

This Treaty has been a truly vital pillar of international peace and security: UK Statement at the UN General Assembly

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Statement by Steven Doughty MP, Minister of State for Europe, North America, and the Overseas Territories, at the UN General Assembly meeting on the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

For more than fifty years, this Treaty has been a truly vital pillar of international peace and security.

It has helped limit the spread of nuclear weapons; facilitated access to clean and reliable energy; and has built confidence for responsible nuclear trade.

In short, it has delivered real benefits for people around the world.

The United Kingdom remains fully committed to the Treaty and our obligations under it, including Article Six.

But we should not take the Treaty, or the stability it helps provide, for granted.

Over the next few weeks, our task is to renew our common commitment to the principles of the Treaty so that it can continue to support the security of us all.

Since this Conference last met, Russia has developed novel nuclear systems, continued its unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine, in which it has relentlessly attacked civilian targets, including with medium-range ballistic missiles, and reckless behaviour in relation to Zaporizhzhia and Chernobyl, and it has engaged in coercive nuclear signalling.

Iran is in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations, and the DPRK continues to develop nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, China is rapidly and opaquely expanding its nuclear arsenal and has not fully engaged in meaningful transparency or risk reduction measures.

Against that backdrop, the UK's position is clear.

Firstly, we will work to support the IAEA and countries around the world in tackling the major nuclear proliferation challenges, above all, the programmes in Iran and DPRK.

We have been clear that a negotiated outcome is the only long-term solution to the threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme.

And we remain committed to avoiding conflict on the Korean peninsula.

We urge the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, re-engage in meaningful dialogue, and return to full compliance with the NPT.

Secondly, nuclear deterrence remains the bedrock of UK security and our commitment to NATO.

We have and will continue to take the steps necessary to maintain our deterrence capability, always with the aims and obligations of the NPT in mind.

At the same time, we continue our work to create the conditions to support nuclear disarmament when the security circumstances allow.

Our approach is pragmatic and principled.

We believe the right approach is to proceed step by step, in a transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner, based on the principles of increased and undiminished security for all.

Our focus is on practical efforts.

This includes our continued support for negotiations to commence in the Conference on Disarmament on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty; maintaining our voluntary moratorium on conducting nuclear test explosions; and our support for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO).

We are fully committed to the P5 Process and have taken our role as Chair seriously this year, using meetings under our Chair to promote active engagement and practical measures between nuclear weapons states to reduce risks.

We strongly support US efforts to intensify discussions among the P5 on strategic stability, including through proposed multilateral strategic stability talks.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the principle and practice of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

We will continue discussions with ASEAN Member States to establish a path for the UK to sign the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty to progress the establishment of the South East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

Thirdly, as access to peaceful nuclear energy expands, with the obvious benefits to the climate and people around the world, the need for rigorous safeguards becomes greater.

The International Atomic Energy Agency and its safeguards system underpins the effective implementation of the Treaty, providing assurance that nuclear programmes are exclusively peaceful.

It is essential this Conference supports that work.

The UK's goal on peaceful uses of nuclear technology is clear: to work with others to make sure that civil nuclear technology is used safely and responsibly, in a way that builds trust between countries.

We are driving the largest expansion of civil nuclear power in a generation, including through Small Modular Reactors.

And we are working with partners and the IAEA to make sure technologies are used safely and responsibly, from cancer treatment to food security and clean energy, so that every country can benefit.

As we enter a period of unprecedented growth in nuclear power, the NPT will continue to play an integral role in building global confidence in safe and secure expansion, without increased risk of proliferation.

Mr President, the UK believes that the Treaty remains the only credible route to tackle the nuclear challenges of the decades to come.

We must use the next few weeks to unite behind it.

We want this Conference to deliver a consensus outcome that strengthens implementation of the NPT.

Whether or not we can get there, the Treaty's role in global security is enduring and undiminished.

But a collective signal that, despite our differences, we can come together to restate common commitments would further strengthen it and send a powerful message.

So, Mr President, at this Conference, we will all play our part, working with all States Parties in a spirit of pragmatism, in support of the Treaty and its enduring role in the years ahead.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/this-treaty-has-been-a-truly-vital-pillar-of-international-peace-and-security-uk-statement-at-the-un-general-assembly>