

UK statement: General Debate of the UN General Assembly First Committee

Chair,

In March this year, the UK published its Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. It describes a deteriorated global security environment, an increase in global competition, challenges to the international order, and the proliferation of potentially disruptive technologies. The threats facing the UK and its Allies are increasing in scale, complexity and diversity. The review sets out how we will build resilience at home and overseas, strengthen defence and security partnerships, contribute to building norms in the future frontiers of cyberspace, new technologies, data and space, and shape the open international order of the future that allows all countries, and all peoples, to be secure, prosperous and free.

There have been some positive developments this year. We welcome the extension of the New START Treaty, which has contributed significantly to international security and strategic stability, and the beginning of a new Strategic Stability Dialogue between the US and Russia. We encourage all Nuclear Weapons States to engage in similar transparency and confidence-building measures. We also welcome the successful conclusion of both the Open-Ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts on cyber in 2021, and call on all Member States to be guided in their use of information and communication technologies by their consensus reports.

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The Integrated Review also serves as the official statement of the UK's nuclear weapons policy. It made clear that the UK remains committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The UK looks forward to the rescheduled tenth NPT Review Conference, which is an important opportunity to celebrate the success of the Treaty and recommit ourselves to its implementation. We also call for action, ambition and cooperation to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention at its upcoming Ninth Review Conference.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space remains a key objective for the preservation of international peace and security. To achieve this objective, we must look broadly at the behaviours, actions and omissions that could lead to conflict, not only at capabilities or placement of weapons. We thank those Member States, International Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations that contributed to the Secretary-General's report on "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours". The United Kingdom is pleased to introduce a resolution at this session to establish an Open-Ended Working Group to take the issues in the report forward, and we would be grateful for the continued support of Member States.

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Full compliance with all obligations is essential to building trust and confidence. We must stick by our principles and act quickly when states fail to comply with their obligations.

The confirmed use of a Novichok nerve agent in Russia in 2020 against Alexey Navalny is a grave concern, following the Novichok attack in Salisbury in 2018. We call on Russia to account for these uses.

Eight chemical weapons attacks in Syria have been attributed to the Asad regime by the OPCW and JIM. We urge Syria to meet its obligations.

We have deep concerns about Iran's destabilising activity and its ballistic missile activities are inconsistent with UNSCR 2231; in particular, the proliferation of weapons to proxies and non-state actors which undermines regional security. Iran's escalatory nuclear activity undermines the counter-proliferation value of the JCPOA and threatens its preservation. We began talks in April to restore the JCPOA, and negotiated in good faith until Iran paused talks in June. We call on Iran to return to negotiations without delay.

The UK remains concerned by the development of DPRK's illicit nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. The DPRK's recent ballistic missile launches on 27 September, in violation of multiple UNSCRs, are a clear indication that sanctions targeting these prohibited programmes must remain in place and be strictly enforced by the international community. We call for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the DPRK, and urge the DPRK to return to dialogue with the United States.

Chair,

The UK's Integrated Review puts multilateralism, arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament at the heart of our approach to security. We need a collective global effort to uphold and strengthen the counter-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We look forward to engaging with all States throughout this Committee's session.