

UK Statement at the UN Disarmament Committee (UNDC) Opening Session

8 April 2025

Thank you, Mr Chair.

On behalf of the UK Delegation, allow me to welcome Paraguay, and you personally on your appointment as Chair for the 2025 session of the UN Disarmament Commission.

You may fully count on our delegation's support as you lead the work over the course of these three weeks.

Upholding the global non-proliferation architecture, promoting international arms control and disarmament norms, and protecting the international organisations that underpin them are priorities for the UK and of great value to all of us.

The UK has clearly signalled its continued commitment to protecting and strengthening the non-proliferation and arms control architecture and has demonstrated its renewed focus on upholding international law and multilateralism. We welcome the opportunity to make progress together on these most important matters.

To achieve full and complete disarmament, we must take a step-by-step approach within existing frameworks. We should continue to develop practical initiatives on transparency, irreversibility, verification, and risk reduction, to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and pave the way for full and complete disarmament in the future.

But Mr Chair, I must acknowledge that the current geopolitical climate hinders the progress we would like to make. The first duty of any responsible government is the safety of its citizens. The United Kingdom will retain a credible and effective minimum nuclear deterrent, declared to the defence of NATO, for as long as the global security situation makes it necessary. Our deterrent remains a vital safeguard for the UK, our Allies, and for maintaining global peace and security. As a Nuclear Weapon State, the United Kingdom takes our responsibilities seriously - we engage with risk reduction dialogues and remain whole-heartedly committed to our NPT commitments and the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

We need collective action and cooperation between international partners to improve the geopolitical context to navigate these uncertain times and enable disarmament. Despite the need for collaboration and collective action, it is a shame to see some states taking actions that work against this. Please allow me to elaborate:

It has been over three years since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. That and its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric is a profound problem for disarmament. The United Kingdom supports a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, which is vital for Ukraine and global security and prosperity.

Iran's escalating nuclear and ballistic missile programmes threaten international security and undermine global non-proliferation. The E3 remain committed to a diplomatic solution.

DPRK's continuing advancement of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, is in clear breach of UN Security Council Resolutions. We call on DPRK to refrain from conducting further ballistic missile tests. We urge the DPRK to return to dialogue and take credible steps towards denuclearisation.

China's rapid expansion of its nuclear arsenal and development of its delivery systems, without transparency, should also concern us all.

Despite this, the UK believes that there are meaningful and achievable measures that should be pursued now to make progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons, with undiminished security for all.

The UK continues to advance work to address verification challenges, both with our domestic research programme and within a range of global initiatives – including with the Quad (UK, US, Norway and Sweden) and with the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). We recognise the complex challenges of verification cannot be solved by individual states alone and we place importance on building global capacity.

In addition, the UK continues to champion transparency, including by improving trust and building confidence through dialogues with Nuclear Weapon States and Non-Nuclear Weapon States. We also fund projects with academia and think tanks on states' conceptions of responsibilities in relation to nuclear weapons.

Mr Chair,

Emerging technologies add a layer of complexity across this. They offer exciting potential to meet many of the world's challenges, but also have potential for harm and misuse, so we must work together to ensure their responsible use. I look forward to discussions and welcome the steer provided by El Salvador prior to the start of the Working Group II sessions.

Faced with these complexities and challenges, we must work together to preserve and strengthen the global arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and I look forward to discussing with you all over the coming days. We are hopeful of progress and you can trust that the UK will act constructively and in the spirit of collaboration.

Thank you.

