

News story: UK statement on treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons

The UK is committed to the long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of the international nuclear non proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a responsible Nuclear Weapons State the UK continues to work with international partners towards creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

However, we will not sign the treaty which has been published today. As we have previously made very clear, we do not believe that this treaty will bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. This treaty fails to address the key issues that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament.

It will not improve the international security environment or increase trust and transparency. The unpredictable international security environment we face today demands the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future. And we cannot rule out further shifts in the international security context which would put us, or our NATO allies, under grave threat.

This treaty also risks undermining and weakening the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, which has played an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race. The NPT continues to make a significant contribution to the strategic stability that the international community requires. We must uphold and strengthen the NPT because of, not despite, the complex security challenges that we all face. It remains the right framework for progress across all three, mutually reinforcing, pillars, including disarmament.

The UK firmly believes 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. Productive results 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 key international architecture 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 has not taken part in the negotiation of this treaty, and does not intend to sign, ratify or become party to it. The treaty will therefore not be binding on the UK. 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. Importantly, states possessing nuclear weapons have not taken part in the negotiations. As has been made clear, the UK, as a Nuclear Weapons State, has been pursuing a step by step

approach to nuclear disarmament consistent with the NPT and its other treaty commitments.

The UK will continue to work with partners across the international community to press for key steps towards multilateral disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and successful negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. And we will continue to play a leading role in disarmament verification.