



UK Mission  
Geneva

## **Conference on Disarmament**

### **Plenary Meeting: Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones**

#### **STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM**

H.E. Mr Aidan Liddle, Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament  
Geneva, 31 January 2023

Thank you for convening this plenary this afternoon, and for giving us the opportunity to address the important question of Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones. Let me also thank Ms Bino for her very helpful introductory presentation.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the principle of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which contribute significantly to bolstering the non-proliferation regime and enhancing regional and international security. Of particular importance to the United Kingdom, as a Nuclear Weapon State, are the protocols to the treaties on nuclear weapon free zones, giving assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against the parties to those treaties. By signing and ratifying these protocols, the United Kingdom has given legally-binding negative security assurances to around 100 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central Asia, and the South Pacific. On signing each protocol, the United Kingdom has made an interpretative statement aligning these legally binding negative security assurances with our own national negative security assurances, and in particular the understanding that the United Kingdom will not be bound by its negative security assurances in the event that any party to the treaty is in material breach of its own non-proliferation obligations under the treaty.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight once again our readiness to sign and ratify the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, or Bangkok Treaty, with the usual interpretative statement. We look forward to further discussions with the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, under the Presidency of Indonesia, this year, and hope that we can make progress on the outstanding issues that Ms Bino referred to in her presentation.

The United Kingdom supports the creation of further nuclear weapon free zones, under arrangements freely arrived at by all the States of the region concerned, and originating from that region, in line with the 1999 recommendations of the UN Disarmament Commission.

In this regard, we recall the Resolution on the Middle East and the goal of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which the United Kingdom co-sponsored and remains fully committed to. In line with this commitment, the United Kingdom participated as an observer in the UN Conferences on a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in 2019, 2021 and 2022. We were encouraged by the efforts of the Chairs of the Conferences, and most of the participants, to work in a constructive spirit, which does not close the door to other States participating in the future. To make progress, there needs to be a dialogue in which all States of the region feel they can participate, and in which their security concerns can be heard. The adherence to and effective implementation of the NPT, BTWC, CWC, CTBT, the IAEA Additional Protocol and the MTCR Guidelines and Principles of Ballistic Missiles by all regional States who have not yet done so would also bring greater confidence to the region and support discussions on a Middle East WMD-Free Zone.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss the related question of negative security assurances at a forthcoming plenary meeting.

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