of the Alliance, taking into account the current security environment.

Unfortunately, further reductions must be based on the principal of reciprocity – and it is clear that Russia is not amenable to discussions of further disarmament. In fact, Russia is expanding its arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons exponentially, including the deployment of short- and intermediate-range missile systems on the borders of Europe. Russia has repeatedly rejected offers from the United States to discuss arms control or disarmament measures for its tactical nuclear weapons systems. Arms control negotiations take two willing partners and, regretfully, it’s clear that Russia is not a serious partner.

**UK’s Contribution to NATO’s Nuclear Policy**

As one of the two nuclear powers who contribute to the Nuclear Planning Group, the UK has a strong and clear voice in the development of all aspects of NATO’s nuclear policy.

Obviously, the UK’s most tangible contribution to NATO deterrence is its commitment of its independent submarine-based nuclear deterrent, including inventing in the replacement of the VANGUARD class submarine with the new DREADNOUGHT class, as well as its Continuous at Sea Deterrence posture. Allies get visibility of the UK’s commitment in many of our briefs and exercises, and it is a pillar of NATO deterrence.
Recently, the UK hosted both the North Atlantic Council and the Military Committee in Faslane, contributing to “leadership focus” on nuclear issues as called for by NATO’s Strategic Concept. The UK has also hosted visits to London, Aldermaston, and Faslane for NATO’s subject matter experts. These very useful and informative events served to underline the scale and depth of the UK’s commitment to nuclear deterrence and to NATO. I can assure you these events made a very deep and positive impression on Allies.

More widely, given its status as a nuclear weapons state, the UK plays a vital role on nuclear deterrence issues and is a regular and strong contributor at all levels of NATO nuclear policy-making. For instance, the UK has led the Alliance in thinking on Russia’s new nuclear weapons and missile capabilities as outlined by President Putin in March of last year. Your country also has played a key role in maintaining Alliance unity throughout the recent deliberations on the INF Treaty. And, of course, the UK is a leading proponent of NATO’s work on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation.

Received 13 February 2019